

Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants  
**EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER No. 83**

September 2004

The weather has finally broken in most of the country and in some places there has been a bit too much for the liking of our eremophilas. I have had reports from some, who are living in areas where the rains have either not yet struck or have been rather sparse – these members have reported that of all their plants, native and exotic, it is the eremophilas which have fared best – with many thriving and yielding great flower displays.

Thankyou to those who have sent their subscription to me for next year. Subs were due at the end of June and if you had a red sticker at the top of your May Newsletter and have not yet paid, then you will find a similar dot on this issue and unfortunately that will be the last unless I receive your payment.

I have been fortunate to obtain copies from the Baron von Mueller Iconography series, published around 1890. Gwen Elliot spoke to me in Launceston during the National Conference and asked if I, or the Study Group, might be interested in them. A list of the 39 pages, each measuring 25cm x 31.5cm and featuring an *Eremophila* species, was sent to me and I have recently purchased them with the view to offering them to members of the Study Group. If any member is interested in purchasing one or more of them please let me know. I can send the list to you with a suggested price: probably around \$10 each; plus postage. Some of the pages have a degree of 'foxing' but to some this adds to the interest of having such an item. The money raised by Gwen for the sale of these and others in the series went to the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne (Victoria).

There is some updated news regarding the publication of the Eremophila Book which Dr Bob Chinnock has been working on for many years. Progress is slow, but the manuscript has now been refereed and tenders have been sought for the printing etc. When last I spoke to Bob he said that he hoped that it would be out by the end of 2004, and he has sought a retail price to be in the 'reasonable range'. Like Bob, we wait and hope!

I have attempted to send emails to several members in recent times and have had them returned. If you have had a recent change to your email address and have previously given me an address, I would appreciate it if you could up-date the address so that I can once again communicate with you when the need arises.

#### FROM YOUR LETTERS

##### **Hans Griesser – Gumeracha, South Australia**

Not much to report from here on eremophila growing. By now I have about 70 eremophila plants in the garden and another 20 or so in pots waiting to be planted out. The last few weekends have been too wet for digging. Another 50 or so little pots with cuttings are sitting underneath plastic bottles and jars, probably waiting for warmer weather to arrive to get them to strike. But I set cuttings, whatever time of the year I can bet them. Last month I tried my hand, for the very first time, at grafting.

I was really pleased that all but one of my eremophilas in the garden survived the last summer with very little additional watering, even small plants planted out in spring. I am using a Darwinian approach, as I don't want to water any plant after its first summer in the ground. The soil and the good winter/spring rains here may enable me to do this. Growth and flowering have certainly been good, the nice rounded plants are most pleasing. Much better and faster growth than in my previous garden at the back of the Dandenongs!

(Hans recently had a visit from the ABC Gardening Australia team to prepare a programme on eremophilas. Sorry Hans – I dobbed you in since Bob Chinnock was away, I had nothing to show in my collection and they needed to do a programme at very short notice due to a cancellation of another. The other criterion was that they couldn't travel very far due to time constraints. Colin)

##### **Barbara Hannah – Armidale, New South Wales**

Quite a number of our eremophilas continued to thrive despite the appalling weather conditions to which they have been subjected.

**Thelma Roach – Naracoorte, South Australia**

We have sold our property in Lucindale and have moved to Naracoorte.

Of course this means my garden has been greatly reduced in size and the soil has changed from non-wetting sand to a well drained, stony limestone ridge, sloping north.

Fortunately it was a vacant block (with plenty of weeds, I might add!), however, after the house was finished we had the coarse reddish soil pushed around to form "hills and gullies" and planted eremophilas, Sturt Peas, grevilleas, hakeas etc. We have been astounded at the growth of the plants, especially the eremophilas. The list below is what I have, all doing very well and flowering.

To say I am pleased is an understatement. On the strength of this I purchased eremophilas at the Geranium sale – *E. 'lucida'*, *E. latrobei*, (red & apricot) *E. scaberula*, *E. 'splendens'*, *E. racemosa*, *E. 'subteritifolia'*, *E. oppositifolia*, *E. drummondii*, *E. hillii* and *E. 'shonae'*, plus a few prostrates. I have managed to find room for all of them.

