

Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants
EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER No. 87

May 2006

I must firstly apologise for the lateness of this issue of the Newsletter. I had intended to have it out a month or so earlier, however, when I thought of getting it started I realized that there was very little material at hand to make it worthwhile I trust that there will not be anything like the delay in getting the next one finished, although that does depend to some extent on what I receive from members in the meantime. Since that time I have received a lengthy report from the Sydney group and at their most recent gathering they were treated with a much valued contribution from Ken Warnes and Russell Wait who traveled to Sydney to pass on some thoughts to those who meet on a regular basis in the Sydney region.

Please note the change to my email address, printed at the end of the newsletter. The old address is no longer available for me to access.

The **SA Regional APS Conference** is being held in Adelaide on the weekend **11th-12th August** in the Enfield Community Centre. There is a comprehensive programme arranged; with a GIANT cutting stable on Friday night at the registration. One of the Saturday speakers is Bob O'Neil, the ABC's Gardener of the Year 2005. On Saturday afternoon there is a fete, with a range of stalls selling all kinds of native plant related things to buy. There will be a dinner on Saturday night. On Sunday there is to be a bus trip to Williamstown in the lower Barossa Valley, where registrants will be visiting an Australian Native Garden, in the Open Garden Scheme, together with several other gardens of interest.

I mention this since there might be members of the Study Group interested in attending. Details can be obtained from either Allen (Rusty) Russell or his wife Pam. Email: sturtpea@iprimus.com.au In conjunction with this, Ken Warnes has offered to have members of the Study Group visit his property in Owen. The visit would need to be arranged either prior to or after the conference, the Monday after being most likely; however the timing is not fixed. It is suggested that those interested should contact Ken to find out more about the visit. Please contact Ken directly so that he can gauge the level of interest. Ken's email address is warnes@rbe.net.au

It is worth noting that Ken and his wife will be moving into the town of Owen soon and this might be the last opportunity for the collection on his farming property to be accessible in such a way.

There have been a number of requests for us to hold another workshop. The question is where and when? The previously held weekends have been very successful, with good attendances – the last one at Russell Wait's property at Natya was so successful that we had to limit the number of members attending due to overnight accommodation available. To organise another event we would need to look at **approximately twelve months ahead**, since the only communication we have with each other in a total way is via the Newsletters.

Firstly I need a suggested location, a person to coordinate the event if it is to be anywhere other than Adelaide. If it is to be in Adelaide again, then I could get it moving, but if it is to be elsewhere, then I could only be expected to provide the communication and the backup, together with the usual support to the person(s) offering and through the Newsletter etc. **If you are interested, firstly in hosting such an event, please contact me asap, so that I can start the ball rolling.** If you are interested in attending a workshop weekend, please give me an indication of your interest and if you are able to travel to wherever it might be held.

I have been asked about the purchase of more Nescofilm®, which is used by many as grafting tape. I have about 1m left from the material which I purchased on your behalf a few years ago. If members are interested in purchasing more tape through the Study Group, please let me know. Last time we had to purchase a minimum of 50m (5 boxes) and at that time I was charging members \$1.25 per metre, a small profit going into our funds. I do not know what the current cost would be, but expect it to be closer to \$1.50 per metre.

Please note that Subs are due at the end of June for those with a red sticker attached at top corner.

FROM YOUR LETTERS

Russell Wait – Natya, Victoria

I have had this on the go for quite a while but never got around to finishing it off. I had an operation in January and only the last month have I been able to do much. It has been very dry here (Natya - via Piangil Vic) with

less than an inch of rain and a lot of windy days. I have lost some plants over the summer but I am not sure why. It is possible a bit of spray drift of glyphosate hit them, but they have died over a few months.

We all had a good time in Sydney and it was very interesting to see what they were up to and what they had growing. I have sent you an article about hybrids I have seen in the wild and the probable crosses. Some of them I have growing and some have potential, but others are only of interest to those with space.

Ken Warnes – Owen, SA

With Russell's information, the hybrid list is growing, 50+ now, but that can wait!

I did find in NSW that the *E. maculata* x *E. alternifolia* has been around for some time and is sold as *E. 'Blue Thunder'*, but they weren't certain if was a Schilling or Alby Lindner seedling.

Ruth & Alan Grienke – Toowoomba, Qld

We have lived here at Gowrie Mountain, halfway between Toowoomba and Oakey, for about 33 years and have planted many natives on about 1 acre of our property. We would have planted more if the seasons had been better; the last two years have been worse than ever because it has been very hot and not the best for planting cuttings for replacements. We planted the first trees about 1976, forming raised beds of stone and sandy loam to plant the smaller shrubs such as grevilleas and banksias.

