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EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER No. 63

November 1997

Well, it's all over and on looking back on the events of the past couple of months I believe that our efforts were well received. The ASGAP Conference was a great success, and thanks to the efforts of several of our South Australian members we managed to put on a very comprehensive display of some eighty or more *Eremophila* species in a floor display at the SA Region's Spring Flower Show and Plant Sale. Especial thanks to Ronda and Peter Hall for providing a number of potted eremophilas, quite a few of which are rare in cultivation, together with a wide variety of cuts. Ray Isaacson, with his wife Betty, from Geranium in the Murray Mallee, spent much of Friday assisting in the presentation of the display. Thanks to all who assisted in any way, mainly in providing plants for display. Thanks also to my wife Myrnie who spent quite a deal of time assisting in the arrangement of the plants.

From the comments of the public, which unfortunately were few in number this year, the display was well received. The Adelaide Crows were playing the AFL finals in Melbourne, and one of our local FM radio stations arranged to have a spectacular, with large video screen, on the oval adjacent to our show venue. This essentially wiped out Saturday since there was little parking within miles of the venue. On Sunday we had to cope with the crowd associated with the returning victors, again on the said oval. Despite this I do believe that we managed to get the message across, many eremophilas were sold from the plant sales area.

The registrants to the ASGAP Conference visited the show on Sunday morning before the public arrived and again the comments, especially from the Study Group members, were very complimentary. It was great to see so many of you who, up until now, have simply been names on the membership list for so long.

Following the show and sale we went straight into the ASGAP Conference. The Eremophila Study Group, together with eight other Study Groups, staged displays in the main hall, where they could be viewed throughout the Conference. This proved to be quite successful. A Study Group & Trading night was held on the Tuesday of the Conference and many of the registrants spent some time viewing the displays - the programme of slides of eremophilas proved to be very popular.

The theme of the Conference was 'Hidden Treasures' and I was invited to present a paper on Eremophilas - a copy is enclosed. The paper was not exactly the same as the live presentation at the Conference, I had 100 slides of eremophilas to show, so the general text was reduced.

On the Saturday immediately following the Conference we held our Study Group's Seminar/Workshop at the Herbarium of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, thanks to the arrangements made by Bob Chinnock, and the cooperation of staff at the Gardens. More details of this meeting are given further on in the Newsletter.

On Sunday we rested.

Colin Jennings

EREMOPHILAS FOR THE GARDEN

Late in 1996 I was approached by Ivan Holliday to see if I would be prepared to write the text for a book on eremophilas which the SA Region of SGAP was prepared to finance. Ivan was to do the editorial work and together with Mick Freeborn, who was to prepare the material for printing, we would organise the preparation of the book. After some deliberation the book was increased in size and finally appeared with about 70 species fully illustrated, one per page, with appropriate text outlining the descriptive details of the species together with habitat and cultural needs.

The book was launched at the ASGAP Conference and already has proven to be a popular, much needed introductory book on eremophilas. Many were bought during the Conference, and at a cost of $8 to members it is exceptionally good value.

Members who wish to **purchase a copy or copies of the book** can do so by sending **$8 plus postage**, $1.50, to Colin Jennings, 4 Kinnaird Crescent, Highbury, SA 5089. Cheques and Money Orders should be made out to the Eremophila Study Group. Multiple copies are available, but postage would have to be charged at cost.

Although not a complete work, dealing with the entire list of eremophilas, it is a humble start to fill a niche.

Colin Jennings

SEMINAR/WORKSHOP

On Saturday, 4th November, 35 Study Group members met in the staff room of the Herbarium at the Adelaide Botanic Garden.

In the first session, Bob Chinnock spoke about the way in which he photographs eremophilas. He mentioned that too often plants in the wild, or in the garden, are moving in the wind and this makes photography difficult. Bob has an ingenious method to reduce this problem. He removes a piece of the plant, and with the help of some stiff wire and clothes peg is able to mount the piece at a level, away from the breeze, and by arranging the cut in the appropriate way can achieve different aspects of the flowers, and different angles. It is also possible to arrange two or more cuts to get a filled in effect.

