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Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants
EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER No. 99

September 2010

**THANKYOU TO ALL WHO HAVE PAID THEIR SUBSCRIPTIONS
YOUR RECEIPT IS ENCLOSED OR HAS BEEN FORWARDED TO YOU.**

**FOR THOSE MEMBERS WHO NEED TO RENEW FOR 2010-2011 HAVE PLACED A RED
DOT IN THE TOP RIGHT HAND CORNER THIS MONTH.**

SUBSCRIPTION RATE IS UNCHANGED AT \$5 PER YEAR.

I believe that I have now caught up with most of the back correspondence. If I have missed doing so and have not responded to your letter would you please write to me again and let me know of my error.

I had almost completed this issue in early July, however, time escaped me and Myrnie & I had to go to Singapore for their Orchid & Garden Show. Following this, in early September we went to New Zealand for their National Orchid Extravaganza. It was only recently, on our return, that I received a reminder from one of our members that I had not banked his cheque. I then realised that I had not completed the newsletter and on checking my computer found the almost completed #99 still sitting there waiting for my attention.

My apologies to you all for my tardiness! Myrnie & I decided that since we did not manage to do the things we planned to do in the latter half of last year we would do as much as we could as soon as things looked a lot rosier. I hope that from now on my time and energy will enable me to do the job more efficiently.

Since sending the last Newsletter I have received several letters which should be of some interest to you all.

FROM YOUR LETTERS

Charles Farrugia, Seven Hills, NSW

As I mentioned previously we had a very wet couple of weeks. The garden is looking good, with the following observations:

Eremophila lactea – grafted onto *E. denticulata* subsp. *trisulcata*. It is about 3-4 years old, 1.4m high and planted in an area that is totally mulched with pebbles. It was heavily pruned in late November. It had recovered very well from this heavy pruning with a lot of new growth. What happened after the wet period surprised me – quite a bit of die-back with the old foliage in the middle of the plant. It is starting to recover now.

Eremophila prostrata – grafted onto *Myoporum* sp. stock. Before the rain it was growing very well and winding itself along the garden bed. After the rain it wasn't looking too good and I thought that I was going to lose it. It has recovered but what is now happening is this: the branches on the ground have died and the other branches are becoming more upright. They have new growth on them.

Some species that have taken off after the rain are: *E. macdonnellii* 'Simpson Desert form', *E. forrestii*, *E. duttonii* and *E. youngii*.

Hans Griesser, Gumeracha, SA

It is not surprising at all that many eremophilas do not get attacked by termites. Reports in the scientific literature, such as by Ghisalberti and colleagues at the University of Western Australia and by Chi and colleagues at the University of South Australia, have described the extraction from many *Eremophila* species of a variety of diterpenes and sesquiterpenes. It is well known that termites do not like such chemicals and related classes of chemicals. It was therefore not surprising to me at all when the termite resistance of *E. mitchellii* was reported; in fact, it seemed obvious and predictable. Many other plants rich in essential oils are not attacked by termites; for example I noticed in the Wentworth area that dead trunks of Belah pines (*Callitris* sp.) remain standing for what looks like many years while other wood is being eaten by termites. Again, Belah wood is very rich in oils including terpenes.

Therefore, for those growers who have trouble with termites attacking *Myoporum* rootstock, it may be worth trying to use as grafting rootstock *Eremophila* species that contain diterpenes. Typically that is the case for those

species with sticky leaf resins. The stickiest species often do not root easily, but species such as *E. drummondii* and *E. denticulata* ssp. *trisulcata* root well generally and may have enough such chemicals to deter termites. I understand that some growers have used the latter as rootstock and it would be interesting to hear whether they have any observations regarding termite resistance.

Alternatively and perhaps better, *E. lucida* is very rich in diterpenes and should be termite resistant as well as *E. mitchellii*; *E. lucida* strikes easily for me, but I have not yet tried to use it as a grafting rootstock. Nor do I have termites here to see which *Eremophila* species they attack, but I'd love to correspond with an eremophila grower who has some friendly local termites and would be prepared to offer them some of those *Eremophila* species as food. I would predict that many of the silver-leaved species, on the other hand, would be equally palatable to termites as the *Myoporum insulare* rootstock. There is a good opportunity for the Study Group to assemble some useful information!

Ken Warnes, Owen, SA

I have a daughter in Canberra so I will respond to Lyndal Thorburn and offer to supply material when we visit. I hadn't connected Queanbeyan to Canberra before, my lazy brain not working. I can also respond to Anne Langmaid re her female only *Eremophila desertii*, we have natural plants here that are almost exclusively male. It's of interest that the plants in cultivation are mainly female because the male flowers tend to be the showier (as in *Dodonaea* sp.) and human nature suggests that cuts would be taken from the more showy plant. As in my experience it isn't the easiest to propagate it may well be that most plants in Victoria are of a common origin, hence the lack of pollination and fruit set.

