

Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants
EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER No. 43

May 1991

The extremely dry summer has taken its toll of many plants across South Australia this year. Stress has been showing in many garden plants and unfortunately quite a few have succumbed to the conditions. I have noticed quite a few plants, not eremophilas, in the Adelaide hills and on the eastern, drier slopes and plains really battling to stay alive.

It seems that most of the plants in the garden have survived, although I have had some trouble with some October planted eremophilas grafted onto *Myoporum* species stock. The very young, tender stock has been severely sunburnt and as a result I think that I will probably lose about half a dozen or so plants. I will have to either plant such material out into the garden in autumn so that some sort of cover has developed before the next summer spell, or alternatively protect the soft stems from the sun's rays by wrapping them in a protective sheath of paper or something similar. The plants most affected are those in full sun locations; those planted in shadier positions have not shown any sign of sunburn.

Perhaps some of the members of the group would care to comment and offer some suggestions. The grafted plants are, I believe, here to stay, albeit at a price, so it is in our collective interest to ensure that we provide the appropriate conditions for their survival.

EREMOPHILAS - THE STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTERS 1972 —1985.

This 125 page booklet has now been printed and is available from me at a cost of \$6, plus postage etc. \$2.50.

The booklet has been dedicated to the Memory of Geoff Needham who passed away late in 1989. Geoff was an active member of Project Eremophila and was the Study Group Leader from 1976 until his death. A fitting tribute to a most dedicated man.

Members who wish to obtain a copy can do so by sending the money to me; please make cheques payable to the Eremophila Study Group.

The booklet is the edited collection of Newsletters from the first one issued to number 31 issued in April 1985. In editing the originals the chit-chat has been removed and only material considered relevant has been incorporated.

The booklet has been fully funded by the Society for Growing Australian Plants S.A. Inc. To SGAP SA we extend our sincere appreciation; without this assistance this project would have been impossible.

To Val Love we owe our thanks, he was responsible for much of the early editorial work and spent many hours preparing the newsletters in a form that would be suitable for this booklet.

The indexing was done by Beverley O'Keeffe, a task which was not an easy one. Beverley your contribution has been most appreciated.

SEEDS

Not a lot of response to the notes in the last Newsletter about growing eremophilas from seed, however, I did receive a couple of interesting responses.

David Gordon, 'Myall Park', Glenmorgan, Queensland, says yes, using the bog method. He has raised quite a number of species from seed; on one occasion 40 seedlings of *E. macdonnellii*. David does also admit to many failures. He suggests that it is probably necessary to sow different species at different times of the year.

David also recalls the torrential rains in Queensland in 1949 and 1950, forty inches (a little over 1000mm) at Thargominadah, with an average of about ten inches (250mm). Lake Eyre filled for the first time since the arrival of Europeans in Australia. He was out in the western region in 1951 on Grey Range Station, between Adavale and Charleville. *E. bowmanii* seed had washed into the road gutters from the extensive stands of plants higher up the slope. An embankment had diverted the water on to a flat, here *E. bowmanii* seedlings were packed together like the bristles on a brush, countless thousands of them about five to ten centimetres high. David says that this place must have been a very wet spot - a bog during this great wet.

David's method is to place the fruits on the surface only half buried. Seedlings are potted up as soon as they appear because seeds continue to germinate over a prolonged period. He suggests that we should get as many fruits as possible and to keep accurate records of the results.

Guy Richmond, Curtin University, WA, has sent me some fruits of *E. maculata* from Leonora WA, and some *E. spectabilis* from Mt. Keith Station also in WA.

Guy is currently engaged in research on the eremophilas of the Goldfields areas and has offered to provide some seed for members to experiment with. He does ask, however, that any members who request seed, pass back the information about their successes etc. It would also be appreciated if details of methods used and conditions applied were sent back with the results.

If you would like some seed, drop me a line and I will forward some fruits to you. I have about 200 fruits of each and Guy will try to get some other material from time to time.

CUTTING MATERIAL

Several people have asked about obtaining cutting material.

