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Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants  
**EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER No. 92**

December 2007

I still have three books left for members who may have missed out. Same price as advertised, \$75 each post paid. Please send money with your order to me at the postal address below. Cheques and Money Orders to be made payable to ASGAP Eremophila Study Group. Due to the limited numbers remaining it is only possible to sell them to members and ONE per member who has not been able to purchase one in the past. In this way I hope to provide copies to as many individual members as is possible.

Firstly: my apologies for not mentioning in the last Newsletter that the subscription for the 2007-8 subscription year was to remain at \$5. The majority guessed that since nothing was written, then it must be the same as for the previous year – they were right! Thank you to all who have now paid their subscriptions. There were a few who did not renew and unfortunately they will not have received this issue.

From the report which I have received from members it would appear that a number have been visiting clubs and societies to deliver the good word on eremophilas and their value as garden plants. Although some of these visits date back to last year the following have come to my notice. Russell Wait & Ken Warnes visited the Sydney Group, spending a weekend in the Harbour City, demonstrating the techniques of grafting and propagation from cuttings, Ken & Russell visited several gardens of Sydney members and gave helpful advice for them to follow.

In June 2007, Jan Glazebrook and Dennis Cox visited the Ipswich Group where Jan presented a talk based on their visit to WA prior to the WA ASGAP Conference in Perth. In addition to the many native plants from the areas visited, Jan spoke extensively about eremophilas seen on the way. From that talk Arnold Rieck prepared a lengthy article for the club's Newsletter, adding to Jan's comments with information extracted from Bob Chinnock's book. It is pleasing to see that there is quite a bit of interest in some of the rural areas as well as in the cities.

Colin was invited to speak at the Melton (Vic) group in early July 2007, where he was able to further present the value of growing eremophilas in gardens. Although the weather at the time was wet (not like that experienced by our friends in southern Queensland) there was a good attendance at the meeting and quite a few members were interested in developing further interest in the genus. It was also pleasing to see several members from the nearby Keilor Plains Group attending; there is now a small but active group attending regular meetings in the Melbourne area – similar in structure to the Sydney group. We wish this small group well in their endeavour to maintain this interest group. I welcome any reports which members can provide; either from those who have presented the talks or those who were in the audience and were encouraged to put pen to paper and pass on the message which they were given.

Members are encouraged to 'spread the word' about eremophilas. It appears from the reports received over the past few years from many members that their eremophilas have done remarkably well in situations where many other so-called dry-land plants have failed. There have been many reports of frost damage, but I must add that there have been some members who have experience frost damage to their other garden plants, but NOT their eremophilas. This could be due to the nature of the garden situation, the actual temperatures reached, air movement around the plants and perhaps also the condition of the soil with regard to mulching etc.

Since Bob's book was released there have been several 'new' species collected in WA, and there is afoot a further publication based on the eremophilas of WA. More details of this will be made available as soon as the details become available. There are several Perth based researchers who have undertaken, with the help of a number of interested native plant 'addicts', the task of having the work published.

I have had not received any feedback re the printing of colour pictures in the Newsletter. I decided not to include any in the past few issues due to the release of the book, and since I have now sold close to 150 copies, I assume that nearly everyone has purchased a copy. I will continue to not print colour pictures until I get such a flood of requests to start again that I cannot resist the ground-swell.

**NATIONAL CONFERENCE - NEWCASTLE**

Myrnies & I travelled to the conference by car, calling in to Ray Isaacson and Russell Wait on the way to collect plants for sale from Ray and cuttings for use in the display from both Ray and Russell. A special thanks to these two gentlemen for making the material available.

After two days in foam boxes on the back seat of the car, the cuttings were in excellent condition when we arrived on Sunday afternoon. The cuttings were displayed in small plastic containers – actually used to ship fish from the Philippines to our local aquarium shop: these allowed small cutting to be presented. Labels were printed and laminated so that they stood above the cuttings on trident forks (the type used by florists in floral tributes.)

We were provided with two full-length trestles for our display of plants and other items, mainly books, which we had for sale. Three vertical frames were provided for us to display our collection of photographs and a small educational panel. After about two hours the display was complete.

A week before leaving I was asked to do a short (ten minute) presentation to the registrants on the Wednesday afternoon. Three Study Group leaders were so invited. Unfortunately the contribution of Study Groups via displays and presentations has diminished in recent times and at the Study Group Leaders' meeting there was some discussion about the omission and a request made that there be more facility for Study Groups to be represented and heard at future conferences. Hopefully this will not be ignored.

We left on the Friday morning, travelling back via Mt Annan Botanic Gardens, the south coast of NSW, Canberra, (where we spent a full day at the National Botanic Garden), then via Tumut, the Murray Valley and Mildura, where we spent an hour or so with Peter Lang.