From the Queensland report I presume their 3rd method is what I call cutting grafts. I note with interest that both cuttings (presumably stock and scion) are dipped in cutting medium. I have wondered if this would help but Ray Isaacson tried it years ago and found all it did was cause callousing around the graft with no improvement in "take". Perhaps a weak hormone mix such as purple Clonex® rather than the standard red is used. As always, every idea creates more questions.

I seem to have regular contact from Charles, occasionally I can satisfy him but more often it just leads to more questions. I've sent him copies of my bush travel articles and apparently he sits there with maps and charts of all description trying to follow my progress. It makes me realize that when I write for a South Australian readership we really are very parochial and that to an interstate reader it makes little sense. In the same vein, when I wrote the "History" for the *Eremophila* book, the Editor wanted an explanation of "The Beadell Tracks". To a local it is assumed that everyone knows about them, but in the eastern states they are not nearly as well recognised as here.

Marion Simmons, Legana, Tasmania

A short report on how the eremophilas are faring in our garden. Some of them are battling because of the heavy frosts we had had so far this winter and we have had a lot of rain as well after years of drought. None have died but they certainly haven't grown very much either.

Eremophila microtheca flowered quite well earlier and has a few flowers at present (July), as have several yellow-flowered *E. maculata* type plants; one is a small bush, the other prostrate. *Eremophila drummondii* always has some flowers. The 'old' (about twenty years or more) red-flowering plants of *E. maculata* are flowering, as is an orangey coloured prostrate, grey-leaved *E. glabra*.

We still have one plant of *E. nivea* (on its own roots) which is surviving quite well and in bud, but this is planted under the shelter of an overhanging *Acacia*, so it is not exposed to the frost.

Ainslie Lines, Moree, NSW

November was just so difficult; in fact all summer was for us because we had trouble with our water supply. I have nine plants in pots that I was not game to plant into the garden for fear of losing them. I've potted them on and am hoping for a better spring season

I don't know whether I have mentioned previously just how marvelous a book the Australian Eremophilas by Norma Boschen, Maree Goods and Russell Wait is. Full of photos and easy to read and written by people with personal experience.

Something I haven't seen discussed in the Newsletters (since I have been receiving them) is pest and diseases of eremophilas. I have just been rubbing brown scale of three of my potted plants and would love to have a natural predator for that, but I do look after and encourage a little black Lady Bird that has brown on both ends of it – I

don't know its name – that has a larva that looks like a big white woolly, fast-moving mealy bug. It eats the cottony cushion scale that gets on so many of my plants in large numbers.

It was interesting again to hear the news of the progress of the Sydney Group. I noticed mention of *E. debilis*. It is endemic to my area but wasn't in my garden until I planted it here and now it is coming up in all sorts of places, including the lawn. I had always assumed that it was a suckering species.

And Queensland members mentioned taking cuttings in autumn and winter – I must try that!

**ASGAP EREMOPHILA STUDY GROUP
REPORT August 2010**

(I have included in this Newsletter my 2010 report to Council which was forwarded to the Study Group Coordinator in August.)

The Eremophila Study Group has continued to operate in a steady but relatively quiet manner for the past twelve months. The numbers of collecting trips undertaken by members in recent times has diminished, due in part to the lack of rain in many areas. From those trips undertaken we have benefited further from the findings with several new species and varietal forms being located.

Three newsletters have been released in this membership year: the changed dates of release being due to the illnesses to both my wife and me in the latter part of 2009. The three newsletters produced (September 2009, May 2010 and July 2010, 8 pages, 8 pages and 5 pages respectively), carried comprehensive information provided by members of the Study Group.

Drought and hence lack of water for general watering has been reported by many members, however, they also report that their eremophilas are surviving better than many other plants in their gardens

The Sydney group has continued to meet in metropolitan Sydney at the homes of several of their members and the second group, based in Melbourne, is catering for the needs of members living in or near the metropolitan area of Melbourne. A newly formed group in southern Queensland has been very active over the past eighteen months. Reports have been received from the Sydney and Queensland groups, with extracts printed in the Newsletters for all members to read

Unfortunately I was unable to attend the conference in Geelong and thus there was not the usual Eremophila display presented.

The current mailing list stands at 182, which includes approximately 20 clubs and organisations. A significant number are joint memberships and hence the Study Group represents well over 200 individual enthusiasts. Membership rates will stay at \$5 for the coming year. It is not my intention to extend membership to cover electronic mailing of the Newsletter at this stage.

Our current bank balance (19 May 2010), held in the name of the ASGAP Eremophila Study Group at the Bank of South Australia, is \$4,498.59.

Colin Jennings

PHOTOCOPIER

For the past few years I have had access to a photocopier owned by another plant organisation to which I belong.

Due to cost increases for contract servicing they were looking at cancelling the contract which would have left us without the use of a 'cheap' copier.

In order to keep a copier available I have decided to pay from our funds, on your behalf, \$250 (half the new rate) for the service contract. This includes toner and call-out service at all times as well as parts replacement. This should not involve us in any other costs beside paper.

Colin Jennings
Leader, ASGAP Eremophila Study Group,
4 Kinnaird Crescent, Highbury SA 5089

cje97694@bigpond.net.au