Bob also pointed out the need to use a flash to control lighting, he uses an automatic flash light at the extent of its connecting lead, giving a slightly off-centre light to the subject. With most SLR cameras the shutter speed is fixed at one sixtieth of a second, so movement is a no-no, he uses a small tripod to support the camera. Bob stressed the need to get good depth of field, using f22 for his exposures. To further illustrate his theme a number of different exposures of the same plant were presented.

The second part of this talk, following morning tea, illustrated the earlier session; Bob showed us his slides of the 'new' eremophilas. These were very eagerly viewed: for many of us, this was the first time the 'names' really meant anything - it is so much different to see the slide than to read the descriptive text in a newsletter or book, and try to imagine what it really looks like.

A short session before lunch enabled us to view some of the collections in the Herbarium, Bob explaining the workings of the Herbarium and showing some of the historical material housed therein. Due to space limitations, the group split into two, the other group enjoying the sunshine, walking through the Mallee Section of the Garden.

After lunch, superbly prepared and presented by Myrnie Jennings and Shona Chinnock, Bob finished his slide presentation and we then had Peter Hall and Norma Boschen demonstrate the techniques they employ to graft eremophilas onto myoporum stock. This session was very well received, with many of the members indicating that they now feel more confident in going back home and giving it a go. Two other members, Dennis Cox and Ted Beasley, showed their methods. At the end of the session a huge collection of cut material was 'arranged' on the tables and members were invited to take what they felt they could comfortably deal with when they returned home Thanks to many members we had a very wide range of useful material, Ken Warnes bringing in a large collection to choose from.

This was a most successful day. The last seminar, in 1991, lasted two days. I have had one or two approaches from members from the Wimmera area of Victoria suggesting that we hold a weekend for the Study Group in this locality and they have indicated their willingness to help organise such an event. At the moment it would appear that the most likely time would be the **third weekend in October 1998:** keep this weekend in mind. More detailed information will be available when we prepare the next Newsletter in March/April next year.

Special thanks to Bob Chinnock for organising the venue for us and to Myrnie Jennings and Shona Chinnock for putting together such a wonderful spread - at $5 a head, and with everyone well fed, we had a surplus of just 59cents.

Colin Jennings

BORERS IN *MYOPORUM BATEAE*

In January last, I noticed that there was quite a bit of frass on the trunks of several plants of *Myoporum bateae*. Several years ago one of the plants snapped at the base due to borers and on careful examination of the roots I found them to be riddled with tunnels and housing a number of small white larvae. I did nothing at the time, but when I noticed the same thing again this year I decided to take the larvae into the SA museum for identification.

I lodged the live specimens on January 8th, and was duly given a receipt and reference number. I forgot about them for some time, and when I was preparing my talk on eremophilas for the conference, remembered that I had not had any feedback from the museum. When I rang to find out what had happened I was told that they had identified the moth and that if I would like to go in they would give me the details.

Imagine my surprise when I was presented, not only with the name of the pest, but also with two very good photographs. The moth is of the Cossinae group, and was identified as *Archaeoses polygrapha* (Low.). According to one reference, the name of which I cannot recall, this species of moth is known to bore into stems of *Myoporum*, but no further information is given. A related species is known from inland southern Queensland and northern New South Wales to northern South Australia and inland Western Australia, reaching the west coast at Carnarvon and the Murchison River. Larvae of the related species, *Ptilomacra senex* Walk., are known to bore into the grass trees, *Xanthorrhea*, whilst other species are said to attack some eucalypts and mangroves.

I would be interested to hear of any other such attacks by borers, and if possible to have the insect identified. The local museum could be of some assistance or perhaps an entomologist at some government establishment could be of assistance to you.

Colin Jennings

MEMBERSHIP LIST

In response to a number of requests we have made available the current list of financial members of the Eremophila Study Group. It had been our intention to send this out with the last Newsletter, however, time caught up with us and we decided to leave it until this issue.

NURSERIES

It is some time since we last printed a list of nurseries which have been brought to our attention and which have a supply of eremophilas, some with bigger stocks than others, some with a greater or lesser range of species. If you know of any more reliable suppliers of eremophilas please let Colin know and their names can be passed on in a future Newsletter.

