

Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants
EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER No. 54

December 1994

In response to the request for information to publish in the Newsletter I have received a couple of valued responses, but I am sure that there are far more of you who could put some thoughts on paper and share them with the rest of the group.

I have had several requests for such things as 'lists of the known eremophilas', 'habits of growth of selected species of *Eremophila*' and 'growing from seed'. The last of these has been well covered in previous newsletters, but new thoughts would be welcome from anyone with something further to add.

I have difficulty in preparing definitive listings of plants and their growth habits, frost tolerances etc. This is largely due to the vast range of growing conditions in which you are all trying to grow the genus. I have received good responses to lists of cultivated species from many of you, however, my original intention of collating them has been thwarted by the huge variations presented. I will try to get something together for the next issue, despite the diversity.

The request for a listing of species and their 'locations' will be published in the next issue of the Newsletter. Bob Chinnock has been busily working on the monograph and has not had the time necessary to devote to this matter in the past few months.

I have received more information about the ASGAP Conference for 1995 in Ballarat, and will give more details below.

We have also been asked to contribute to the 1995 Wildflower Festival conducted by ASGAP – NSW at Rouse Hill. I am sure that this is in direct response to the excellent effort made by Jim and Wilma Thomson this year on our behalf.

Colin Jennings

ABORIGINAL USAGE OF *EREMOPHILA*

(Rosemary Pedler was prompted to write to me in response to the reference to '*Users of Eremophilas Past, Present & Future*' in the issue No. 53. Rosemary has recently (April 1994) had published her Plant Identikit, *Wildflowers of the Northern Flinders Ranges*. Obviously she did an enormous amount of research in its preparation and located a number of valuable references to the uses of eremophilas by the Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and northern South Australia. Anyone interested in obtaining a copy of this 'pocket book' size identikit can get further information from Rosemary at PO Box 58, Koolunga, South Australia 5464. It is probably also available through your region's booksales person.)

I was particularly interested in '*Users of Eremophilas Past, Present & Future*'.

I was lucky enough to have contact with some of the Adnyamathanha people from the northern Flinders Ranges and was able to learn something of their uses for food, medicines and ceremonies of some of the Flinders' flora. Mrs Gertie Johnson, (known as Grannie Gertie) was the chief source of information and it is her information on *Eremophila longifolia* that you might find of interest.

A very common and widespread species, it was of considerable importance to them. The foliage was used to cover the dead before burial which did not take place immediately after death. The relatives would visit the dead person from time to time to observe what was happening to the covering leaves, and there was significance in the way in which the leaves lay. The body was buried at a depth of about an arm's length after about a month and was again laid on and covered by the Varti-varka foliage (*Eremophila longifolia*).

Also used for medicinal purposes. The bark of trunks was scraped off, reduced to ash and then mixed with emu oil. This preparation was then used for all manner of skin complaints with excellent results, according to several people in the group. This is still being used today.

I was also told by one of the men that the smoke from Varti-varka was used in the initiation ceremony of young boys. This aspect is in the past as the last fully initiated Adnyamathanha man is very elderly now.

They are making a great effort to record and write down as much of their language and folk lore as they can while there are still some elders who still have the information in their heads. Adnyamathanha is a difficult language to transcribe as many of the inflections of the language just don't translate easily into our English alphabet.

To continue with Aboriginal uses of eremophilas, in the book *Traditional Bush Medicines, an Aboriginal Pharmacopoeia* which comes from the Aboriginal Communities of the Northern Territory, the following are noted.

Eremophila alternifolia. Branches and leaves are dried in the sun for a few days, the dried leaves broken up and wrapped in soft bark for storage. A small handful of dried leaves boiled in a billy of water for about 2 hours then strained and used as a remedy for coughs and colds, fever and general malaise. It can also be used as an inhalant for head colds. Interestingly it is one of the few plants considered worthy of storing.

Eremophila duttonii. Leaves boiled in water and used as a wash for sores, cuts and larger wounds. It is always used fresh and has weak local anaesthetic effect. Also mixed with sugar it is used for sore throats, taken internally.

Rosemary Pedler - Koolunga

ASGAP BIENNIAL CONFERENCE – 1995

The Conference will be held in Ballarat, Victoria from 23–29 September 1995.

The theme of the Conference is 'The Brilliance of Australian Plants'. The three days of lectures will revolve around 'In the Australian Garden', 'The Local Environment' and 'People Power/Your Society'. There is a comprehensive list of pre- and post-conference tours. No doubt you will receive information through your local ASGAP group in due course.

There is to be a Study Group Leaders' Workshop/Meeting. This will be held on the Saturday 23 September.

On the following Tuesday evening there is to be a Study Group Display and Traders' Night.

It is my intention to attend the workshop and to organise a display with help from whomsoever is able to help at the time – more details in the next issue. I am not sure of the arrangements or requirements for the Traders' Night, but as soon as I know more I will publish the details.

Colin Jennings

SMOKE TREATMENT

I have just received my latest issue of *Veld & Flora*, the publication of the Botanical Society, Kirstenbosch, Republic of South Africa. In this issue further details are given re the use of smoke treatment in the coaxing seed of many species to germinate.

Research has been carried out to the point where The Conservation Biology Research Unit is selling smoke impregnated papers. These papers have been impregnated with smoke of fynbos plants. The grower simply soaks one of the papers in water to extract the 'smoke' and treats the seeds in the extract solution.

