

NEWSLETTER NO. 1:

Dear Friends,

Please accept my apologies for the delay in Newsletter No. 1. Apart from my own procrastination, another factor helped to delay our launching. Being a new study group I thought it best to wait till the applications for membership started to come in. The response has indeed been good with about twenty definite starters to date. I have been a little embarrassed by some of your letters. When people talk about their experience with 60-70 Hakeas in their garden I feel presumptuous in offering to lead this group. Yet, is it not encouraging that from the outset there is considerable depth of interest and experience available to share amongst ourselves, and eventually to a wider group of people? A very pleasant surprise was to receive a letter from George Althofer from the Burrendong Arboretum near Wellington N.S.W., where he and his brother Peter are growing about 100 species of Hakea - "mostly doing well". He has listed in considerable detail his experience, and I will use much of his material in this and following letters.

But first some general comments about the Hakea group. May I introduce myself. I am a clinical Pathologist living in Penrith about 30 miles west of Sydney, at the foothills of the Blue Mountains. Annual rain fall is about 30" per year, with some ghastly outpourings in late Summer-early autumn, with sometimes up to 14" in 10 days. This annual downpour usually dashes many of my botanical hopes, nurtured over the previous year and brings home to me anew that we who live in the East have to come to grips with the harsh reality that many of the areas where the best Australian species grown receive their annual soaking in the winter months.

I know this summer deluging has played havoc with Hakeas in Melbourne this year. Austraflo nurseries tell me they have cut their Hakea range to about one third that of previous years and unless groups such as ours come up with some answers about their survival, Austraflo will not be again offering the range that they have had in the past.

What aims should we have in this group? I am assured by those with experience in running study groups that we should have one or two basic aims in mind and try to solve a few problems at a time. However, may I cast the net a little wider in this first letter and share with some of the areas that I consider need attention.

1. Historical: Baron von Hake. Who was the old boy? What sort of person was he? Did he ever know much about the genus named after him? Did he give an embarrassed sideways glance to his friends when some botanical enthusiast showed him a dried out herbarium specimen of Hakea sericea as an example of the type of plant which would immortalize his name? Let the amateur historians amongst us send in any historical material they may have stumbled across. Who knows what the past hides about our austere patron. I believe there is much room for some serious dramatization for television or radio about the early days of Australian Botany. Sir Joseph Banks descriptions about Australian plants, given at public meetings in

England on his return from Australia, aroused a great excitement at the time - alas too little shared by the majority of Australians today.

2. Systematics: We must draw up a list of all the known species of Hakeas. Some authors list 130 of them, others state that between 160-170 are known. People who roam the great outback tell me there are Hakeas "out there" that aren't in any book or list. How many of us have "Hakea species" on the labels in our garden plantings. I will make a start in this letter and await your help in filling in the gaps.
  3. Literature: My dream is to pick up a book similar to Banksias by Halliday or Eucalypts of the Western Australia Goldfields, devoted entirely to Hakeas. I would like to make this a labour of love and aim to produce something like this one day, with lots of beautiful photographs - an exhaustive but generally attractive book covering every known Hakea.
  4. Promotion: Once we are acquainted with what's what amongst the Hakeas we should draw up a list of the 30-40 of the more spectacular ones with the best horticultural potential. I think our group could serve a purpose in this area. Much of the information on Hakeas is scattered and anecdotal. I suspect that many of them have a tough survival rate in dry climate but less so in the eastern summer-wet climate.
  5. Propagation: We should set up seed bank and plant sharing facilities. What about lime ( $\text{CaCO}_3$ ) therapy as Jim Webb in Canberra has described for Hakea multilimeata? I suspect that the answers to many of our problems with Hakeas will come from the Calcium study group in Canberra and I think we should all be associated with that group.
  6. For The Future: Would anybody be interested if our group was to run a study tour of the Hakeas of Western and Central Australia? It would take a little organizing, but there are all sorts of travel concessions available for groups, which may make it worth saving for. I think it is important to travel and actually see the plants in their natural environment. We must go while they are still there. Have you read in an old S.G.A.P. issue that dreadful story about some Botanists from Sydney Botanical Gardens who discovered an unusual Hakea at Keepit Dam in Wee Waa, Northern New South Wales. They could not readily identify it, so they took some samples back to their laboratory and finally confirmed that it was indeed a new, hitherto unrecognized species. All excited, they sent back another team, some little time later, to collect more material and prepare details about its distribution. When they arrived at the spot where they had discovered the new species they were dismayed, to find several acres of --- bitumen car park! Alas they searched the district in all directions but the Hakea had gone - probably forever. Is this sad story not a parable for our times? Friends, this is what the Hakea study group is all about.
- Aesthetics: What is it about Hakeas which stir people? One member has written "I'm crazy about Hakeas, and wouldn't have a clue why". It's obviously something of this spirit which has drawn us together

to start this group. There is something stirring about the starkness, the harshness, the contrasts of Hakeas which stirs some deep emotion. The old Hebrew and Persian notion of Paradise as a garden is very rich in meaning. Something tells me that though neglected and destroyed by man, the Hakeas in that great Garden to come will too cause men to cry out, "Oh Lord, what a variety you have made! And in wisdom you have made them all! The earth is full of your riches". (Psalm 104:verse 24) So then, let us make a start. Her is a first list of Hakeas. About 100 have come from George Althofer's letter.