Some which I planted in January and which have been flowering include: *E. 'rugosa'*, *E. cuneifolia*, *E. abietina*, *E. platycalyx* and *E. dalyana*.

**Betty Denton – Eltham North, Victoria**

I have just returned from Mildura after a very successful Victorian quarterly meeting of APS Victoria.

This was a very much and eremophila oriented event and I think the Eremophila Study Group could well receive a boost.

Russell Wait excelled himself with his after-dinner talk and slide presentation on the Saturday evening. Quite a few people who were not familiar with eremophilas were very impressed by their beauty and other attributes. As a result many visited Peter Lang's nursery on the Sunday morning.

The gardens we visited all provided good examples of eremophilas and they were well represented in a streetscape on the Boulevard. This was planted by the Mildura Rural City Council to demonstrate the use of native plants to reduce the need for watering.

Locally we have a reasonable (?) amount of rain which has been great for the garden. There have been many species in flower, including *E. rotundifolia*, *E. muelleriana*, *E. 'mirabilis'*, *E. spectabilis* and *E. compacta*. (I have only selected some of the thirty species which Betty mentioned in her letter, mainly the less commonly grown ones. Colin). Several plants in bud include *E. abietina*, *E. arachnoides* and *E. barbata*; *E. duttonii* has almost finished flowering. In all, quite a good show of flowers!

**Joke Meyer – Tamworth, New South Wales**

Despite the frost and dry conditions, most of my eremophilas are doing well. I lost only one, which was in a pot and probably did not have enough drainage. I have an *E. maculata* 'Aurea' that's huge, 2.5m x 3m, which flowers almost all of the time and my many different honey eaters love it.

**Sylvia Cleland – Campbell, Australian Capital Territory**

It is extremely dry here, driest autumn on record! I lost one eremophila in January, the others seem to be surviving; some well, some not so well.

**Cherree Densley – Killarney, Victoria**

The eremophilas in the garden have survived well despite me being overseas for 8 weeks. (The glabra forms in particular are bursting with colour.) I travelled through Spain, Sweden, Denmark and Germany. I did not see any eremophilas whilst overseas, despite visiting lots of Botanic Gardens. If they were there, they were well hidden.

I presented a paper at the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Botanic Gardens congress at Barcelona in April – a real eye-opening experience where some 500 participants from 50 countries shared experiences with plants from all parts of the globe. The 'Aussies' did well with quite a few speakers from Kings Park, Darwin Botanic Garden and

Melbourne.) I spoke on the "Value and Future of Private Collections" and based my paper on the work, in particular, of the Correa Study group with reference to other Study Groups within ASGAP.

Just back from the APS Victoria Quarterly Weekend at Mildura. Peter and Marion Lang had lots of lovely eremophilas for sale and Russ Wait gave an enthralling insight into his travels, collecting and cultivation of eremophilas at the Saturday evening dinner. His slides showed much of the difficult and challenging countryside where eremophilas are to be found. It was terrific weekend with some 160 present, with not only Victorian members but APS members from SA, NSW & Tasmania.

#### **Anne Langmaid – Keilor, Victoria**

I was very thankful for the listing of hybrids in the last Newsletter. At our last group meeting I was able to take in a piece of my *E. nivea* and my new *E. 'Eyre Princess'*. (I don't have *E. drummondii*.) APS people like to see parentage of plants, particularly when the similarities are there to be seen.

I borrowed the file of old Eremophila Study Group Newsletters from our library at Keilor Plains Group to read. One real gem I discovered was to take cuttings of *E. maculata* var. *brevifolia* in autumn; I have not been able to propagate it from cuttings and none of my group has either. I took in lots of material to our April meeting. Now two and a half months later I have one cutting with the beginnings of roots on it. It is a cold winter in Melbourne and they are not heated, so I will keep my fingers crossed that some will root properly.

I have had better luck with the only local species, *E. desertii*. I had such a good strike rate that I was able to put one on our native plant trail, give some to treasured friends and to donate to the plant auction as well as plant in my own garden. Giving a plant away to a friend that you have grown yourself is even better than keeping it yourself.

