

Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants
EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER No. 74

August 2001

Thankyou to all who so promptly sent in their subscriptions, receipts not already sent out are enclosed with this issue. I am pleased to report that there have been very few who have failed to renew their subscription, which is very encouraging.

As is often the case, with the renewals come letters. I am grateful to those who have expressed their thanks for the effort put into the Newsletters. It is encouraging to be thanked, although one does not volunteer in order to gain praise or thanks. If it were not for the contributions which I receive from the more active members my lot would be impossible - to all contributors over the past year - **THANKYOU.**

Several suggestions have been made about articles for future Newsletters and I list them here for your consideration and hopefully, action. Your own personal experiences would be most welcome.

Gerald Keurschner, from Orroroo in the mid-north of SA suggests that along with descriptions of the more recently introduced plants, information about their climatic requirements, soil types, and where they come from etc. could be added. This would help members to know a bit more about the plants they are growing.

He also asks if members could write about their gardens or plantations, not only talking about the plants that they are growing, but also giving some information about the conditions under which they are growing - this would also help members to appreciate the requirements of the various species and their suitability for different locations. (I have extracted from Gerald's letter - the remainder appears later in this Newsletter. Ed.)

Dr Michael Alp, Adelaide, SA also asks if someone could write an article about the pruning of eremophilas - more of the species are being grown in home garden settings where they need to be kept in check.

If anyone feels that they can contribute to any of these three suggestions, please put 'pen to paper' and I will include your comments in the November issue.

CANBERRA CONFERENCE

Thankyou to those who have indicated that they will be able to assist me in the presentation of the Study Group display. If anyone is able to help and has not let me know, would you please contact me by the middle of September. I would like to know what I need to take with me from home to set this up.

I have received a letter from the co-ordinator of the Study Group activities for the Conference and note that only four Study Group Leaders have indicated that they are able to present a paper and/or a display. This seems a bit of a pity, since the work of the Study Groups is, I feel, a significant contribution to the understanding of Australian Plants. Unfortunately it is not possible for every Leader to attend due to other commitments, but I am sure that a few delegated members of Groups could be appointed.

EXPORTING EREMOPHILAS

I received a clipping from *The Transcontinental*, the local newspaper for Port Augusta in South Australia; sent to me by Geoff Winning, husband of Denise, who is one of our Study Group members and who operates a nursery at Stirling North, a short distance from Port Augusta.

The article by Cara Jenkin reads as follows.

A local small business will soon be exporting to the United States through exposure created by their Website. Goodwinii Eremophila Nursery at Stirling North, run by Denise Winning, is about to send off their first load of eremophilas to a nursery in California that contacted them through their Website in October last year.

Mrs Winning said that it's been a difficult process to obtain approval from the authorities to export her plants. "We've had a lot of problems with gaining approval from Environment Australia, such as how we're not allowed to export soil, but we've solved that problem by developing a suitable transporting mix made from other ingredients," she said. "It's been a long and slow process but we're not far off now."

Mrs Winning can now apply for permits to export her plants overseas after completing all the requirements set by the Federal Department of Environment and Heritage to become an accredited artificial propagator.

Her nursery was first established in 1998 with help from her husband Geoff and now holds up to 250 different varieties of eremophilas. They did not initially plan on developing a Website as part of their business, but gave it a second thought when they decided to buy a digital camera to make their own plant tags showcasing the different flower colours.

The Website has enabled her to expand the business beyond local buyers to as far away as the United States and she has even received inquiries from Poland.

"We're hoping to establish a long term relationship with the nursery in California and the person we've been talking to is even coming over here in June to witness the different varieties for herself," Mrs Winning said.

Improvements to the Website <http://www.goodwinii.com.au> are currently underway and the Winnings hope it will bring in a lot more business once it has been completed.

FROM YOUR LETTERS

BROTHER HOWARD - Tabulam, NSW

I had a disastrous year with eremophilas last year. I lost virtually all of them during the severe drought we had - **no rain** between May and November. I rescued a few by digging them up and planting them in large pots. All of the survivors are forms of *E. glabra* and *E. maculata*. They were not the only losses; banksias, grevilleas, prostantheras, persoonias and hakeas all gave up the battle.

