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Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants
EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER No. 94

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I thought that this issue might be a bit light-on; however as I started to set it up I received several interesting articles from Ken Warnes. The ones I have received have in the majority of cases referred to the effects of the drought and that many have had their eremophilas survive very well, whilst other natives and exotics have failed.

In the last newsletter I opened by stating that insurance was an issue with non-members attending Eremophila Study Group activities. It would appear, from some of the letters received with payments of subscriptions, that some members have misinterpreted the information supplied, thinking that their spouses, partners etc. can be covered under ASGAP insurance if they attend ASGAP functions etc. To be covered in such a way they must be members of their respective ASGAP affiliated organisations and hence covered by their club's insurance for such events. Membership of the Eremophila Study Group only covers them as ASGAP members if they attend an Eremophila Study Group function. This extension of the policy is in place to allow insurance cover for members of study groups to attend organised functions under the name of the Study Group concerned. Such events need to be advised to me so that I can at least have knowledge of them happening and if necessary advise the ASGAP. It does not cover, as far as I am aware, privately arranged gatherings not advised to the Leader of a relevant Study Group. So if you happen to go out for a Sunday afternoon trip to visit someone's home to have a look at their eremophilas – this is not covered!

I have received a report on the trip to Wangaratta made by the Melbourne Group in June. This group, I understand has been meeting in Melbourne at the homes of members of the study group, discussing eremophilas and aspects of their culture. When I receive more information about the structure of the group, I will pass it on, together with information about the times of their meetings so that others might be able to take the opportunity to attend if they happen to be in the area at the time or are able to attend.

The Fred Rogers Seminar, to be held in Horsham, Victoria on the weekend of 4-5 October is, I understand, receiving very good support from members of the study group as well as from members of APS Victoria. I hope to be able to attend and to report on the event in the next Newsletter.

Sue Oldfield in a letter asks about resin on cuttings of some eremophilas and what do members do to remove it, or do they not bother. Does the presence affect the strike rate? Members may care to write in and comment on their experiences with this. I recall one grower many years ago used to dip such affected cuttings (e.g. *E. duttonii* and the like) into an aqueous alcohol solution or into a diluted detergent solution, rinsing off in clean water before placing them in the hormone powder or gel and the propagating mix.

ITEMS FOR SALE

Members may be interested to know that I still have plenty of Nescofilm® for sale. The cost is \$1.50 per metre, including postage. There are also plenty of copies of the booklet of the edited Newsletters #1-31, which can be purchased for \$8.45 (including postage.) Single copies of the other Newsletters can also be purchased for 50cents each including postage. **I do not have any more copies of Bob Chinnock's book for sale.**

APS SOUTH AUSTRALIA – PLANT SALE

The plant sale was a success once again, with a significant percentage of plants placed on the tables ready for sale on the weekend were sold by the end of trading on Saturday. Many of the growers were very relieved when they found on Sunday that they had almost nothing to take home. It was pleasing to see so many of the Study Group members in attendance, and I noticed that they managed to find quite a few eremophilas as well as other 'goodies'. The next sale is to be held in the same location on the weekend of October 18-19 October.

Subscriptions for 2008 fell due at the end of June.

The rate of \$5 continues. This issue will be the last which you will receive if payment is not made. I have indicated on this newsletter in the usual way (by the red spot in the top right hand corner of the front page) if your subscription has not yet been received.

If you wish to pay more than one year's subscription that is OK.

AUSTRALIA'S EREMOPHILAS

The 7th F J Rogers Seminar - Eremophilas will be held in Horsham on Saturday & Sunday 4th & 5th October 2008. The venue is the Horsham College Assembly Hall. The keynote speaker will be Dr Bob Chinnock.

To be launched at this seminar is the book *Australia's Eremophilas*, co-authored by three members of our Eremophila Study Group: Norma Boschen, Maree Goods and Russell Wait, who will also present either talks and/or workshops.

This event should prove to be an excellent opportunity for members of the study group to get together with other like-minded native plant enthusiasts.

I have included a publicity brochure which Maree Goods has provided. Maree contacted me to ask if I would be able to include a copy of it in this issue of the Newsletter. I was only too happy to assist in the promotion of this prestigious seminar.

Details of the seminar programme, costs etc. are included in the brochure.