Picton Plants, May Harding Drive, Broken Hill, NSW
Habitat, Shop 4, Roma Fair, 50 Wyndham St, Roma, Queensland
Nellie Nursery, Randall St, Mannum, SA
Langs' Native Plant Nursery, 564/11th St, Mildura West, Victoria
Pinery Nursery, Pinery, SA
Jan Glazebrook & Dennis Cox, 87 Daintree Drive, Loganview, Queensland
Carawatha Native Garden, Placid Estates Rd, Wellington East, (near Tailem Bend), SA
The Daisy Patch, 1 George Tce, Coonalpyn, SA
Mt Cassel Native Plants, Lot 9 Wildflower Drive, Pomonal, Victoria
Kalgoorlie Garden Centre, Box 485, Kalgoorlie, WA
Mary Squire, PO Box 32, Mukinbudin, WA
Wakiti Nursery, 5km east Shepparton on Midland Highway, Victoria
Kuranga Native Nursery, 393 Maroondah Highway, Ringwood, Victoria
Jan Hall Native Plants, 'Patanga', Murray Valley Highway, 7km west Yarrawonga, Victoria
John Rooke, Main St, Casterton, Victoria

I may have missed out on some; most have come from memory. If so please drop me a line and I will extend the list in the next issue.

Colin Jennings

FROM YOUR LETTERS

Peter Lang - Mildura, Victoria

"Over the past four to five years there has been a developing interest in people wishing to grow cut flowers. Over the past ten to twelve years I've been involved in the cut flowers/foliage industry in the Sunraysia/Mallee area, propagating various plants for people. To this stage it has been Geraldton Wax, banksias, dryandras, eucalyptus and acacia foliage.

Of late a few people have said 'What about *Eremophila* species as cut flowers?' I'm afraid I've often been a bit stumped to give them accurate information. I know that when eremophilas are placed in vases or tubes of water for a flower display for a few days, many species last quite well, but as far as which species can take the handling and processing, and will last as cut flowers I'm at a loss. Could you help or direct me in a certain direction? Perhaps it could be **thrown open to the whole Study Group** at some stage **for input** on past experiences.

I refer to your article on page 3 of Newsletter #60, December 1996, regarding an approach to the Study Group by Sunraysia Oasis Botanical Gardens. I am willing to act as a local contact and offer my time to go with you on any future visit to the Botanical Gardens. Through the local SGAP group and my vocation as a nurseryman, I've had a reasonable amount of contact with the people at the Botanical Gardens. The recently appointed foreman of the Gardens, Alan Hydes, has had a lot of experience and contact with Australian Plants. With the added expertise and knowledge of people like Russell Wait, I feel the opportunity to establish a wonderful public collection of eremophilas is too good to pass up.

I too agree with your concerns about costs, maintenance, provision of plants etc, and this would need to be sorted out from the onset. I still think that a collection of eremophilas (other than Kenny Park) sited basically in the corner of the three states NSW, Victoria and SA, is too good to pass up. How we go about it is of course the difficult part!"

(I have written to Peter, concerning both matters raised, and have indicated that we should make further contact with the Botanical Gardens and try to arrange a visit at some suitable time. I have not had much contact with them since the initial invitation to express interest. I understand that there has been some change in management structure and that the original contact person is no longer involved. Colin)

Alice Aisthorpe - Roma, Queensland

"Since I last wrote I have acquired many more eremophilas.. in fact, 3 gardens full and overflow of hills, banks and fill-ups. Not finished yet, but I thought everthing was growing well enough and looking great - and flowering, to be confident to talk about my planting methods.

I usually select an area that I've been taming with the mower. Proceeding to the chook house (we have 1800), I get trailer loads of manure which I haul off and shovel into the shape I decide on. This is serendipity, as I don't plan or lay-out on paper, just work at it. If I've been able to get trailer loads of sheep manure (we have a sheep stud too), I can plant straight into this, but with chook manure I use two shovels full of soil from my vegie patch, then plant and water in the eremophila and then stand back! The chook manure is applied 20 to 25cm deep, this successfully kills the couch grass, buffel grass and weeds without any further effort from me. I'm over 50 so digging is ignored unless there is no alternative. The manure has worms working in it within 3 to 4 weeks, they do the digging.