|               |              |              |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| H. ADNATA     | GILBERTII    | PURPUREA     |
| AMPLEXICAULIS | GLABELLA     | PYCNONEURA   |
| ARBOREA       | GIBBOSA      | PLATYSPERMA  |
| AMBIGUA       | GLABRATA     | PLEURINERVIA |
| AURICULATA    | GRAMINEA     | PREISSII     |
| BAXTERI       | FERRUGINEA   | PROPINQUA    |
| BIPINNATIFIDA | FLEXILIS     | PUBESCENS    |
| BUCCULENTA    | INCRASSATA   | PRITZELLII   |
| BROOKEANA     | INVAGINATA   | ROEI         |
| BAKERANA      | IVORYI       | RECURVA      |
| CIRCUMALATA   | KIPPISTIANA  | ROSTRATA     |
| CLAVATA       | LEUCOPTERA   | RUGOSA       |
| CORYMBOSA     | LAURINA      | RUSCIFOLIA   |
| COSTATA       | LEHMANNIANA  | SALICIFOLIA  |
| CUCCULATA     | LASIANTHA    | SALIGNA      |
| CRASSIFOLIA   | LISSOCARPA   | SERICEA      |
| CRISTATA      | LISSOSPERMA  | SCOPARIA     |
| CYCLOCARPA    | LINEARIS     | STENOCARPA   |
| CYCLOPTERA    | LOREA        | SUBSULCATA   |
| CINEREA       | MUELLERIANA  | SULCATA      |
| CERATOPHYLLA  | MICRONEVRA   | SUAVOLENS    |
| CORIACEA      | MULTILINEATA | SUBEREA      |
| CONCHIFOLIA   | MACRAEANA    | STRUMOSA     |
| DACTYLOIDES   | MARGINATA    | SMILACIFOLIA |
| DIVARICATA    | MINYMA       | SUBSULCATA   |
| DOLIDOSTYLIS  | MYRTOIDES    | TERETIFOLIA  |
| ERIANTHA      | MYRTIFOLIUM  | TEPHROSPERMA |
| ERINACEA      | MICROCARPA   | TRIFURCATA   |
| ELLIPTICA     | NITIDA       | ULICINA      |
| EPIGLOTTIS    | NODOSA       | UNDULATA     |
| FALCATA       | NEUROPHYLLA  | VERRUCOSA    |
| FLABELLIFOLIA | OBLIQUA      | VITTATA      |
| FLORIDA       | ORTHORHYNCHA | VARIA        |
| FRANCISIANA   | OLEIFOLIA    | VICTORIAE    |
| FLEXILIS      | OBTUSA       |              |
| FLORULENTA    | PANDNICARPA  |              |
|               | PERSIEHANA   |              |
|               | PROSTRATA    |              |
|               | PETIOLARIS   |              |

This then is a starting list of 109 species. We seem to be missing another 50-60 at least. Any additions?  
Another task will be to list the species naturally belonging to areas or states. e.g. about 18 species come from Queensland. I would be pleased if members could give me a list of Hakeas they are growing, detailing those easy to grow in your area, and those prone to death, especially after heavy rain, along with your comments on those you consider of exceptional horticultural potential.

Odd and Ends:

Could anybody with a complete set of past S.G.A.P. volumes please give me a complete list or references to articles, maybe in the form of a photostat of a page or so in a cumulative index. Also if there is any serious Botanist reading this letter I would be grateful for some more detailed references on Hakeas.

SEED BANK: Since, by and large, Hakeas grow readily from seed and mostly seem to hold their seed till the woody fruit is picked it should be possible to build up a seed bank. Identification is important. Maybe, en passant, we could also note whether it is possible to identify species by their seeds. If you have large quantities of particular species in your area you may wish to donate several hundred clearly identified seeds to get the seed bank started. Obviously this may not be possible with rarer or lesser known species.

Again, I apologise for the delay in getting the group started. I am taking 8-10 weeks in early July leave from my medical practice and will be heading to Western Australia. So it may be several months before the next letter. Thank you for your cooperation to date. I hope something of lasting value will come out of our efforts.

Kind Regards,

*Michael Barratt*

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Michael Barratt.