Study Group Members who are able to attend the seminar are encouraged to register their intention. The list of speakers and the schedule of events suggests that this will be a very worthwhile weekend. Please support it if you can!

Being in a country town, you might find that accommodation is somewhat limited. If you intend to go to the Seminar it would be a good idea to register early and make sure that you have your accommodation booked well in advance.

REPORT FROM THE SYDNEY GROUP

Several comments were made at their meeting in March. I print them here for members of the Study Group to comment on if they wish, since they do invite comment and the answers should be of interest to all, not only the Sydney Group.

A nurseryman commented that he "had been grafting eremophilas for thirty years and thinks that *E. maculata* is not compatible with *Myoporum*, long term."

I cannot comment on this other than to say that from the general observations of the few cases where I have seen such grafting done, that they are compatible, but I would add 'why bother to graft *E. maculata* on to *Myoporum* in the first place when it grows so well and easily on its own roots.'

Helen Lane in Dubbo reported that her eremophilas were doing well after eight months of neglect. They more or less look after themselves.

Charles Farrugia commented that he had lost a few eremophilas that were stressed due to the drought and never fully recovered before the rain came. Most of his eremophilas handled the wet conditions quite favourably, with many species doubling or even tripling their size. All the plants referred to are grafted onto *Myoporum* stock.

One eremophila which does not like the Sydney conditions is *E. enata*, whether grafted or on its own roots. It has been tried in all suburbs relevant to the Study Group – in the ground and in pots.

A General Comment was made re the **incorrect labels** used on **plants in nurseries**. It was reported that Eremophilas on sale in some nurseries had labels attached which were obviously wrong. The report went on to say that even when a member of the staff was advised that the labels were wrong they weren't interested.

(I am afraid that this is not restricted to Sydney – we have visited many 'general' and some specialist 'native' nurseries in our trips around the country. I take some interest in labels attached to plants and not only those of eremophilas. I have contacted staff and advised them of the errors and they simply pass it off by saying that the label is the one which came with the plant and they can't, or won't change it. Much of the error relates to the wholesaler, especially when preprinted labels are attached. One blatant error was seen where an *E. weldii* label was attached to a plant of *E. microtheca* – one cannot confuse these two since the 'smell' of dingo is so obvious when *E. microtheca* leaves are crushed, or even lightly brushed. Colin)

I thank the Sydney Group for sending me the minutes of their well attended and interesting meetings. I will continue to pass on extracts to members via the Newsletter. I hope to receive similar reports from the Melbourne Group in due course and will pass on their findings etc.

WANGARATTA TRIP

The Melbourne Group arranged a trip to Wangaratta on the weekend of 7-8 June. Unfortunately it was on the same weekend as the Correa Crawl, so a number of people had to make a choice between events. Hosts for the weekend were members of APS, Wangaratta Region.

A number of gardens in the area were visited, including that of Alan & Jan Hall in Yarrawonga. Alan & Jan have been actively involved in the Eremophila Study group for many years and have put together a comprehensive collection of eremophilas in their 'new' garden.

A brief report received from the coordinator of the Melbourne Group, Anne Langmaid, stated that "The food and company were outstanding, but it was the plants that fed our soul. I am still working at culling (down to 350) and naming the photos I took." Ann refers to a magnificent plant of *E. punicea*, in the garden of Jan Hall – it was covered in flowers and stood out in the most prominent place in the garden. Wow!

Ann has offered to write an article for the ESG Newsletter and Phillip Robinson is writing one for *Growing Australian*, the publication of the APS Victoria Region.

At the time of sending this out I had not received the article so I hope to include it in the next issue.

MORE GAWLER GLABRA

I have written in previous Newsletters about the prostrate form of *Eremophila glabra* known as either the Gawler or the Roseworthy form and how the only known plant had been destroyed. Well, rejoice with me, because a local recently told me of two more plants roughly forming a 10km triangle with the previously only known specimen. On checking them out I found one to be almost identical to the original plant, growing under a roadside mallee, forming a green carpet 3m across. The first lot of cuttings failed but a second lot look good. The other was on a low rise with mixed plants and has a larger leaf and not as dense, although still prostrate. This one struck well and is already planted out. Neither had flowers but I would expect them to be small orange/red. Both will be collected as herbarium specimens when in flower and join their compatriot in Adelaide. As there will be records from three well separated collections I would think that a sub-species could well be in order. This overrides an earlier suggestion in N/L 82 that the plant may be only an aberrant growth form.

