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Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants
EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER No. 96

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I started to look at writing the April Newsletter about the beginning of March and then decided to put it away since I had nothing from members to use in its preparation. I looked again at the beginning of April, realizing that it was due out sometime this month: again it was a rather soul-less exercise since there was no more in the closet than there had been just one month earlier. It has now become a May Newsletter!

I realize that there have been many who have been affected in one way or another by the severe bushfires in Victoria and on the other end of the weather spectrum, the cyclones in northern Queensland and the severe flooding along the eastern seaboard. However, when I checked my calendar, I noticed that most of these horrendous events happened after the time when I would have expected to have received some material.

The brief report on the use of False Sandalwood for the treatment of termites has raised a couple of questions from members, but unfortunately I have not been able to find out anything more than I extracted from the TV report. If any member has been able to find out more, or perhaps better still, used it in the treatment of termites themselves, I would be very pleased to receive a brief report of the treatment and the results –either positive or negative.

Coincidentally I was typing material into the second page when an email message arrived from Charles Farrugia, leader of the Sydney Group, containing the minutes of the meeting which they held on 4th April. This was a life-saver, since there is material contained in it which is relevant to us all – what is more it will allow me to now produce a four-page Newsletter. These minutes confirm that Noel Gane is in a nursing home in Sydney and that Charles is planning to visit him in the next couple of weeks and will send to me a report on his situation.

Brian Collis

21ST NATIONAL CONFERENCE – GEELONG

The Conference is being held in Geelong from 26 September – 2 October. Earlybird registrations are still available if paid prior to 30th June. If you have not registered and are still planning to attend I suggest that you contact the Seminar Convenor (for other than registrations) hakeaholic@aapt.net.au and registrations are to be directed to Sue Guymmer asgap2009@gmail.com

It is my intention to present another display of eremophilas on behalf of the Eremophila Study Group. In the August/September Newsletter I will let you know of the details and what I might be needing to make the display one which is worthwhile. Help from members will be requested, especially with cuts for display.

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL FOR 2009 – THOSE MEMBERS NEEDING TO RENEW HAVE A RED DOT IN THE TOP RIGHT HAND CORNER – RATE UNCHANGED AT \$5 PER YEAR.

GROWING EREMOPHILAS IN SOUTHERN NSW

We have a half-acre house block in Moama NSW and have sufficient room to experiment with *Eremophila* plants. This being a semi-arid region of Australia, we therefore have to change our gardening practices after previously living in dry, rainforest country around Wauchope NSW. We now have only a 350mm median rainfall.

There was no rain for the garden when it was unattended for 6 weeks over the period Aug to Oct 2008. Our eremophilas sustained some damage even though the garden was covered by 50mm of wood chips. At the end of that 6 week period, those established species most affected were *E. glabra* 'Murchison Magic', *E. purpurascens* probably now dead and *E. drummondii* with 75% dieback.

I had previously discovered that *E. glabra* 'Murchison Magic' and *E. maculata* subsp. *brevifolia* prefer a very damp location as they can't cope with dry soils.

Surprisingly, there was less damage in the garden after Saturday 7th Feb when the air temperature reached 47° C. One month later, I could see that the sustained high temperature had little or no effect on the bushy and compact shrubs. The most affected were the prostrate or open woody shrubs that allowed the sun to penetrate and heat the

wood chips to an even higher temperature. The foliage died on the outermost plant stems in close contact with the wood chips. Those plants are now more open than before. The cream flowering form of *E. laanii* probably sustained the most damage. *Grevillea lanigera* and prostrate form of *G. juniperina* were similarly affected.

Of the fifty or so *Eremophila* species, I consider *E. racemosa* to be one of the most unsatisfactory for a home garden. It is very bushy and forms a good windbreak but most times it has dieback for 50mm or more which seems to occur when not regularly watered.

Eremophila laanii, cream flowering form, is an open and woody bush tending to become untidy after flowering and requires considerable pruning to make it more compact. However, the pink flowering form when covered with masses of pink flowers never fails to attract attention in the garden and is quite spectacular.

Of small shrubs for the gardens, I highly recommend the pink flowering *E. youngii* and deep blue flowering *E. macdonnellii*. They are virtually maintenance free, very compact and have attractive flowers and foliage. The ground cover bushes that I believe should be in every garden are *E. weldii* and *E. verticillata*. The low and spreading form of *E. weldii* is a dense ground cover, easily grown and propagated here on the Murray River - probably because it likes this latitude.

My most interesting plant, bought without a label, is what I believe to be *E. verticillata* - after studying my R.J.Chinnock reference book. It is a low spreading compact shrub with purple flowers. To me it resembles a sea anemone. Only recently I heard someone on radio talking about a purple spotted sea anemone and I thought - how appropriate!