I think we have developed a love of eremophilas through our trips and have propagated many from cuttings and purchased many from nurseries in SA and Brookvale Park, when it was here near Oakey. The nurseries up here only have a limited number of species. We have nearly one hundred species growing in our black spoil, that has not clay under it and in built up beds. Some of the eremophilas are growing well, most have been in for five years and some for over twenty five years. We have many forms of *E. maculata*, together with a range of other species (list supplied). *Eremophila mitchellii* was torn in half by a bad wind storm and had to be cut right back, but has shot out and is almost back to its original height in about four years. I have grown quite a few cuttings at about 30% success rate and have no trouble finding homes for them. I have lost *E. gibbifolia*, which had been growing in the black soil for about twelve years and one which had been in a raised bed for about three years. I think that it was the extreme heat and the dry season. They are not readily available here so I am looking for some cutting material.

HYBRID EREMOPHILAS I HAVE SEEN IN THE WILD

E. fraseri x *E. platythamnos*. An open bush with whitish brown flowers.

E. fraseri x *E. abietina*. It looks like a narrow *E. fraseri* with a white and brown flower.

E. platythamnos x *E. gibsonii*. Crosses both ways the smaller leafed one has *E. platythamnos* as the female. It has been seen in a number of places. The plant that has been grown now for a long time, as *E. gibsonii* is probably a hybrid with *E. platythamnos*.

E. willsii x *E. platythamnos*. It was a young bush so was only small

E. scoparia x *E. dempsteri*. A broom bush with small white flowers.

E. scoparia x *E. ionantha*, A greenish bush with blue flowers.

E. forrestii x *E. latrobei* growing and very variable as it grows in many places and can be very good and it is also possible that *E. latrobei* has crossed with *E. glandulifera*.

E. hygrophana x *E. jucunda*. Not as good as the straight *E. hygrophana*.

E. simulans ??or *E. gilesii* At first thought to be a form of *E. simulans* with the narrow leaves but is now probable a hybrid of unknown parents and seen in a few places and in different years 1995-2004 and is very hard to propagate.

E. lachnocalyx x *E. spathulata*. A grey, open bush with blue flowers.

E. spathulata x other unknown as there was no green foliaged eremophila in the immediate area and was seen in two areas with half a dozen plants at each.

E. fraseri x *E. phyllopoda* or possible *E. macmillaniana*, very large leaves but not a very showy flowers as they are white and brown and.

E. cuneifolia x *E. phyllopoda* some variation as has been seen in a few places and is frost sensitive. Not a bright showy flower with variation with the foliage.

E. cuneifolia x *E. macmillaniana*. A spreading bush with greenish foliage.

E. glabra x *E. georgei*. A slow growing open bush with large pink flowers. Only seen in one place

E. margarethae possible hybrids as there were bushes with smaller leaves and a hint of pink in the flowers and a couple of bushes.

E. elderi or *E. acrida* x *E. hughesii*. There are a few forms seen in the wild in a few places.

E. spuria x *E. foliosissima*. A leafier bush than *E. spuria* and has larger pale blue flowers than *E. spuria*.

E. interstans subsp *interstans* x *E. dempsteri*. Had mostly blue flowers but some were pink. In the wild they were mostly more open bushes than *E. dempsteri* but not as tall as *E. interstans*.

E. drummondii x *E. labrosa*. Has finer foliage but not as showy flowers as *E. drummondii*.

E. oppositifolia x *E. oldfieldii* pale pink flowers and can be quiet good.

E. maculata x *E. duttonii*, been in cultivation for many years.

E. clarkei x *E. spuria* patches of them looking as though it was breeding.

E. ringens x *E. latrobei*

E. polyclada x *E. bignoniiflora*. Can get to 10m and with various forms and is found in Vic, NSW and QLD

E. polyclada x *E. divaricata* also known as 'Summertime Blue' and found in Victoria.

Russell Wait

EREMOPHILA PROPAGATION

GRAFTING

A couple of grafting methods have come to my attention.

The first is to reverse the normal procedure and make an inverted V on the stock and the split in the scion. I observed this in *Verticordia* grafted onto *Chamelaucium* with material barely 2mm diameter and the joint a good 20mm long. The union was perfect, which may have said something about the skill of the operator (John Edmonds-Wilson). I could see neither reason nor advantage unless that point tip on the stock concentrated the sap flow upwards.

The second described by Has Griesser involves the removal of a wedge from the stock to match the wedge cut on the scion (or vice versa if you use the above method). I can see this working OK on the side graft method used by Ray Isaacson but I question whether the Cambium layers would match on a tip graft using materials of equal diameter. Hans says it works and reduces the tendency of the graft to spring open if only a slit is made.

While I have had considerable success with grafting this year I have a lot of trouble with the stock shooting along the margins of the graft, even through the tape. I presume it is primarily a result of blunt tools but if anyone has the answer I would be pleased to know. My experiments with cutting grafts continue as I remain convinced that it is the way to go. The main problem is the large diameter types such as *E. fraseri* as the large-stemmed *Myoporum* required are slow to root.