My older sister recently asked my advice about what to plant along her driveway where a dead plant had left a hole. I did a 2 minute spiel on *E. glabra* (Rottnest Island form), showed her mine and she was sold. I still had a couple of pots of it so gave her one. It will be perfect for that spot.

Our wholesale/retail nurseryman is trying to expand his eremophilas. he is mad on them. Most of this area is basalt clay although very dry. (Not my block – a windswept ridge over the river where the only moist patch is in the pond. Love the plants you can grow.)

I have about 24 eremophilas, many of which are 'glabra forms' of course. My favourite had been *E. ionantha* because of the foliage and the massive covering of flowers, rather like a mint bush. I think I have since moved favourites, usually to whatever I saw last. *E. oppositifolia*, with its soft grey foliage and long-lasting calices, *E. racemosa* (we call it the lolly plant for obvious reasons), *E. 'Yanna Road'* and a prostrate form of *E. glabra* with yellow flowers. (The SEC dropped huge branches from our River Red Gum on top of this. It was badly damaged and I pruned the worst of the damage – it shrank by half, but it is a tough blighter and looks great.)

The nature strip is perfect for eremophilas and the birds, skinks and occasional brown snake make up the rest of the nature in the nature strip.

#### **PROPAGATION DEMONSTRATIONS BY NOEL, CHARLES, GORDON & IAN**

(The following four sets of notes are taken from the minutes of the Sydney Group's meeting held in July last at the home of Gordon Brooks. Their next meeting is to be held on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> October at the home of Charles Farrugia, 12 Grandview Ave, Seven Hills, NSW).

#### **Noel**

Noel uses a mix of 1 part perlite, 1½ sand and 1 Cocopeat® and places one cutting per tube in small 25mm tubes. He prepares the cuttings by stripping off the lower leaves – he has not found with eremophilas that they suffer from this treatment. He dips the cutting which may be from 5cm – 10cm, depending upon the species, into Easi-Root® hormone just to the depth of the wound. He does not reuse the hormone again after the completion of this cutting session. Noel accidentally used Easi-Root® in a concentrated form and had such wonderful results that he continues to do this rather than dilute as recommended by the manufacturer.

He places cuttings into foam plastic boxes to which he fits several inverted U-shaped wires to keep a plastic cover clear of the cuttings. He sprays the cuttings as required with Seasol®. He places them in a shed that allows plenty of light on the cuttings but he pulls down shade cloth to reduce heat and light when necessary. When roots appear out of the bottom, Noel transfers them into a larger tube and finally into a bigger pot before planting into the ground.

When potting on, Noel turns the new larger pot onto its side, half fills it, turns the cutting tube on its side and slides the cutting out onto a 4 inch Venetian blind cut down and bent inwards, places it into the new pot, fills other half of pot and ensures the cutting stands upright. He pots on into a mix of soil and horse manure (Condell Park Caviar). He waters with Seasol® every 1-2 weeks. He uses a larger "trowel" to transfer plants into 8 inch pots in the same way but fertilizes with blood and bone, Patons® Native Plant Food and a Slow Release such as Osmocote®.

### **Charles**

Charles uses Bunnings Seed Raising Mix for his cuttings. He finds this very effective. In preparing his cuttings, Charles cuts the lower leaves off the cutting material with light secateurs, removes soft top growth and cuts a diagonal wound at bottom of cutting with the same secateurs. He dips cutting in Clonex® Purple rooting hormone to just below bottom leaf of the cutting. He reuses the hormone again at another session.

He places several cuttings in square 50mm tubes, primarily because they are easier to pack into foam plastic boxes. He labels the pots with yellow electrical tape on which it is easy to write. Cuttings are watered on an as-required basis, usually at intervals of about 14 days

After about 8 weeks when roots appear, he transfers the struck cuttings into 150mm pots. Potting mix used is a combination of Amgrow® Native Plant Mix, Good quality Potting Mix and Cow Manure. The mixed ratio used is 4:4:2. He places these in a suitable part shade spot.