The only real disappointment was Arid Land Garden north of Mildura. As a Study Group we were invited to be involved in the development of this area, but after several contact letters I heard nothing more. What a pity, for there were several locations within their complex which would have been most suited to growing eremophilas – we saw three in a very uninteresting planting. We spent less than an hour here, taking in the natural bush which had been cared for by some local enthusiasts, but the plantings left a lot to be desired. The mosquitoes were huge and left a lasting impression, or should that read itching to leave.

#### FROM YOUR LETTERS

##### **Bonnie Addison-Smith Junabee, Qld**

The drought has not broken in this part of Queensland and I have found it impossible to select cutting material even though most eremophilas are holding on. Desperate selection of some material for propagation has produced no results.

Heavy frosts recently (-6°C) have not affected any eremophilas either in the ground or in pots. Other plants, which have never before been touched by frost, have been badly frosted, even on the verandah. I have found recent notes on frost in the newsletter very interesting, but I still find frost behaviour bewildering. I have found the use of ENVY® useful for protection against light frosts but not quite so successful against heavy frosts.

##### **Rosemary McLaren – Temora, NSW**

Having relocated from farm to town garden, with very different soils, the last year and a half has been a time of adjustment. I have an area in my new garden which seems ideal for eremophilas but my problem has been that I have had little success with cuttings from my original garden. I believe that this has been due to the plants being stressed by the drought. Jim Thomson mentions taking cuttings from a straggly plant or *E. maculata* but there were a number of new leaf shoots from the old wood. My eremophilas didn't seem to have any new shoots but most of them are still alive and hopefully by October I will be able to take cuttings. It's so difficult to buy eremophilas in the nurseries here. In Wagga the majority of plants for sale are grafted and there is very little choice – mainly *E. nivea* and *E. maculata*.

(This is unfortunately a common problem, not only in Wagga. It still seems as if there is little interest from the nursery trade to venture into growing eremophilas, despite the many references made to them in gardening programmes across the country. There are many species which grow well on their own roots and are suited to dry-land garden situations. The grafted species and cultivars are often those which grow well on their own roots as well and could be produced in masses much more cheaply than the cost of producing grafted plants. The other factor causing many people to shy away from eremophilas is the cost of the grafted plants – I have seen them for as much as \$35 each and in some cases have been rather 'unsightly' examples of what a good eremophila plant should look like.)

##### **Ainslee Lines – Moree, NSW**

We have one day in particular of terrible frost (for here), -4°C which would have been -6°C on the ground. Plants have been hit that aren't normally, even plants in my fern house and under the carport. Some plants have even dropped green leaves. It's odd to see green leaves on the ground like a carpet under trees, but thankfully none of the eremophilas have been touched yet. May it continue!

**Arnold Rieck – Rosewood, Qld**

Since last year our branch display at shows and other displays have featured eremophilas. We are encouraging Ipswich folk to grow them as they are drought tolerant and bird attracting. After heavy frosts locally back in mid-July (-5°) I can also add, frost tolerant. We are encouraging folk to grow them and to go to their local nursery and demand that the owner gets some in. A few of our local growers are propagating them from cuttings and the demand is greater than the supply.

**Briony Sinclair – Kalgoorlie, WA**

Kalgoorlie Boulder Urban Landcare Group has had its most successful year propagating local native species and has expanded into eremophila propagation, with at least ten species successfully propagated.

**Barbara Hannah – Armidale, NSW**

... Our glabras and maculatas and the *E. bignoniiflora* crosses etc. are thriving, despite the hail – frost – drought etc. (especially in sites where the cold air can drain away, where there are trees overhead.)

**Ron Gruinke – Toowoomba, Qld**

We are still in the grips of drought here, with our water supplies in local dams at 13%. We have been experiencing a warm spell of weather recently but are on the promise of rain for the coming weekend. We had our first rain for the month (13 August) yesterday: 2.5mm. Better than nothing!

We had a long period of heavy frosts and cold days last month, with quite a few plants being tipped by frosts, but the eremophilas showed no problems. Some have died because of the dry and possibly age. A *Myoporum desertii* has been dropping leaves for about six months and seems to be dying at over twenty years of age. The other eremophilas we have lost were three years old or less.

I have been having some success with cuttings since April. Before that, during an extremely hot summer, there was no success. Quite a number of the eremophilas are well-rooted.

We have grown what we know as *Myoporum biagiana* for about twenty years, though it may only last for ten to fifteen years. It grows well from cuttings, so I always have a few on hand to replace. I could not find it in the Eremophila Book, but believe it is perhaps *Myoporum petiolatum*. It grows to about 1m by 1m, with white flowers and flecking in the throat.