I have heavy black and red clay soil called 'self-mulching soil', it grows wonderful wheat etc. and has a pH of 9.5, so my manure brings it down to 7. If by chance I want to raise a bed I

just pile the manure higher and leave it for three months. For mulch I have been getting cypress pine wood chips, available at $20 per trailer load from the local timber mills. These are better than straw and long lasting; the cypress pine is impervious to white ants too, which can be a nuisance in any other mulch.

I always try to get around the new plants to keep pinching them out. I'm very much into pruning and my husband says if I stop (pruning) he'll leave! Around these properties the local *Eremophila mitchellii* and *E. longifolia* are scorned and pulled out, as farmers believe they make the soil 'poor', so to grow lots of eremophilas of different sorts people *do* look sideways at me!

The eremophilas planted in November last year are now knee-high or more and with no more water than the initial planting water. The plants planted last April have not been watered after setting them in. I don't plan to water them again. The eremophilas don't need extra water, but do like it if I have any to spare. In fact I've some that are real "gobblers" of water, an *E. laanii* is affecting some grevilleas, it drinks up their water, I think.

I wonder if down the track I will have to do the manure process again as I plant my darlings fairly close to each other and if the farmers' theory of turning the soil 'poor' is right, will I need to keep feeding them (the plants, not the farmers!).

The garden is now to the limits of my ability to get around everything and keep up pruning, weeding etc. etc., so I must try to stay within its perimeters. I really don't think that I have planted my last eremophila yet..... after all I bought 5 yesterday.

We are in the Open Garden Scheme this year, but if anyone is passing this way on dates other than those for the scheme, please drop in.

We get 40°C heat in summer for weeks on end and it goes down to -5°C in winter. I don't cover my plants and have not lost any to frost or heat.

I have enclosed my 'tame' nurseryman's card. He recently had an Eremophila Weekend when he had 90 varieties available. Of course he did need some prompting and prodding, but I'm sure he now has the right idea and will keep getting eremophilas!!"

Brother Howard - Tabulam, New South Wales

"A very wet February/March took a big toll or our eremophilas. Only forms of *E. glabra, E. maculata, E. ternifolia* and *E. calorhabdos* survived the drenching. I also lost most of my 'western' grevilleas - rootrot (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*) was the cause.

On a recent trip to Moree I came across a very interesting population of *E. maculata,* about 65-70km west of Moree, on the Boomi Road. What attracted me was the diversity of flower colour - shades of pink, bright yellow and pale apricot, and almost everything in between. Very few of the cuttings I collected look like striking, so a return visit may be called for. Also on the same trip I came across *E. maculata* with deep crimson flowers, this was on the Garah to Boomi Road, just near the 'Banyandah' Homestead turnoff.

I think I will have to resign myself to a limited variety of eremophilas in our garden, or to try growing them on a suitable myoporum rootstock. *Myoporum parvifolium* seems to thrive here, so I may try some of the myoporums which grow on the Darling Downs and on the western slopes of the New England tableland. Is there anyone in northern NSW or SE Queensland who can help with this?"

(With regard to the use of *Myoporum parvifolium* as a rootstock, I am sure that Ted Beasley in the ACT has been using it and has had excellent results. In fact he referred to its use at our Seminar in Adelaide just recently. Colin)

INTERNET

I referred to the page on the Internet in the last Newsletter. Recently I received a letter from Brian Walters in New South Wales. He is responsible for compiling the ASGAP page on the Internet. In the past he has prepared pages dealing with a number of genera of Australian native plants, and is in the next few months going to present eremophilas. He has sent to me his intended material, which will include culture notes, descriptions with photographs, together with general information about eremophilas, asking for any comments to be made. I have passed this on to Bob Chinnock for his perusal and will return the material in the near future.