Fertiliser used is Osmocote Native Plant Controlled Release Plant Food Plus, or Brunnings Nitrophoska Slow Release Fertiliser, with Blood and Bone and Potash. Charles does not recommend using Water Saver Granules. He used this product on a potted eremophila and the plant died.

### **Gordon**

Gordon said that in past he has used 75mm tumbler tubes and placed 8-10 cuttings in each but recently has been using 25mm tubes and placing one cutting in each tube. The cutting medium was 4 parts coarse sand and one of Cocopeat® but recently switched to Perlite only. On one occasion he lost most cuttings after adding Cocopeat® – the mix was too moisture-retentive.

He cuts the lower leaves off the cutting material with light secateurs, removes soft top growth leaving 3-5 nodes, and cuts a diagonal wound with a sharp knife or the same secateurs at bottom of cutting. He dips cuttings in Clonex® Red rooting hormone for 5 seconds to at least the depth of the wound and generally reuses the hormone again at a later session.

Tubes are placed in boxes in the shade-house in times of no water restrictions but within 15 litres spring water containers (the periphery is cut near the top and the top section used as a lid) in the shade-house under present conditions. The cuttings would be sprayed 2-6 times per day depending upon the season if in the open shade-house, but on as-required basis when in the plastic water containers. Sometimes they are also sprayed with Seasol®.

Struck cuttings in the small tubes are transferred into larger pots, the size of which depends upon the species and their intended use. Eremophilas are brought into the sun as soon as they are ready. Seasol®, slow release fertiliser and Paton's® Native Plant Food are used as required.

Ian commented that he does not use pots unless they have seams inside as without these the new roots twist around inside the pot and do not come out the bottom.

### **Grafting Demonstration by Ian**

Ian prefers to use whip (side) grafts, choosing stock and scion having similar stem diameters so that the cambium layers may be matched. He has had greater success with rooted *Myoporum acuminatum* stock rather than stock cuttings. He prefers a stiff razor blade to a scalpel. Ian uses Parafilm® (would probably use Nescofilm® if he

had it) as grafting tape and cuts strips about one cm wide (and about 10cm long) which he winds onto a sturdy knitting needle. The knitting needle assists him to wind on the tape without the scion getting in the way. He finds no difficulty in holding the stock and scion together, anchoring the end of the tape under a finger and winding the tape over the joint. He places the plants into clear plastic 40 litres containers (with fitting lids) which are readily available from stores. He adds a few drops of Seasol® in the water that he sprays on the cuttings as required. The containers are placed in a shade house and progressively brought into more sun out as soon as possible.

Gordon mentioned that Queensland members recommended turning the stock plant such that the cut is facing away from the grafter to allow him/her to hold the scion on with the forefinger. This allows the thumb to anchor the end of the tape. They too use a knitting needle or similar from which to dispense the tape. He also referred to the notch graft done by Ray Isaacson which was written up in an ESG newsletter about 2 years ago.

### PROPAGATION HINTS

After noting how effective the green "fresh" bags were in preventing cuttings from wilting prior to planting, (Green fresh bags are available in the plastics section of most supermarkets), I decided to make large "shower caps" to cover the top of the poly-boxes containing tubes of cuttings.

This was achieved by splitting three "bags" and sewing them together on the sewing machine to make a large, flat sheet; then sewing a piece of elastic around the circumference of the plastic sheet, so as to make a snug fit over the top of the poly-box. I left the covers on the boxes (in the shade house) for three weeks; the cuttings remained fresh and upright. The striking rate was excellent.

This method was a little tedious, so I purchased broccoli boxes, with lids, from the supermarket. Each box was rinsed well with White King® prior to using. (This product is a chlorine based disinfectant containing approx. 4% sodium hypochlorite as the active ingredient. Colin)

Using a sharp knife I then removed the top of each lid, about 5cm from the actual rim of the lid. I then split a green fresh bag open and stapled it securely onto the top of the lid and then used 4cm waterproof duct tape over the top of the staples for additional strength. This produced a close fitting lid with a large window of plastic.