SUCKERS

Lindy Lahn, in N/L 86 warns of the possibility *E. ovata* becoming a weed. Anyone who has seen the massed beds at the Parks & Wildlife Administration buildings in Alice Springs would surely agree. The solution is to graft onto the smaller *Myoporum*, it takes readily.

As proof, I have a grafted twenty month old plant, free-flowering and of rounded, compact habit and a twelve month cutting grown plant that has numerous suckers up to 600mm away in heavy soil. It would probably be further in light soil. The crown plant is already deteriorating into a straggly mess, presumably as the vigour is transferred into the new suckers.

While I haven't tried yet, I must attempt to graft the white flowered form of *E. laanii* as that is my potential weed. I once grafted *E. longifolia* for the same reason but it died after a year, reason unknown!

Another species to occasionally sucker is *E. virens*, but here it appears to be a survival mechanism. A species with little to recommend it apart from the novelty value and the very high levels of anti-bacterial agents it contains, this species in my experience produces a single stem (trunk) to 3m which only lives a few years. As the stem goes into decline a sucker appears and takes over, the most recent being the 4th 'generation' over a 20 year period. The suckers have never thickened the stand beyond three stems and currently there is one, 2m stem and a 30mm sucker only. A new plant in another area (probably the same clone although 20 years apart) has yet to display this behaviour.

The acute-leaf form of *E. serrulata*, I believe from Peak Charles, develops suckers, but they have not proved overly aggressive to this time. Speaking of Peak Charles, the grey-leaf form of *E. calorhabdos* from there is a superb plant, both struck and grafted.

SEEDLINGS

Once again a late summer thunderstorm and 27mm of rain triggered a small volunteer germination in a sandy-loam patch. Over twenty have been seen and potted up at ten days with a 40mm radical. Unfortunately some bug has eaten most of them off in the holding area; I can't call it a nursery. Big spring rains in 2005 caused a few *E. maculata* to germinate, but nothing else, not at that time of the year.

Ken Warnes

REPORT FROM SYDNEY GROUP

At their meeting on 11th March 2006, the Sydney Group welcomed Ken Warnes and Russell Wait to their meeting which was held at the home of Ian & Tamara Cox at Kenthurst. A number of 'regulars' were present, together with visitors from the Sydney region.

Reports from members of the group which were included in the report, which are of general interest, have been extracted. For the benefit of members of the Study Group.

Ian Cox reported that their garden had relatively shallow soil and as a consequence the plants required more water than in many gardens. He used Seasol® and grafted onto *Myoporum* species.

Betty Rymer, a new member, stated that she had heavy soil, but she planted her eremophilas into the crevices between rocks.

Andrew Harvie reported that he was in a start-up phase. He had a higher success rate with grafting than he expected, particularly before the higher humidity weather hit. He uses grafting clips rather than tape when grafting. Russell asked whether he had difficulty keeping the graft free of disease, but Andrew said that he had not noticed any.

Charles Farrugia stated that his eremophilas had been in the garden for only five years and most were growing well. He normally prunes in early December each year. Nothing was affected by the 48°C heat on New Year's Eve. During the hot and very high humidity of January and February the following eremophilas were lost: *E. 'Murchison Magic'* (grafted), *E. bowmanii* (grafted), and *E. glabra* 'Burgundy'. These eremophilas were pruned heavily early December.

Gordon Brooks agreed that notwithstanding the dry conditions and water restrictions, most plants were doing nicely. He had lost several, however, probably as a result of the long periods of high humidity this season. Those lost include: *E. lucida*, *E. macdonnellii*, *E. mirabilis*, *E. platycalyx* and *E. warnesii*.

Ken Warnes and Russell Wait were invited to talk to those present. They gave an interesting dissertation on many different eremophilas including details of their specific habitats and referred to many hybrids that they had seen. They stated that when taking cuttings they only dampened the paper in which they intended to wrap the material with only a few squirts of water. Newspaper may be used. They placed the cuttings in green vegetable storage bags, which, if kept in a refrigerator or other cool place, will enable the cuttings to remain fresh for several days.

Russell and Ken demonstrated their method of grafting, preferring to do a side graft, which enabled stock and scion of different diameter to be successfully grafted. They wound the tape a couple of turns below the graft and gently stretched it before completing the taping. They keep the grafted plant in humid condition for a minimum period. They used various *Myoporum* species as stock. Russell & Ken provided a selection of cuttings for members to take and use.

On the following day Russell & Ken visited a number of gardens of members of the Group.

Appreciation was expressed to Russell & Ken for the time that they had spent in presenting their ideas to the group and the travelling which they had to do in order to be in Sydney.

COLOUR PHOTOGRAPHS

The colour photographs this month have come from my collection, acquired over a number of years. Unfortunately there have been a couple of glitches with my printer, at times it decided that it would only print part black and part colour, after printing a number of full colour pages without problem. As a result I have had to programme the printing over several days and this has added further to my frustration. I managed to get the last fifty or so printed by installing a new printer, which I hope will last a few years into the future.

ASGAP Eremophila Study Group Leader

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