

EUCALYPTUS STUDY GROUP, NEWSLETTER

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Issue 29

A new beginning for the Eucalyptus Study Group



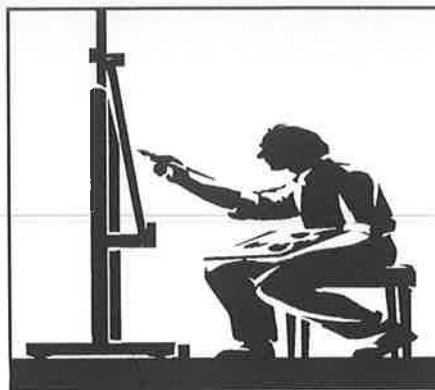
fter a recess of some four years the Eucalyptus Study Group is back on the road.

My name is Angus Stewart and I am your new leader. I would like to take the opportunity to thank Shona Sadlier for her stewardship of the group in the past. I am sure that I express the sentiments of us all when I thank her for her hard work and wish her a speedy & full recovery from the illness that caused her retirement from the leadership of the study group and I hope that she will remain in the group.

I am not a professional eucalyptologist in any sense and do not pretend to know each and every species. However, I am a very passionate plant person and I could no longer stand to see arguably the world's most important tree genus without its own study group!

With the rebirth of our group I would like each and every one of you to think hard about the future direction we should take. My own personal opinion is that we should be focussing on the documentation and conservation through cultivation of the wonderful genetic diversity of the genus. I would like to see us working with botanical gardens and private arboreta to further scientific knowledge of eucalypts.

As a professional horticulturist I also have a passion for the growing of eucs as not only ornamentals, but also as timber trees and we can certainly continue to further knowledge in this area. The dwarf eucalypts for gardens project of previous years could be resurrected and given new impetus.



Your faithful leader putting the finishing touches to the first newsletter

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I would appreciate it if all renewing members could write me a short note giving me their latest eucalypt gossip. This will ensure a longer newsletter next issue!

New red flowered bloodwood hybrids released



The bloodwood group forms a very distinctive unit within the eucalypts. So distinct, in fact, that botanists have now reclassified them as a separate genus to be known as *Corymbia*. The bloodwoods form a very distinctive group because of the terminal (corymbose) groups of flowers (hence the name *Corymbia*). I

The spectacular displays that bloodwoods give has long been admired by gardeners with the red flowering gum (*E. or should it be C. ficifolia*). It is popular in many places around the world. However, for those in humid climates such as Sydney, it has proven to be a disappointment. To overcome this a plant breeder has crossed *E. ficifolia* with the swamp bloodwood, *E. ptychocarpa*. The obvious idea is to combine the spectacular flowering of *ficifolia* with a greater degree of adaptability to more tropical climates from the swamp bloodwood - a rather fascinating case of 'east meets west'.

A rather interesting parallel to this cross is *Grevillea* 'Robyn Gordon' which was a cross between the arid climate *G. binnatifida* and the subtropical species *G. banksii*. The result has been one of the most adaptable and successful native plants of all times.

The scope for breeding of eucalypts is enormous - both for forestry and ornamental purposes. I would love to hear from anyone involved in genetic improvement of eucalypts.

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Corymbia or not to Corymbia - that is the question?

The new hybrid bloodwoods mentioned on page 1 also raise the question about the reclassification of this group. I would love any of our botanically minded members to write an article outlining the story of why the bloodwoods are to be given a new genus. I believe the rationale is that bloodwoods are considered to be more closely related to the angophoras than they are to most other groups of eucalypts.

This poses the dilemma to botanists that if the bloodwoods are closer to the angophoras then either angophoras should be part of the eucalypt genus or the bloodwoods should be raised to a separate genus which is what has happened at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney.

The question appears to be whether other botanists accept the idea and adopt it on a world-wide basis. I would love to hear from any members who could write a more comprehensive piece on this topic.

I personally think the bloodwoods are the group with the greatest ornamental potential of all the eucalypts

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given their often spectacular terminal flowering displays. Eucalypts in other groups often have spectacular flowers but they may be hidden inside the plant.

EUCALYPTUS BOOKS

There are so many wonderful books on eucalypts available and I have collected most of them. One that is not widely available but may be of particular interest to members is *Eucalypt Domestication and Breeding* by Eldridge, Davidson, Harwood and van Wyk. This fascinating book details work done mainly with eucalypts for forestry purposes. It gives detailed information on genetic variation due to provenance (the geographical location where the seed was collected).

MEMBERSHIP FEES DUE

Membership fees are due now and I have set them a little bit higher than previously to ensure that we have enough funds to operate efficiently. The annual fee is set at \$10.00 for Australian members and \$15.00 for overseas members.

Until such time as I can persuade one of you to take on the job of treasurer please send your cheques to Angus Stewart 52 Narara Creek Rd, NARARA NSW 2250.

Important - make your cheque payable to A.S.G.A.P. Eucalyptus Study Group.

PLANET ARK

NATIONAL TREE DAY

For those of our members interested in revegetation Planet Ark (a non-profit organisation that undertakes environmental projects) has organised a national tree day to encourage local communities to plant tree species indigenous to their area. In particular they are encouraging people to plant species indigenous to their area. The organisers are giving away 250,000 empty cardboard milk cartons with seeds of native species attached. The idea in particular is to get children involved in tree planting.

It would seem to me that a group like ours could well encourage the planting of indigenous eucalypts throughout the nation. The National Tree Day will apparently be an annual event so if it is on again next year I would propose that we lend some assistance in terms of providing

Sorry this newsletter is so brief but I felt it was important to get it to you ASAP. I look forward to using your contributions to expand next issue!

advice on species suitable for each region as well as seed that members might collect. If we can provide known provenances then something worthwhile can be achieved.