Square tubes with cuttings were placed in the box on a bed of sand. (I didn't have fine gravel available) and the boxes placed in the shade house. Cuttings were kept damp according to the weather. I found this method very effective in keeping cuttings fresh and the striking rate improved dramatically. I did not, however, use this method for any of the "hairy-leafed" species.

I used the same boxes for grafted eremophilas, making sure that the box was full. Again this worked well and the grafts didn't wilt – some just plain died due to lack of expertise in grafting on my part! Having gained some good tips from the workshop last year and with the use of Nescofilm® and a magnifying lamp I am getting at least 75% of grafts to take.

The main problem has been to get *Myoporum insulare* to strike; the cuttings are extremely slow to strike. I believe some other members have had similar difficulty. Is there a secret?

#### Spring Cuttings – Without Heat

*Eremophila dichroantha*  
*Eremophila interstans*  
*Eremophila dempsteri*

All three were successfully struck in September. The previous summer I had put in numerous cuttings of these three and they just sat and sat – looked healthy but not a root appeared for over twelve months. The spring cuttings rooted within three to four weeks.

#### Winter Cutting – Without Heat

*Eremophila crassifolia* was successfully struck in July (only one tried; it was collected on the West Coast under Mallee on private property.) I wonder what other species prefer winter or spring striking, rather than summer! Does anyone have any records?

## FLOWERING TIMES IN TRURO, SA

I am wondering who agrees with this chart of flowering times – useful in choosing group plantings that look spectacular when all flowering at the same time.

Name	Flowering Months									
	Summer	Autumn	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	
<i>Eremophila abietina</i>				X	X	X				
<i>Eremophila bignoniiflora</i> X [b/pink]									X	
<i>Eremophila bignoniiflora</i> X <i>polyclada</i>									X	
<i>Eremophila calorhabdos</i>	X									
<i>Eremophila</i> 'complanata'						X	X			
<i>Eremophila cuneifolia</i>		X	X	X						
<i>Eremophila dempsteri</i> - blue form						X	X			
<i>Eremophila densifolia</i>									X	
<i>Eremophila denticulata</i>									X	
<i>Eremophila dichroantha</i>						X	X			
<i>Eremophila divaricata</i>	X					X	X			
<i>Eremophila drummondii</i> - dwarf border										
<i>Eremophila duttonii</i> - yellow form				X	X	X				
<i>Eremophila gibbifolia</i>									X	
<i>Eremophila granitica</i>						X	X			
<i>Eremophila</i> 'hygrophana'									X	
<i>Eremophila inflata</i>									X	
<i>Eremophila interstans</i> - mauve form						X	X			
<i>Eremophila ionantha</i>									X	
<i>Eremophila lehmanniana</i>							X	X		
<i>Eremophila mackinlayi</i>						X	X	X		
<i>Eremophila maculata</i> – pink/sprawling	X								X	X
<i>Eremophila maculata</i> - yellow/red spots						X	X			
<i>Eremophila maculata</i> [Morgan form]						X	X	X		
<i>Eremophila maculata</i> var. <i>brevifolia</i>				X	X			X		
<i>Eremophila nivea</i> X <i>drummondii</i>						X	X			
<i>Eremophila oppositifolia</i> - pink form						X	X			
<i>Eremophila</i> 'papillata'						X	X			
<i>Eremophila pantonii</i>					X	X				
<i>Eremophila</i> 'pinnatifida'									X	
<i>Eremophila polyclada</i>	X	X								
<i>Eremophila</i> 'praecox'									X	
<i>Eremophila</i> 'rostrata'									X	
<i>Eremophila</i> 'rugosa'						X	X	X	X	
<i>Eremophila scoparia</i>						X	X			
<i>Eremophila serrulata</i> X <i>oppositifolia</i>						X	X			
<i>Eremophila</i> 'Summertime Blue'	X	X								
<i>Eremophila veronica</i>									X	
<i>Eremophila viscida</i> - pink form						X	X	X		
<i>Eremophila viscida</i> -cream form						X	X	X		
<i>Eremophila weldii</i>									X	
<i>Eremophila youngii</i>				X	X	X				

Beverly Rice  
Truro, SA

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