FROM YOUR LETTERS

Jan Glazebrook Logan Village, Qld

(Back in January I received a brief report from Jan, together with information about a visit to Brookvale Park, Oakey, Qld., early in April. Unfortunately the date has passed and the information is no longer relevant - Sorry Jan - not enough other material to get this out prior to the event.)

On the home front we have had an unusual summer, with an early wet spell in November, followed by a hot, dry December and early January, but now, in the last week of January, we have had 135mm of rain.

The eremophilas in the ground are all coping very well. Most are grafted on *Myoporum acuminatum*, which is extremely hardy in this part of the world. Plants I brought home from Victoria which are still in pots have not fared as well. I have lost *E. delisseri* and *E. splendens* prostrate; both on their own roots. I am trying to graft as many as I can before we get more showery weather.

The Horsham seminar was wonderful and it was great to see how popular eremophilas have become.

Gordon Brooks - Castle Hill, NSW

Gordon emailed me on 14 March to let me know that Noel Gane, a long term member in the Sydney region had been admitted to a home. Noel had not been able to continue living independently and was experiencing some difficulty settling in to his new surroundings. It is to be hoped that he might be able to do some gardening in the future.

Members will perhaps remember some of the articles which Noel wrote a few years back about the use of horse manure in the preparation of his garden beds at his house, and with the great success he had with his eremophilas in this preparation, by which he swore.

Richard Travis - South Texas, USA

(I received an email from Richard in early March. The contents of the emails will indicate the direction he wanted to take.)

Colin:

"I noticed that you are in charge of the Eremophila Study group in Australia. I have an interest in them here in the US in South Texas where the climate is semi-arid, but at the same time humid. Some eremophilas have been tried here from time to time, usually coming from Arizona, but few seem to have lasted for any amount of time, with the notable exception of a nice planting of *E. maculata* at the San Antonia botanical gardens.

I was wondering if you could offer any advice. I notice where some species (including *E. maculata*) occur all the way to the Queensland coastal region in the middle of the state. Are these forms more tolerant of humidity?

Also can you offer any tips on growing species like *E. bignoniiflora* from seed.?"

(I replied to Richard in general terms and he then replied further.)

"Thanks for the information. How does one prepare a smoke water treatment?

Are there any *E. maculata* cultivars that are particularly well adapted to humid conditions?

Is 'Carmine Star' a good choice for Queensland?"

He also wrote a few hours later to say:

"Thanks for the tips. I don't know how I can do smoke-water here, but will try to find some. I'm more than ready to give the seeds a crack (literally). I've tried to germinate *Acrocomia* palm seed before and they possibly could not be harder than those (I got pretty good at smashing them just right!)

Our climate is quite humid and coastal and we only get about 600-750mm of annual rain, which coupled with the high temperatures leads to a semi-arid climate but with the fungal diseases of more tropical climates. I am imagining that the climate of coastal central Queensland is similar.

If you know of any cultivars that do well in such a climate it would be appreciated to know.

The cultivars available here include the following and it would be appreciated if you could comment on of them.

'Carmine Star', 'Outback Bicolor', 'Outback Bluey', 'Bushfire', 'Pink Lady', *E. prostrata*, 'OB Sunrise', 'Outback Cupid', *E. diversifolia*, *E. glabra*, 'Murchison River', *E. laanii* and *E. maculata* and several cultivars, *E. racemosa*, *E. (polyclada x divaricata)* as 'Summertime Blue' and *E. hygrophana*.

HOW DID OUR EREMOPHILAS COPE WITH THE CONSTANT, EXTREME, SUMMER HEAT AND THE WET SPELL AFTERWARDS?

Each member commented differently on how their eremophilas coped through the constant hot summer conditions. Charles said that he pruned his eremophilas very late this year in mid-January, two weeks before the very hot weather spell started. Some eremophilas responded very well e.g. *E. splendens*, *E. pterocarpa*, *E. aff. gilesii*, *E. warnesii*, *E. delisseri* (all grafted) and *E. dempsteri*. Others like *E. complanata* and some varieties of *E. maculata*, and *E. macdonnellii* (grey green foliage / pink flowers), their foliage turned to pale green. Ken Warnes (via email) suggested this was due to lack of moisture. This is possible because in my area we had a long, dry spell before the hot weather arrived. The three *E. nivea* had most of their foliage burnt by the heat. Others like *E. muelleriana*, *E. willsii* and two varieties of *E. spectabilis*, *E. calorhabdos*, *E. (ionantha x caerulea)*, *E. (nivea x drummondii)* and *E. (nivea x christophorii)* were showing signs of stress.