Ken Warnes

TROUBLES WITH MACULATA

The patch of *E. maculata* established from volunteer seedlings in 1993 has been looking increasingly decadent. I had expected that the heavy, highly alkaline black soil should suit them well, and for a few years it did, to the extent that it was difficult to walk between plants on a 4m spacing. The honey-eaters loved them, with up to 5 species feeding at a time, but after a few years chlorosis set in and plants began dying. Replacements started well but soon became chlorotic and also died. So what has changed? I can only assume that the first planting used all the available iron, unless a mass planting of one species affects exchangeable cations or something similar. A few grafted plants of other species are managing OK and further up the slope where sheet rock comes to the surface there is far less chlorosis in a range of species, both grafted and cutting grown, although *E. maculata* still struggles. The exceptions are a couple of seedlings from a form of *E. maculata* ssp. *brevifolia* collected on Barwidgee Stn (WA) which have shown no yellowing. I have plants of *E. maculata* approaching 50 years of age, so old age is not the problem. I had not have expected that Southern forms of *E. maculata* would prove so lime intolerant.

Last year I potted up about 30 seedlings from within this area and grew them on in 75mm pots. This year I have cleaned up all the dead and dying plants and deep-ripped lines to a depth of 45cm in the hope that this will enable the roots to move more freely and find better nutrition. The plants are in the ground with some grafted plants of other species, so time will tell the story.

Ken Warnes

500km FOR NOTHING

I had long been intrigued with the reported occurrence of *E. decussata* north of Port Augusta and when I read of *E. pentaptera* in the same region I decided to check them out. *Eremophila decussata* is otherwise known only from Ooldea and *E. pentaptera* is very rare and found further North. I had led our local APS group on an introductory trip to the Gawler Ranges and after leaving them to return home I headed north towards Kingoonya. Rain had been patchy and the plants of *E. rotundifolia* on Kokatha were looking rather tired but between Kingoonya and Glendambo the *E. duttonii* were very fresh and flowering well. I headed East through Mt. Eba,

collecting some *E. maculata* flowering in a creek but the country became increasingly dry. I discovered on my arrival at Billa Kalina that apart from the rain in January that had resulted in them making the front page of our daily newspaper, prompting my trip, they had recorded 10mm for the year. Suffice to say that the only specimen I saw of *E. decussata* was a dead plant in the House-yard (proves it WAS there) and if the dead sticks in the spot where I was assured the *E. pentaptera* grew were that species, they were well beyond my powers of resuscitation. So that was disappointment after 500km of expectation. However it was all new country and satisfied an itch that needed scratching. And as we returned via Roxby Downs I saw Sturt Peas like I have never seen them before; the rains had been through that area. A strong-growing, white-foliaged form of *E. glabra* from Parakeelya Stn struck well but died after potting on. Result of the trip = one *E. maculata*.

Ken Warnes

EREMOPHILA LATROBEI

Back in the early days when I was building up a cutting grown collection of the variations in *E. glabra*, I became increasingly frustrated at my inability to propagate the almost as variable *E. latrobei*. Cuttings would sit a long time, usually shedding leaves from the base up before finally dying. Those few that made roots failed to pot on. I found that the only form that grew well here was the southern form which begins not far north and west from Port Augusta. Other members had some limited success with propagation but not with cultivation. Ray Isaacson provided the breakthrough with his grafting work and with the help of several friends I now have a collection of 12-15 forms. Frost has not been a problem here, but Russell Wait says it affects them in his area. The grey-foliaged forms do suffer die-back on the tips in prolonged wet spells but recover well when the sun comes out. As most forms flower profusely on short side spurs this can actually enhance the flowering, which is remarkably rapid following the autumn rains. Following the very dry and hot summer just experienced, when many plants were put under stress, I was amazed that the *E. latrobei* were in good flower within a month of rain falling.