In our mad climate we had all of the rain in February and March of this year, including two big floods in five weeks. I am a bit reluctant to plant out the eremophilas, as the wallabies (Brush-tailed Rock Wallabies) love to graze them, and seem to hang around waiting for the new leaves to appear. At present the eremophilas live in the vegetable garden, which is fenced like Fort Knox to keep the blighters out.

MICHAEL ALP - Adelaide, SA

One of my problems is that some of the eremophilas become quite 'leggy'. This is particularly so with *E. nivea* and the Murchison River form of *E. glabra*. I have a problem as to how much they can be pruned. Pruning of these two seems to kill them, whereas *E. maculata* seems to thrive on it.

Perhaps someone with a lot of knowledge about pruning of eremophilas could write an article, especially as people are putting these plants into garden settings more and more where they need to be kept in check.

I am sorry that I cannot provide that information for the next Newsletter, but I am sure that there are many more knowledgeable people than myself who would produce an interesting article in that regard.

BEVERLEY RICE - Truro, SA

.... glad I am not the only one, I was starting to think that "I had lost the plot" in the hot weather.

Our dam is dry so the lawns are quickly turning to brittle straw and everything looks very, very thirsty.

I have lost a five year old, well-established *E. dempsteri*. Fortunately I have other smaller ones that seem not to have been affected by the long, dry spell. I had planned to take cuttings just after Christmas, but with temperatures over 40°C, I decided to wait and have 'cold frame' in autumn.

My *E. 'lucida'* looks very sad, the bees seem to take the moisture from the tips; it looks rather forlorn, but it may well recover when the rains come. *Eremophila 'splendens'* no longer looks "splendens", but it seems to strike fairly readily. I potted on all of the little runts from last autumn which were too weak to plant out in 2000. They have come along in 'leaps and bounds' in 125mm pots in the shade of a pepper tree - so I should have some strong plants to plant out as soon as it is wet again. I should learn to not plant out after July in this part of the world.

News of the Year - I actually got two seedlings of *E. maculata* - collected on the Morgan trip last year. I had them in a container in a 'slush' for about three months. I thought it was about time to throw them away, then surprise, surprise, shoots on three of them. One I managed to handle too roughly, but two fruits were planted out and it seems as if one has two seeds which have germinated and the other has one set of leaves. So far they appear healthy and are growing vigorously.

CHARLES FARRUGIA - Seven Hills, NSW

In January 2000 I bought a half-dead, very yellow, *E. bignoniiflora* x *E. polyclada*. This was planted in a mixture of mushroom compost and cow manure, over heavy clay soil. heavily mulched with lawn clippings and native mulch.

This plant has been through:

- February 2000 two weeks of very high temperatures (up to 37°C)
- March 2000 three days of torrential rain
- June/July 2000 a few nights of low temperatures (0-2°C). During these winter months it was in medium to heavy shade for about five hours each day.
- September 2000 No rain for four weeks (a dry spell in Sydney).
- December 2000 - February 2001 During these summer months it was very humid and wet.

The plant is now 2m high and has beautiful deep green, drooping foliage. It hasn't flowered yet. Since purchasing this plant I have planted in my garden the following eremophilas - all planted in the same way as described above.

E. debilis, (flowering), *E. decipiens* (did not flower), *E. racemosa* (flowered), *E. microtheca* (flowered), *E. nivea* (flowered), *E. "Summertime Blue"* (flowered), *E. macdonnellii* (Simpson Desert form - grafted, flowering), *E. maculata* "Red form" (flowered), *E. maculata* "Yellow form" (flowered), *E. glabra* (prostrate yellow form from Murchison River - flowered).

From all of this I have found that *E. decipiens* is the slowest growing one. I have had 100% success rate with cuttings except for *E. nivea*. which have been total failures.

When I pot my cuttings I leave the pot sitting in a weak solution of Thrive until the root system emerges from the bottom.

The problem I have had so far is with *E. microtheca*, The two plants raised from cuttings which I planted out in full sun turned a brown colour, with one dying. The original plant which is in broken shade is quite healthy. What could be the cause of this problem?