With the last Newsletter, a copy of the current membership was included. It is hoped that you will find it useful in contacting people in your locality or when you have the opportunity to travel.

Sue Oldfield, Rockbank, Victoria is interested in exchanging cutting material with any members in the Central Victorian region. She is willing to have her bushes pruned, especially if she is able to get some of the newer species in return.

David Gordon also asks for some assistance in obtaining cutting material. If anyone is prepared to send material please contact David directly. He would very much appreciate your help.

John Rooke, Casterton, Victoria has also asked for help in obtaining cutting material. Please contact him directly.

AUSTRALIAN GARDEN AT EXPO 90 — JAPAN

Jan Sked, ASGAP Study Group Coordinator, reports that there were many eremophilas incorporated in the Australian Garden and that they all looked wonderful once they had settled in.

Plants were supplied by Fishers Native Nursery, Rockhampton, and Anstey Park Nursery, Adelaide.

It is hoped that a report on this display will be included in a future Newsletter.

FROM YOUR LETTERS

- * Russell Wait, Natya, Victoria, has reported on some of his efforts with seed, cuttings and grafting. My wife and I called in to see Russell in January this year and had the opportunity to see his collection of established eremophilas and his propagating arrangements.

He writes:

"I had some cutting material brought over from Bob Chinnock at the beginning of December and did some grafting and cuttings. Of the grafts, that were put on very soft, sappy growth with a wedge graft like the method shown in *Australian Plants* written by Merv Hodge, I have lost all of the *E. cuneifolia* and *E. homoplastica*.

"I put seed of *E. bignoniiflora*, (pink) *E. maculata* and *E. santalina* in April into polyboxes using sand and some humus. I have potted up 23 *E. bignoniiflora*, 15 *E. maculata* and 5 *E. santalina*. They have been coming up and getting watered each night automatically."

"I have used *Myoporum parvifolium* as the stock for my grafting. In September I grafted a number of plants and to date new growth is being put on *E. miniata*, *E. delisseri*, *E. battii*, *E. strongylophylla*, *E. goodwinii*, and *E. platythamnus*." (Dec. 1990)

Noel Gane, Panania, NSW, presents an account of his methods.

"Last year I visited Victoria and much to my delight returned with a 'good bootfull'. The plants were potted on and are growing in 200mm and 250mm pots, loving all the hot weather, rain has been almost nil but they have been watered very regularly. The mix used was compost, sieved after being dried in the sun. Quite a lot of stable manure being used in its making. pH level was around 6.4.

"Again, breaking with my usual tradition of planting out in March (i.e. in Sydney) I made a start in early February as an experiment. As usual, quantities of stable manure went straight into the garden without composting, some of the existing shrubs were given a good 'short back and sides' pruning. I scratched around their bases and applied a good handful of 'Patons Native Plant Food', covered with fresh manure then spread a good depth of mulch over all gardens prior to heavy watering."

"For the month of February we have had one of our hottest on record, however, I must say my plants really appreciated it, especially when some of them may have been watered even at mid-day; they have still made good growth."

"A few species I have found difficult to grow have been: *E. hillii*, *E. willsii*, *E. gilesii*, and *E. freelingii*." (March 1991)

Sue Oldfield, Rockbank, Victoria. Annual rainfall here is only 400mm and the eremophilas do well, better than most other natives. Her *E. hillii* flowered magnificently after a 50mm rainfall in December. Unfortunately she has had little success with cuttings over the past couple of years, suspecting the quality of the water available. Water from a concrete tank is now being tried with the hope of something better in the future.

OUTBACK SEARCH

I reported in the last Newsletter about a student of mine who had been out in the far north west of SA and beyond into WA. Well, he is to make a second trip in the near future and has offered to make some further collections of material as and when it is located. This trip will take him out to the west of the Giles Weather Station, south through WA, returning along a route due east back to Coober Pedy. With more time available and a better background in what to look for, we could receive some interesting material. We wish him and his family well in their trip.