I have been unable to observe a pattern of particular forms that have developed in specific areas. Either that, or the origins of material supplied have not been accurate. For example what I call the Yowah (Qld) form seems to be very similar to one from central W.A.; equally, what I call the Paroo (Qld, NSW) form has a W.A. version. There are many more examples that on superficial study appear to cross over. Very narrow leaf forms from West of Kata Tjuta to the WA border crossing on the Sandy Blight Junction Rd must be close to ssp. *filiformis* that is listed as confined to the Hammersley Ranges. From my observations I would say that variations do not generally over-lap in the field, with the possible exception being west of Alice Springs where green and grey leafed forms were regularly interspersed. They can often grow in close proximity but as a general rule the green leafed forms will be on the flats, grey leafed on the stony rises. You will notice that I am not using the two sub-species named in the revision; these are based on the hairs on the sepals, and may not always reflect the general appearance of the plant in question.

Some forms are beginning to become available, one in particular being sold at high prices (\$29-\$49) in general nurseries. It is a lovely form with relatively low, dense habit, grey broad linear leaves and bright pink flowers. I have seen this form in barren creek-beds between Birdsville and Windorah but I believe it extends well into western NSW. I doubt if it will survive long unless there is adequate exposure and air movement, but it is a beauty. A yellow-orange flowered form from Siam Stn, NW of Iron Knob is also being grown. This is a colour selection of the most southerly occurring form which has glabrous green leaves and should be more adaptable. It grafts readily. The normal colour of this form is the full range from orange to scarlet.

The habit of this very variable species is from low and spreading to spindly upright (2m). Foliage varies from linear to spatulate, almost white to deep green, glossy to soft downy. The flowers vary from deep pink through the whole range of reds to brilliant scarlet, quite small to large. The star-like calyx can be a feature as well, varying from lime-green to crimson. Many forms become very spindly but should respond to pruning. It is listed as highly toxic, but the green leafed form in the SA Pastoral Zone is usually heavily grazed. Rabbits can be a problem with this form but grey leafed forms are rarely attacked.

Despite being so widespread and variable the species is usually easy to recognize, the only time I have had difficulty was with a very broad-leaved form in the Gibson Desert that was vegetative only. Shortly afterwards I found it in flower and the penny dropped. It has also been found to hybridize with its close relatives *E. bowmanii* ssp. *latifolia* between Windorah and Quilpie and in large numbers with *E. forrestii* ssp. *forrestii* in several WA locations. The latter hybrid is in cultivation. "Yana Road" is also a presumed hybrid, probably with *E. gilesii*, the original plant collected by Lance Cockburn.

I'm typing this with the rain coming down and a Spiny-Cheeked Honey-Eater calling outside. They have become nearly permanent residents with the availability of suitable food plants for most of the year. I've heard their call in some very remote areas, even in times of drought. Time to plan another trip!

Ken Warnes

FROM YOUR LETTERS

Jocelyn Lindner, Tutye, Vic

28.05.08 I have established a number of *E. maculata* plants from the ones grown from seed by Frank Fitzpatrick at Walpeup. (Frank moved to Toowoomba from Walpeup, where he set up the Dryland Garden with a good selection of eremophilas. Frank continues to grow eremophilas in Toowoomba.) Many of the *E. maculata* seedlings are from plants in the Dryland Garden and are often commented on by visitors.

Before he left he asked me to take cuttings from many of the ones he had in his private garden, I have established them here. I intend to take photos of them and put them with the information he gave me on each plant. I haven't a clue as to what I will do with it, but thought that it should be recorded, even if it is only kept at Walpeup; there are a few interesting ones. The frustrating part about all this is that the ones on the Walpeup garden are named after his relations, so that you have people asking "where can I buy Walpy Jess?"

Most of the eremophilas are still surviving despite the frosts and the dry of the past year. We are fortunate that we have plenty of bore water, despite it being a little salty.

(Members travelling on the Mallee Highway might like to take a short stop off to visit the Walpeup Dryland Garden on their way between Ouyen and Pinaroo. It is on the left hand side of the road in the town centre, when travelling east.)

Bob O'Neill, Wandin Vic

25.04.08 We have survived the long, dry spell that is forecast to end tonight, as we are supposed to have three days of rain, perhaps up to 25mm. We will see!

To this point we have lost maybe 150 to 200 younger plants that were put out latish last year. We missed out on the summer storms that more frequently have come our way, so the plants just gave up the ghost. Still, a lot of young plants did survive, so hopefully we can commence planting shortly and fill the gaps over the next month.

We have done well with eremophilas. Over the past year we would have added in the order of twenty five species or more, including several grafted ones from Phillip Vaughan. Generally speaking we have lost very few eremophilas. The drier conditions seem to have really suited them.