In the recent Sydney summer of high humidity and rain, *E. racemosa* wasn't looking too healthy, but once the humidity went down and the soil dried out it recovered very well.

NORMA BÖSCHEN - Warracknabeal, Victoria

The eremophilas look good at present, as the frosts have only been light and we have had some rain. An *E. maculata* var. *brevifolia* cross (from Ray Isaacson) looks magnificent. If the weather had been wet and cold, this one would have some dead patches. It has been really quite mild here.

I have an interesting hybrid, collected between Meekathara and Sandstone (WA) - one parent is probably *E. pantonii*. I also collected from several plants of *E. platythamnos*, there were lots of them on the sandhills that had been burnt.

A mauve flowered *E. paisleyi* from the Great Victoria Desert began flowering in early May and still has lots of flowers and buds. My other plants of this one have very pale mauve flowers. The yellow flowered *E. duttonii*, also from the Great Victoria Desert, is looking good and seems to be a much stronger grower than the red flowered form which is growing alongside.

GERALD KUERSCHNER - Orroroo, SA

I have been a member of the Study Group since 1980 and look forward to each copy of the Newsletter.

I had lived on a farm with unlimited space and no water suitable for garden use so eremophilas were a good choice. Our annual rainfall was about 300mm and although eremophilas are desert plants they respond to additional water in dry years. They will survive drought conditions, but plants placed in these conditions lose leaves and produce few flowers. I would cart water to them in dry periods from bores on the farm. I had about fifty different species, some of which were not very ornamental, but on the whole a very worthwhile genus.

We were in a very frost prone area, with frosts severe enough to freeze pipes, but I had very few losses. Some plants resented very cold, wet spells, but always recovered when the warm spring days came.

I no longer live on the farm, but in a small township block so my space is limited and I concentrate on the smaller growing species.

..... Even when water is available we should be trying to grow what will flourish under natural conditions. In this district, with a rainfall of 300mm, we have mostly red-clay soils, which are alkaline. Frosts are heavy and we have hot, dry summers and a number of eremophilas grow naturally.

The natural ones are:

- E. alternifolia* 2-3m high. Forms have deep red, pink, lilac and white flowers.
- E. glabra* 2m high. Orange and deep red flowered forms found.
- E. serrulata* 1-2m high. Green flowers.
- E. longifolia* 2-3m high. Dull red flowers.
- E. scoparia* 1-2m high. Blue flowers.
- E. oppositifolia* 2-3m high. Pale cream, pink to light purple flowers.

The publication 'Eremophilas for the Garden' was an outstanding book and at that price a real bargain. I am looking forward to more of this type of publication on eremophilas and other native plants, as most of the books at present are so expensive and seem to be repeating what has already been published.

BRIAN FREEMAN - Victor Harbor, SA

When I knew in August 2000 that we were moving from Koolunga (mid-north of SA) to Lower Inman Valley (Fleuieu Peninsula), I potted a lot of my eremophilas, after a wet spell, that I had growing in our garden. I kept them in the pots until we shifted onto our new property in March 2001. I was pleasantly surprised at how many of them survived the transplanting and the summer in the pots. Will they survive down here??? (Will be good to hear of the outcome in about twelve months time. Ed.)

RUSSELL WAIT - Natya, Victoria

We have had a week of heavy frost but I have only *E. warnesii* with split bark so far. There are quite a lot of the eremophilas flowering if they got water in the autumn.

Will have to wait for a while to have the plants identified which I collected last year in WA; but when I have the details I will be able to write about them. Two new ones which I found and have growing in pots in the poly-house are doing well and flowering, they are *E. 'occidens'* and *E. 'prolata'*.

I have had another go at growing eremophilas from seed and *E. nivea* was a great success. I got good results from both methods used: one was smoking the seed for one and a half hours, the other was to soak the seeds in 'smoke water' for the same time. I managed to get over 200 seedlings up!

I have a compact form of *E. nivea* that I raised from seed in 1999 and it looks as if it might have potential as a garden plant. Another seedling, of *E. drummondii*, also looks as if it might have a future for the garden. I hope to get the papers for the registration of these in soon.