NEW SPECIES OF EREMOPHILA

Bob Chinnock

Last September I visited Western Australia with Professor Gordon and Mrs Betty Oriens to study various aspects of *Eremophila*. Gordon is a zoologist, an authority on the Blackbirds of the Americas upon which he has published a large book, but his interest in *Eremophila* concerned why some species like *E. longifolia* are widespread and common while other species like *E. racemosa*, *E. brevifolia* and *E. purpurascens* are very local and rare. The aim of the trip was to see as many species as possible so that he could measure and record different features of the flower.

Unfortunately on this trip I added a number of new species to the list. After my previous visit to WA in 1986 I had thought "that's it," but not so.

We left Perth and spent the first night at Dalwallinu a small wheatbelt town 200km NE of Perth. I had a slight problem with the vehicle so had to wait until the garage opened at 8 a.m. While filling in time we drove around the back of the town where we found a shire reserve. Driving along the edge of it I spotted what appeared to be an eremophila (instinct) so we stopped and when I walked over to it I decided it wasn't, as the small leaves were deeply lobed a feature not known in eremophila. The branch tips were very fat due to dense clusters of the hairy sticky leaves, however, when I looked at the flower there was no doubt that it was an eremophila. The eremophila which will eventually be called *E. "pinnatifida"* is a very attractive shrub to about 1 m tall with large violet flowers. It also appears that it will be an easy species to establish as Colin Jennings was able to obtain 100% strike and small plants are now well established.

In addition to *E. "pinnatifida"* I managed to add, to my disgust, 4 additional species. One related to *E. compacta*, one related to *E. platycalyx* and another near *E. freelingii*, all of which I had been aware of, but unfortunately the herbarium material that I had was inadequate to do anything with. Two of these species occurred between Mt Augustus and Meekatharra in very remote areas where I also discovered a new fascinating *Portulaca* and a striking *Calandrinia* with multicoloured petals. The third related to *E. platycalyx* but with narrow linear, tuberculate, leaves grew near Niagera Dam south of Leonora.

The last species of eremophila was found between Laverton and Leonora. It was growing

only on the top of one hill where it dominated the shrub layer. It has small linear leaves like *E. exilifolia* but the most peculiar feature of it is that it looks like a bonsai with very old gnarled deeply weathered thick stems.

In the second half of the trip we met up with Guy Richmond and spent two weeks with him. Guy has just joined our study group. He is doing a Ph.D. at Curtin University on the factors affecting the seed germination in Goldfield species of *Eremophila* so you will definitely hear more from Guy in the future.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Thank you to all who have forwarded their subscriptions to me.

I note that there are many who have not done so, and on checking through past receipt books note that they have not been financial for some time, yet are still receiving the Newsletter.

If you do not wish to receive the Newsletter in the future, please let me know. If you do, then please forward the \$2 subscription as soon as possible.

For \$2 this would have to be one of the best 'value for money' study groups. It won't stay that way if we don't have the income.

Subscriptions fall due June each year.

SEMINAR — WORKSHOP — FIELD DAY

Several members have suggested that we conduct an event such as this sometime this year. The suggested date is the last weekend in September; this coincides with the start of the South Australian school holidays, and is also a date when we can have access to the facilities of the Botanic Garden.

The idea has met with enthusiasm for the local members who have been asked. The programme will be worked out when we have an indication of the extent of the interest of members generally. By publicising it as this early stage of the year, we hope that a number of interstate members might be able to organise their time and holidays to include this in their schedule.

A brief outline is a day of talks, workshop activities etc. on Saturday with some social outing, dinner or the like on Saturday night, followed by a field day on the Sunday; Ken Warnes has offered to have us up to his place at Owen. For members who have the time there is the possibility of extending beyond these two days if they wish to do so.

Members who wish to take part are asked to indicate their interest to Colin as soon as possible, with any suggestions about things we could do that they consider worthwhile.

Details of the weekend will be published in the next Newsletter. This should be a great weekend so please try to be involved if you are able.

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