Andrew who lives just outside the Sydney region said that the eremophilas in his garden survived quite well but he had a few losses with the ones in his father's garden, which is only a short distance away.

Ian and Gordon said their eremophilas came through the hot spell quite well but they suffered a few losses.

Comments were that all the members' gardens, although they are in the Sydney region or just outside of Sydney, have different soils and conditions and this makes a difference to how the eremophilas cope and survive. When the wet cooler weather arrived all members agreed it transformed our gardens.

Charles said that all his stressed eremophilas including *E. nivea* have sent a lot of new growth. *Eremophila warnesii* and *E. hygrophana* had quite a bit of dieback due to the wet weather, but since the end of the wet spell they have shown a lot of new growth. All members agreed that in Ian and Tamara Cox's garden, all the eremophilas and other genera, are looking magnificent.

Andrew commented that it doesn't matter what the weather conditions are, eremophilas seemed to adapt to those conditions.

(This extract from the April meeting minutes of the Sydney Group)

**KEN WARNES' EMAIL
AS SENT TO THE SYDNEY GROUP**

One of Ken Warnes comments in his email was that after the sort of rainfall we had in Sydney we should be looking for *Eremophila* seedlings and he wrote about the large number of seedlings appearing in his garden. We are wondering why that here in Sydney none of our members have any experience of *Eremophila* seedlings in their garden at this time (one exception being three *E. debilis* [which is a local species] seedlings on a heavily pebbled path in Charles's garden). We all have plenty of seeds in our gardens but no seedlings. Charles commented that about 20 years ago he had a *Grevillea* 'Coochin Hills' in his front garden. Three years ago three seedlings germinated in a pebbled area. One seedling survived and this year it is about 3 metres high and already flowered twice.

(It might be that there are plenty of fruits in the garden, but are there any seeds in those fruits? It is highly probable that there are insufficient pollinators in the Sydney gardens and so there are insufficient mechanisms for pollination to take place. As a result fruits form and harden but there is no seed development inside those fruits. It could be worthwhile to split some of the hardened fruits and to try to locate seeds within the locules in those fruits. My guess is that they will be 'seedless' or carry very few seeds. Then there is the matter of conditions right for germination. We are well aware of the problems that our members have experienced when trying to grow eremophilas from seed artificially in pots etc. Colin.)

A question asked is whether any one knows if these are old, weathered, *Eremophila* seeds or new ones that are germinating in such gardens as Russell Wait's or Ken's. Gordon commented that the soil structure in South Australia is different from those in Sydney. In SA the soil is often heavier and the moisture seems to take longer to seep down to the sub-soil. Could this be another factor, affecting *Eremophila* seed germination? The Sydney members would also like to thank Ken Warnes for his support of our sub-Study Group. No question, query, plant identification or request for cuttings was ever ignored.

(This extract from the April meeting minutes of the Sydney Group)

**COPYRIGHT
A FURTHER ITEM FROM THE SYDNEY MINUTES**

One item that wasn't listed on the agenda but was mentioned at this meeting was the question of copyright.

All members agreed that all Study Group material (and that from other Study Groups) should be acknowledged when used by others. The reason for this is not to stop free access to our articles but in order that anyone using the Study Group material should give appropriate credit and facilitate response when required. Charles mentioned an example where a native plant nursery was handing out fact sheets that were an exact copy of APS fact sheets, but there was no acknowledgement at all of APS. It was agreed that the matter with regard to Study Group material should be brought to Colin's attention.

(This matter is of a great concern to all organisations where information is freely accessible to the general public without impediment. Generally most who wish to use the material as published do the right thing and seek permission from the editor who in turn will, where appropriate, usually approach the author of the work for permission to reprint. The general rule is that permission is granted provided that the material is not to be used for commercial gain. For reproduction in Newsletters, other like-minded journals etc, permission is given, but where a nursery or commercial publication wishes to use it the answer is generally NO. Rarely do these organisations offer any financial return for the use of someone else's intellectual property.)

(This extract from the minutes of the April meeting of the Sydney group)

OTHER EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP SUB-BRANCHES

Our members expressed the desire to make regular contact and exchange group meeting minutes and maybe cuttings in the future. Charles said that he did make contact with the Victorian sub branch but this contact did not progress. Charles said that we should not overstep our mark within the Eremophila Study Group. All members agreed that in order to improve our knowledge about eremophilas it is worth having regular contact with the sub-branches with the concurrence of the Study Group Leader and in a manner he/she approves.

(This from the minutes of the April, meeting of the Sydney Group)

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