LAURIE GILMORE - Corio, Victoria

I have about 30 *Eremophila* species, but a lot of them are about 10-20 years old. They are all on their own roots, any grafts have long passed away, usually because the stock has taken over before I have trimmed it back. I have had very few losses, mainly prostrates e.g. *E. biserrata*, *E. chamaephila*, *E. serpens* and *E. 'subteretifolia'*, as well as *E. inflata*, and this is usually because they become smothered by other species.

Some of the oldest are:-

- 1) a form of *E. decipiens* with very narrow leaves. It is 50cm high and 3m wide and 25 years old.
- 2) *Eremophila polyclada* is now 3m high and very 'scruffy', with many new shoots coming from the main trunk. I may get courageous and try coppicing it. This plant is 20 plus years old.
- 3) *Eremophila laanii*, the pink form, is 18 years old and about 2m high. It has never looked happy, with very few leaves on the stem extremities, and with only a few flowers.
- 4) *Eremophila eriocalyx* is now about 1.5m high. This white flowered form is about 15 years old and to my knowledge is the best eremophila for floral work, the flowers display themselves well and they also have a very long vase life.
- 5) *Eremophila purpurascens* is about 2m high by 1m wide. This 15 year old plant flowers for 9 months of the year and is a very neat, robust and attractive shrub.
- 6) A form of *E. glabra* 'Carmine' is 12 years old, very vigorous and about 1.5m high by 3m wide (if let go!) It thrives on very hard pruning & is adored by the New Holland Honey-eaters.

A few facts and observations may prove useful:

I am on a block which is 60m x 30m. The soil is very mobile, basalt clay. The block has been raised about 30cm with whatever was available, mulch is mostly prunings and gum leaves etc.

Unlike the Myrtaceae, which I find propagate best from semi-hard side shoots, eremophilas seem to strike (for me) from new growth with the tip pinched out. Also the older the plant the more difficult it seems to achieve a high strike rate.

MRS LEON HOPWOOD - Boree Creek, NSW

We have a small area of natural grey-box woodland at Boree Creek (about 85 hectares), which is now called the Allan Carrol Flora & Fauna Reserve because Allan had it declared a Flora & Fauna Reserve about 30 years ago. It could have been fenced then, only the community would have had to buy the fencing material. We now have the money from Greening Australia.

There are kangaroos, wallabies, echidna, lizards, snakes, over fifty bird species, fungi, truffles, mosses, ferns, sedges, trees and shrubs, ground covers, orchids, herbs, lilies, grasses and reeds. Some of the area was a rubbish tip, but it is not now. The tip area is now regenerating. It is one of the largest areas of *Hakea tephrosperma* still left in the area. I am still finding new plants.

The Buckingham State Forest is about 15-20km to the west, with a good corridor. The Galore Hill Nature reserve is 15-20km to the east and a reasonable corridor. The Boree Creek is on the eastern side about 1km away. The creek only flows occasionally.

There are a lot of *Eremophila debilis* plants. I took some cuttings and put them in a mini-greenhouse, leaving them inside for about a week. We went away for a holiday one May and I put them in the car-port out of the sun, with one of the butterfly vents slightly open. When we arrived home in September, six of them had struck, no hormones were used. I planted them out and all but one are still growing. The only suggestion as to why the one dies is that when we arrived home from a holiday about two years later on the plant was covered by a large cape-weed. The foxes seem to like the seeds, they apparently go straight through them as we found them undigested in the droppings.

Eremophila longifolia is also to be found in at least two patches. There are red and pink flowering forms in the area.

I have purchased three eremophilas. One is *E. glabra*, green foliage with red flowers and grows well as a ground cover, extending over a wide area.

Eremophila microtheca has pink/mauve flowers with grey stems and very small green leaves. It has a greyish appearance and is doing very well.

Eremophila maculata is not growing well. Two large trees in a neighbour's yard shade the plant and reduce the light it can receive. The plants are growing in a black, alluvial clay soil over a sticky red clay which cracks when dry. We have put about 75mm of sand on top, but the large trees make it very dry. I have put gypsum and osmocote (9 months - for native plants) into the holes when I plant the eremophilas out. Unfortunately the plant is rather spindly and did not flower last year very much. I am wondering what I can do to improve it. Can I move it, it is about two years old?