Colin Jennings

WHAT'S IN A NAME

behriana	after Dr Hermann Behr, early SA botanical collector
bowmanii	after Edward Bowman, the original collector
christophori	after Christopher Giles, 19th Century explorer
clarkei	after William Clark, a patron of botanical collecting
delisseri	after William Delisseri, 19th Century surveyor
dempsteri	after Andrew Dempster, an early WA settler
drummondii	after James Drummond, first Governor of WA
duttonii	after Francis Dutton, 19th Century Governor of SA
forrestii	after Sir John Forrest, former explorer and politician in WA
freelingii	after Sir Arthur Freeling, 19th Century SA Surveyor-General
georgei	after William George, 19th Century botanical collector
gilesii	after Ernest Giles, 19th Century explorer
hillii	after Ron Hill, SA collector and horticulturist
laanii	after van der Laan, 19th Century Dutch doctor
latrobei	after Charles La Trobe, 19th Century Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria
mackinlayi	after Sir Richard McDonnell, 19th Century Governor of SA
macdonnellii	after John McKinlay, 19th Century explorer
maitlandii	after Maitland Brown, 19th Century explorer and plant collector
oldfieldii	after Augustus Oldfield, 19th Century English botanist
pantonii	after Joseph Panton, WA public servant and plant collector
phillipsii	after George Phillips, 19th Century WA public servant
sargentii	after Oswald Sargent, WA pharmacist and plant collector
sturtii	after Charles Sturt, 19th Century explorer and botanist
weldii	after Sir Frederick Weld, Governor of WA and Tasmania
youngii	after Jess Young, member of Giles expedition

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EREMOPHILAS

The family Myoporaceae is found to be concentrated in Australia in the semi-arid and arid regions, being found in all mainland states and the Northern Territory. The largest number of species is located in Western Australia; the greatest density being in the Eremaean Botanical Province, centred on the Willuna area. It is represented by two genera, *Eremophila* R. Br. and *Myoporum* Sol. ex Forster f..

Eremophilas have been used in Aboriginal tribal life in both cultural and medicinal roles. Plant material has been used in ceremonial rites, extracts and decoctions of plant parts have been used as liniments, medicines and antiseptics. The resinous exudants from some species, being used as sealants and adhesives. (Richmond 1993).

Currently 214 species of *Eremophila* are recognised, some 70 or so are to be published in the near future, in addition, approximately 50 subspecies will be validated. (Chinnock *pers. comm.* 1997).

Approximately 75% of eremophilas are insect pollinated (entomophilous), with the remainder being bird pollinated (ornithophilous).

Eremophila species are locally dominant in many areas, often growing in impoverished sites; in general they are tolerant of harsh conditions, including drought, fire, frost, flooding and grazing - the name Poverty Bush being aptly applied. In addition to this name, they may also be referred to as Emu Bush, Fuchsia Bush, Tar or Turpentine Bush. Common names applied to particular species are many and varied, whilst Aboriginal people have names for plants which they use.

In 1968, Margaret Lee and Ron Schahinger, SGAP (SA Region), started a group of enthusiasts under the banner Project Eremophila. In 1972, the Eremophila Study Group was formed and since that time its members have been instrumental in pioneering the introduction of many species into cultivation. In their September, 1973 Newsletter, #3, they list 63 species in cultivation, many of which were very new, and described in the Newsletter as very small; too small for cuttings to be taken for members.

Ray Isaacson, Geranium, South Australia, in the early 1980's, showed that grafting eremophilas onto *Myoporum* rootstock was possible and from his humble start this process has become the norm for establishing newly introduced species and for extending the range of species which can be grown in the more temperate areas.

Eremophilas are diverse in their habit, ranging from prostrate groundcovers, like *E. serpens* and *E. biserrata* to shrubs, both small and large, e.g. *E. glabra, E. maculata, E. nivea* etc. to large bushes including *E. psilocalyx, E. gibsonii,* and *E. duttonii.* There are several tree species, including *E. mitchellii, E. longifolia* and *E. bignoniiflora.* Flowers range in colour across the spectrum, as well as white.

A survey carried out in 1995/6 by the Eremophila Study Group revealed that there are now 165 species being grown by members of the Group, some tenuously so, but others growing extremely well and now fully established as plants with horticultural merit. It is very pleasing to note that many of the species gazetted as Rare and Endangered, including *E. nivea, E. racemosa,* and *E. denticulata* are now well known as garden plants.

My observations in nurseries in South Australia and Victoria indicate that there are about 20 or so species available through general nurseries, with about 80 available through those which specialise as native nurseries. There are now many colour forms marketed and it is noted that the 'colour' labels attached to so many plants these days often have concocted names which are not registered with the Australian Cultivar Registration Authority. This will, I fear, lead to much confusion in the future.