(I asked Ron about the name of this *Myoporum* species when he rang me back in August. He received it as the stock of a grafted eremophila, but when the scion died, the stock continued to grow, and it was decided to take cuttings and to propagate it further. The name of the stock, which Ron found out from the person who gave him the grafted plant, was *Myoporum biagiana*. Ron approached Bob and on sending a piece to him, was advised that the plant was most likely to be *Myoporum petiolatum*. No reference to the name *M. biagiana* can be found. If anyone has heard of this name or indeed knows anything about its origin, I would be very appreciative of the story be passed on so that I can write about it further in the next Newsletter. Since that time I have seen some cuttings of *M. petiolatum* in a display arranged by The Para Group of APS (SA) at the Gawler Agricultural Show held in August, and if fits neatly with Ron's description. Colin.)

**Jan Hall (Yarrawonga, Vic)**

I enjoyed Hans Greisser's article on frost damage as I had just listed my findings here this year, when temperatures were as low as -5°C, just inside the 'fairly safe' zone. In summary, one specimen of *E. malacoides* died and one other very young plant of *E. alternifolia* hybrid (not sure of the ID of the other parent) which was looking lovely looked dead in September, but now, at the end of October, has a lot of shoots at the base.

My interesting wooly and silver species that I know from the past may be damaged from the frost were sprayed with Anti Stress® in autumn and this does help somewhat. These include the following:-

*E. bowmanii*, *E. dendritica*, *E. margarethae*, *E. platycalyx*, *E. latrobei* (from Tibooburra) *E. citrina*, *E. tietkensis*, *E. macmillaniana*, *E. spathulata*, *E. punctata* and *E. glandulifera*: all of these are grafted plants. I also like to keep them in 20cm pots until they are a bit woody and give them a full summer out in the hot sun after planting out to harden them up. I also have another ten or so in 20cm pots but keep them under an open roofed area and sprayed just in case. This also helps them to cope with the ongoing drought. We now have about seventy five eremophilas in the garden so far.

Our new garden is now three years old and I am building up the numbers of eremophilas because I love them and they are so reliable in harsh conditions. Our one hectare of windy, clay plains country suits them quite well. The Wangarratta Group is responding to the need to grow and promote these plants and yesterday we did a presentation at the TAFE College.

### **REDBACK SPIDERS**

FOR those of us who have a hobby that requires us to delve into pots, tins, containers and into odd corners such as in glasshouses, brush houses and potting frames. A word of warning!

In these hiding places is to be found the Redback spider, one of only two species of poisonous spiders to be found in Australia and the only spider known to be dangerous to man in South Australia. It is to be found throughout Australia and is apparently also to be found in PNG, much of Asia and the Western Pacific. This creature is also known to frequent letter boxes and there are the well-known anecdotal stories of the Redback on the toilet seat. (The most venomous spider is the male Sydney Funnelweb spider which is to be found along the eastern seaboard, in New South Wales, particularly north of Port Jackson).

The jury is out on the White Tailed spider as to whether it is venomous or whether the necrosis which can occur, results from infection rather than envenomation.

The Redback spider spins a rough, coarse, irregular web in sheltered places and usually away from the light.

Only the female is potentially dangerous to man. The female is much larger than the male, the male being relatively harmless. Neither sex is aggressive and usually tries to escape when disturbed.

Now the motto is "Look before you leap" or rather "Look before you put your hand into that dark corner, or pick up a pot which has a rounded, overlapping lip or edge - a favourite site!" "We can always be wise after the event, but how many times do we put our hands into these places and then see a Redback and wonder - did she bite?

The bite may cause a sharp stinging or burning sensation or may not be felt at all. Well then how do we know if we have been bitten?

Around the site of the bite a localised pain and sweating will take place. The venom is rather slow acting. So far as can be found this is the only bite which causes the phenomenon of an area 4cm to 8cm across to sweat in this manner. This is the sure sign of a Redback bite. If the sweating area is wiped, it will sweat again. The use of an ice pack can result in some relief from the pain.

This is the first stage, so get to the doctor for an antivenin injection.

In the second stage, the pain, often burning in character, becomes general with profuse sweating, shivering, nausea and vomiting, abdominal pains, restlessness and muscular weakness being common manifestations. Swollen and tender glands may occur near the envenomated limb.

In adults recovery is recorded from 95% of untreated cases, but for children it is less favourable. Not wishing to frighten anyone, but it is forewarned is to be forearmed and in knowing the symptoms and what can be done to help us all.

The Redback or Jockey spider is closely related to the Black Widow spider of America.

**Colin Jennings**

### **COMPUTER CRASH**

Ken Warnes has recently contacted me to advise that his computer crashed and as a result he has lost all of his stored data. Not only has he lost the articles etc, which he had stored on his hard drive, but he also lost email files including his address book. Not only is it very frustrating but much of the hard work of the past is lost.

If any member has tried to contact Ken by email since about November 15<sup>th</sup> and has not received a reply, Ken asks that you try again. He wishes to re-establish his address book so that he can keep in touch with the many who communicate with him. He asks that all who have used email in the past contact him.

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