(Any suggestions about moving eremophilas that are established and in need of a new 'home'? Ed.)

ON GRAFTING

Ray Isaacson has had enormous success with his grafting, using *Myoporum acuminatum* and *M. montanum* as the stock plants. He has persisted and now feels that he has made a significant breakthrough, despite having said on a number of occasions that 'he was not going to do any more.'

Ray has been an advocate of using very soft tissue as the scion material, grafting this onto young, actively growing stock. He has tried various techniques over the years, ranging from the use of *E. maculata* as the stock, to the use of the prostrate growing *M. parvifolium*, as well as using much older stock and larger, more mature cuttings from which to take the scion material.

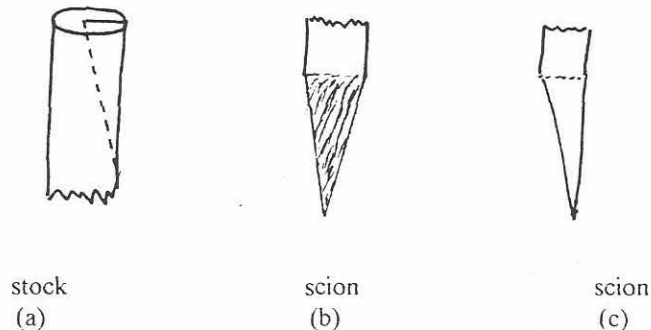
The wedge graft has been the most popular for use with eremophilas, with the stock being cut completely through to the depth required for the wedge-shaped scion to be inserted to its full depth. The problem with this has been that often the scion and stock material do not match up and the 'marrying' of cambium tissue has been rather 'hit and miss'. This has been overcome to some extent by ensuring that at least one of the prepared edges matches up with the edge of the stock.

Binding the scion to the stock to ensure a good union has been achieved by the use of a film used in laboratories to seal petri dishes etc. This film 'breathes' and also stretches, allowing for expansion of the tissue as union occurs and tissue growth takes place. This has been found more satisfactory than using the grafting tape used in the horticulture industry for tying grafts on trees etc.

Ray has now developed a modification of the wedge-graft technique.

He still uses very young scion material and young, fresh growth on the rooted stock plants. The major differences are:

1. The stock is cut off just below the second pair of leaves above ground level. This gives a good length of stem to work with and allows sufficient leaves to ensure photosynthesis is continuing. It also ensures that there is less water loss through transpiration.
2. The scion is prepared by making a wedge shape, but one of the sides is cut away to leave only one surface with its outer surface still intact. The wedge is thus halved.
3. The incision into the stock is only made part-way into the stem and vertically as shown below.
4. It is important to only cut as deeply into the stock as is necessary to accommodate the prepared scion.
5. The scion is then placed into the prepared slot and positioned so that the outer surfaces of the scion and stock are aligned.
6. Parafilm or Nescofilm is then wrapped around the scion and stock to ensure that the graft is fully protected both above and below the union.
7. A small zip-lock plastic bag is then placed over the graft and the plant placed under protection until the union has been made. This can take as little as ten days: different species seem to vary.



**shave scion to form a wedge, then turn through 90°
and shave to suit incision made in the stock**

The best time to carry this out is in January/February. Ray says that any earlier or later can be successful, however, he has achieved excellent, in fact 100% results with some species, by doing them at this time. Growth is active in both the stock and the eremophilas being grafted.

Grafting has been found to be most successful in establishing newly discovered or hard to strike species. Without the work in this field it would have been almost impossible to have some of the very desirable species in cultivation which we now see. It is thanks to Ray and others who have persevered with this technique that we can now see such species as *E. mirabilis*, *E. 'enata'*, *E. spectabilis* and *E. 'lucida'* in our collections. Whilst some of these could have been introduced via cuttings it would have taken a lot longer and with fewer successes.

EREMOPHILAS FOR THE GARDEN

Colin still has stocks of the book *Eremophilas for the Garden*. This is a very popular book, referring to approximately 70 eremophilas which are proven garden plants. Cost to members is \$9.50 (including postage). Cheques to be made out to Eremophila Study Group please.