A strong wind blew through a couple of weeks ago and did a little damage to the trees here. A plus was that we have been able to be supplied with seven loads of mulch which is not always easy to come by. To do what we would like to do, we would need at least another 6-7 loads over the next few weeks. The dry has helped to keep the weeds down, so the place is very clean.

Sue Oldfield, Rockbank, Vic

21.04.08 We had a similar run of ten days over 35°C and four over 40°C, then the windstorms a couple of weeks ago. I'm surprised anything is still alive. I'm beginning to think it will never rain – reduced my herd by 40% last year and another 50% this year which has been much worse.

A friend who also grows eremophilas asked what we do to remove resin when doing cuttings. I never have! Do other people?

Chris Strachan, South Oakleigh, Vic

Great Newsletter – you get the strong feeling that things are really picking up with activities and a growing interest and respect in eremophilas. Early Newsletters reflected a small but dedicated band of enthusiasts and believers in the potential of eremophilas in their gardens. Continuing drought conditions have 'swelled the ranks' and people are starting to listen to us when we talk about their suitability to survive (and thrive) with little rainfall.

The recently formed Melbourne Eremophila Group has filled the need for keen members to get together and swap information, cutting material and to see each other's gardens.

Brother Howard, Tabulam, NSW

29.04.08. Due to the depredations of wallabies all my eremophilas are in large pots, dotted around the veggie garden. All are thriving!

Marion & John Simmons, Legana, Tas.

Legana is about 12km north of Launceston on the West Tamar. The garden is about 1¼ acres of grey loam, typical of the region. Drainage is pretty good as the land has a gentle slope towards the east. We have been increasing the range of eremophilas, particularly during the last six months or so as they have become available at the local nurseries and we now have about thirty five plants of around eight species, plus several hybrids.

As many have found, we too have found that older plants in the garden are very reliable, hardy and not worried by a lack of water. New plants are watered fairly regularly until they are settled, then they are on their own.

The list supplied indicates that they have the following species growing:

Eremophila calorhabdos, *E. decipiens*, *E. denticulata*, *E. drummondii*, *E. glabra* and *E. maculata* (several forms of the latter two are listed.) In pots they have growing *E. denticulata*, *E. drummondii*, *E. (drummondii x nivea)*, *E. glabra*, *E. maculata* and *E. 'Summertime Blue'*.

(Marion and John are two new members of the Eremophila Study Group – we used to have several members from Tasmania, however, they lived in the south of the island and conditions were not that favourable to the genus as a whole.)

Australia's Eremophilas changing gardens for a changing climate

This exciting new publication will add to the existing publications relating to the genus.

Extent -272 pages. Dimensions - 260mm x 185mm. Over 500 coloured photographs.

Release: September 2008.

RRP \$49.95: plus postage and packing.

Study Group Members Special - \$40 plus packaging and postage.

One of the greatest challenges for any gardener is selecting attractive or functional plants that require very little water. *Australia's Eremophilas changing gardens for a changing climate* enables the gardener to select a suitable *Eremophila*, which will thrive in just about any situation, but it is important to choose the right species. This book contains a brief description, extensive cultivation and growing hints and additional notes for each of the 216 described species of *Eremophila*. It also includes many hybrids and cultivars; some of which will be released shortly and information on propagating from cuttings, seed, and how to graft.

This book is intended to be a useful resource, not only for the everyday gardener, but also for the enthusiastic collector, landscapers, and the horticultural industry. Eremophilas are exceptional shrubs, which help to bring colour and habitat to gardens at a time of acute water shortage.

The authors, Norma Boschen, Maree Goods and Russell Wait have been propagating, growing and trialling eremophilas for 30 to 40 years. All have travelled extensively, observing them in their natural habitat, and have been responsible for introducing many new species into cultivation. Each of them has extensive collections of eremophilas.

Further enquiries can be made by phone (03) 5383 2229 or eremophilas@skymesh.com.au.

Orders (with cost of packaging and postage added - rates for Victoria: \$10, Interstate: \$14) with payment can be posted to:

Maree Goods
Private Bag 2197
Horsham VIC 3400.

NEXT ISSUE

I plan to have the next Newsletter ready to send out in early December. If you were not able to send anything in for this issue, please try to send a few notes to me by the middle of November and I will include them.

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