The cultivation of eremophilas is best suited to the drier areas of Australia, however, they have in the main, proven to be adaptable to a range of soil types provided that drainage is very good and that light conditions are adequate; most require a full sun site in the more temperate climates. More eremophilas have been killed through overwatering than through any other cause. Some species have proven to be short lived, but these often propagate readily from cuttings, others , once established have proven to be very reliable and long lived. It is possible to establish plants on their own roots as well as those grafted onto *Myoporum* stock in garden situations, the grafted plants appearing to be the better option in the wetter locations. Pot plant culture is also suited to many of the species of smaller growth habit.

Whilst it is dangerous to generalise, most eremophilas are relatively pest free, aphids and mealy bug are the most commonly met. These can be controlled by predators or by applying 'soft' insecticides. Borers, particularly the larvae of the Cossinae family, do attack roots and stems of some *Myoporum* species and this may prove to be a problem for plants grown on *Myoporum* rootstock. (In June 1997, moths emerging from larvae and pupae, which I collected in *Myoporum bateae* roots and stems in my home garden were identified at the

South Australian Museum as *Archaeoses polygrapha* (Low.). These larvae had been found before in *Myoporum insulare* and *Myoporum montanum*, commonly used as the rootstock for grafting eremophilas, but not identified positively.)

As a genus, *Eremophila* has the potential for use in the revegetation of minesites etc. (Richmond 1993). In his thesis Dr Guy Richmond dealt largely with dormancy and germination of seed and the ecology of *Eremophila* in Western Australia. His studies centred on Mt Weld Station and Mt Keith Station in the Willuna area. He researched the potential for a range of local species to be used in this way. One statement in his conclusion, (P 218) reads:

"The future potential of this genus is significant, since it offers a wide range of uses in rangeland and minesite rehabilitation programs, horticulture, medicinal and phytochemical industries."

Eremophilas have long been recognised as fodder plants in the pastoral areas of Australia; *E. maculata, E. latrobei, E. forrestii, E. longifolia, E. oldfieldii,* and *E. scoparia* are grazed, particularly as seedlings or when in the flush of new growth. (Richmond 1993).

In recent times research has been carried out on the medicinal properties of eremophilas. One such study, (Pennachio *et al.*), discusses the research into the cardioactive effects of extracts from *E. alternifolia*. In their introduction, reference is made to the Aborigines' use of decoctions for headaches, fevers, inducing sleep and general well-being. Another paper (Richmond & Ghisalberti 1994) deals with the Medicinal, Horticultural and Phytochemical uses of *Eremophila.* This is a most comprehensive look at the future potential of a very diverse genus of native Australian plants.

The propagation of eremophilas may be achieved from seed, from cuttings, by grafting and by tissue culture which is still in its infancy.

There is much anecdotal material about growing ermophilas from seed, the legendary information about the seeds having to pass through the gut of an emu, is, as far as I am aware, without proof. Members of the Eremophila Study Group have from time to time reported on their successes and failures in the Study Group's Newsletters, but there is no consistency of procedure or results. Reference to the work of Dr Guy Richmond in this area is cited above. In The Czech Republic, Paul Rezl, has done some successful work on seeds extracted from fruits, raising seedlings of such species as *E. compacta, E. eriocalyx,* and *E. platycalyx.* (ESG Newsletter #59).

Cuttings may be taken at most times of the year, but spring through summer are best, especially when new growths have started to mature. In autumn into winter, bottom heat is generally required. Not all species respond at the sime time of the year and so there is some trial and error required to establish the optimum time. Some strike easily without hormone treatment, others respond best with hormones. Many growers have trialled different hormones and concentrations, but there is little detail reported - this area seems to be something of a "Holy Grail" to some.

Grafting has been a very valuable process. Much material collected in the field does not strike readily; grafting onto *Myoporum* stock has been the only way in which many 'new' species have been able to be introduced into cultivation. This has also been employed to produce plants for more temperate conditons. It is hoped that this method will allow more species and varieties to be introduced into cultivation for eremophiles to enjoy.

As a rule eremophilas will grow on relatively poor soils, but they do respond to fertilisers, provided they are not applied too heavily and too often.

The future of this genus as a garden plant is very sound. Selected forms of many species are now becoming available, and there are many more to come. It is to be hoped that we are able to preserve the threatened wild populations and, through ethical collecting, have these species introduced into the collections of people who care for the genus, then ultimately into general horticulture.

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