There are also plenty of copies of the edited booklet which carries the first 31 issues of our Newsletter. This costs \$8.75 posted. Copies of all past Newsletters in loose form are also available at a cost of 50 cents each, postage paid.

For all enquiries contact Colin Jennings

NORTH HAVEN NURSERY DISPLAY

Arrangements have been made with a local South Australian Nursery to display eremophilas at their sales location as a promotion for the Eremophila Study Group. It is intended to place a ground display of flowering plants in the protected and well lit shade-house and to sell grafted eremophilas raised by Ray Isaacson. Ray has offered to make a donation to the Study Group from the sales.

Anyone who is looking for that 'new' or hard-to-get species might find it amongst the stock which Ray has available. Since this is a commercial nursery it is not appropriate to have other nursery folk selling.

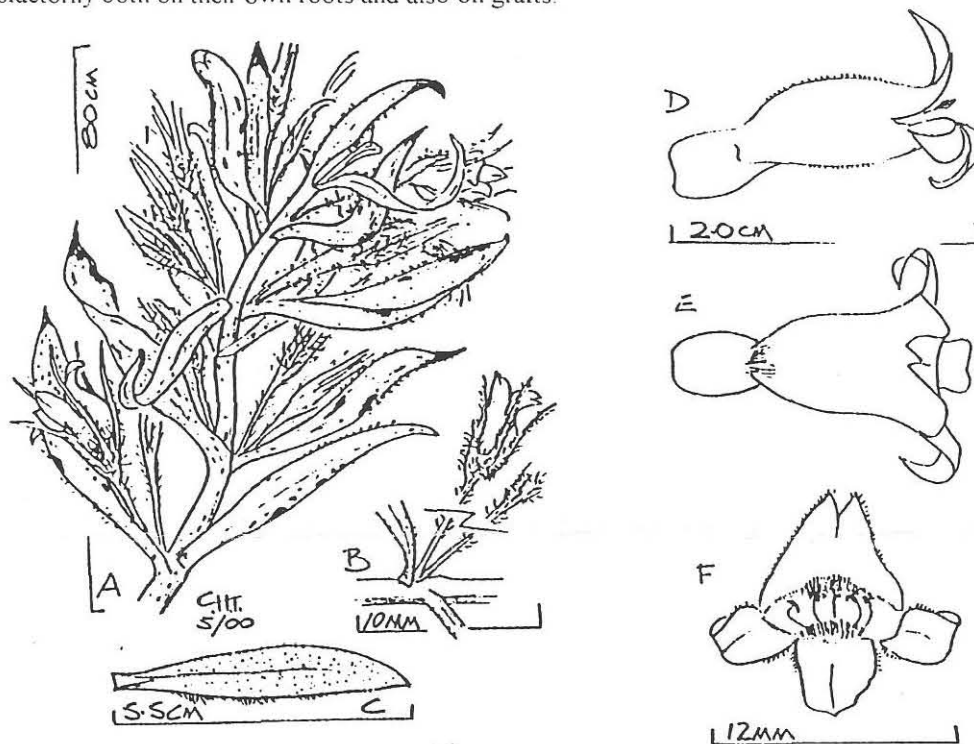
This will cost us nothing, other than a bit of time on the part of those who volunteer to be there. Anyone who thinks that they might be able to help, even for a short time, should contact Colin. If you happen to be in Adelaide on the weekend of November 10th/11th, please call in.

This is the first time we have done this sort of thing and hope that it will be successful. Other plant societies have taken up the generous offer of the proprietor of North Haven Nursery, Cresswell Rd, Largs North, (the second nursery in the street) and have benefited from their efforts.

Eremophila 'magnifica'

Once again I am pleased to have another of the drawings which Colin Theakstone has prepared for us.

Eremophila 'magnifica' has been available to members for some time now and has proven itself to be a good garden plant. It is not widely available, but cutting material has been sent to members over the past couple of years. The bush remains quite rounded and it very floriferous. Plants can be grown satisfactorily both on their own roots and also on grafts.



A, habit. B, branch showing leaf and peduncle. (from 0-3 flowers per axil) C, leaf. D, E & F, corolla. side, top and front views.

N.B. calyx is very slender and covered with long, grey/white hairs.

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