Approximately 150 species from the fynbos have been screened for their response, and to date at least 80 have given very promising results. Of particular interest is the response given by ericas, Restionaceae, helichrysums, lobelias, grasses and sedges. Sale of the papers will raise funds for further research into this process.

Acknowledgement of the work being done at Kings Park in WA is also made in this article.

Colin Jennings

EREMOPHILA RACEMOSA

Most of us are familiar with the popular species *E. racemosa* syn. *E. bicolor*, with its interesting change of colour from the bud to the fully formed flower.

Bob Chinnock sent back a small amount of cutting material from Western Australia October last year.

I was fortunate to get about half a dozen pieces to strike, and several of these plants are now doing well under cultivation.

Of particular interest, however, is that this form has yellow buds developing into almost pure white flowers.

The flowers appear to be slightly smaller than the 'normal' form, but in all other respects the flower appears to be similar.

It is hoped that a small amount of cutting material will be available next spring.

Colin Jennings

FROM YOUR LETTERS

Meg Officer (via Mullewa, Western Australia)

In sending her list of species growing on the station property, Meg refers to two more species which she has found on the property in the past few months.

Meg offered seed from her plants and has now supplied the list. I have so far had only one request for such seed.

Plants included:

<i>E. clarkei</i>	<i>E. laanii</i>	<i>E. platycalyx</i>
<i>E. compacta</i>	<i>E. latrobei</i>	<i>E. pterocarpa</i>
<i>E. eriocalyx</i>	<i>E. longifolia</i>	<i>E. punicea</i>
<i>E. exilifolia</i>	<i>E. maculata</i> subsp. <i>brevifolia</i>	<i>E. serrulata</i>
<i>E. forestii</i>	<i>E. oldfieldii</i>	<i>E. "shonae"</i>
<i>E. fraseri</i> subsp. " <i>galeata</i> "	<i>E. oppositifolia</i>	<i>E. "spuria"</i>
<i>E. gilesii</i>	<i>E. pantonii</i>	<i>E. youngii</i>
<i>E. "glandulifera"</i>	<i>E. "physocalyx"</i>	<i>E. mackinlayi</i>
<i>E. glutinosa</i>		

Russell Wait (Natya, Victoria)

The following Eremophilas died as a result of the frosts this year. *E. "spuria"*, *E. hughesii*, *E. "citrina"*, *E. jucunda*, *E. maitlandii*, *E. "flaccida"*, and *E. "pachomai"*. The last two were struck cutting grafts.

A number had the flower buds burnt off, but the plants have survived. *E. psilocalyx*, *E. gibsonii*, *E. oppositifolia*, *E. rotundifolia*, *E. microtheca* and *E. alternifolia*.

Eremophila "crenulata" and *E. "setacea"* were cut back to ground level whilst some of the bushes of *E. "stenophylla"*, *E. bowmanii*, *E. miniata* and *E. freelingii* have been badly cut and other bushes not affected.

Four out of five grafts of *E. "acrida"* died and *E. cuneifolia* was cut back by frost in April so I took them to my mother's place in Swan Hill for the winter and they are now flowering.

The black honey-eater has taken up residence (at least six male and three females) here and their favourite is the green flowering *E. viscida*. I have not seen them in the pink flowered form, but the other honey-eaters are in it. Black honey-eaters only come here about every ten years.

Joy Jeffrey (Texas, Queensland)

A few weeks ago we spent a day or two in Clermont (Queensland) and I was delighted to see some beautiful eremophilas near the Information Centre at the edge of the town. They were in a bed that was raised very high, at least one metre, and covered with some type of chips as a cover. The soil would have been brought there,

but I could not see what it was; it surely did suit the plants though. They were very healthy specimens.

I don't know who would have been responsible for planting them, but it is one example of eremophilas being used in a public place and very effectively.

Lorraine Kernick (Prospect, South Australia)

We have an *E. bignoniiflora* at least ten years old and approximately 5 m high. It is planted on the south side of the house, so has tolerated a good deal of shade in its youth. It is now well above the height of the house walls and receives full sun. It has flowered for most of the year. It has also survived much pruning, some underwatering and at times overwatering when ferns and fuchsias were growing in its shade. It should make an excellent street tree, but I have not seen it used as such.

There is at least one excellent plant growing in the waterfront reserve in Murray Bridge, planted alongside the car park. It probably receives only natural water plus some from the watering of the lawns nearby. (Colin)

Cherree Densely (Killarney, Victoria)

In a letter a little while back Chereee asked for some help with her *E. gilesii*. Any suggestions?

The plant has galls on the stems, one or two per stem. The question asked is:

Are they caused by wasps or other insects? The leaves have dropped. The plant is a grafted one.

I do not know if it is of any help, but I have found that several of my eremophilas on *Myoporum* sp. stock have been attacked by borers in the stock. The same borer also plays havoc with my plants of *M. batae*, both from cutting and self-sown seedlings which have appeared from time to time. (Colin)

Leader: Colin Jennings, 4 Kinnaird Crescent, **HIGHBURY SA 5089**

Editor: Bob Chinnock (c/- Address below)

Typed and printed at the Botanic Gardens, North Terrace, **ADELAIDE SA 5000**

