

Dear Members,

I am your new group leader and therefore should introduce myself. My name is Hazel Blackney (Mrs), I live at 23 Devon Street, Eaglemont 3084 and my telephone number is (03) 45 1917 and I will be very glad to hear from you at any time. For over five years I have been editor of the Victorian Regional Newsletter but will not be standing for re-election again. My husband Tom retired from teaching last year and we look forward to travelling around looking for hakeas and meeting up with other kindred spirits. My qualifications for leader of this group are very vague; because of my inexplicable love of hakeas I have collected a veritable ragbag of information and photographed as many as I could, both in their natural surroundings and under cultivation. Tom and I made a trip around Australia by caravan in 1973 and we collected seed at the time but I have little left. Other friends have collected for me but because of insufficient evidence, most of it is unidentified. Due to our travels however, I can be certain of some species and hope to add to that knowledge as we exchange information within our group.

Mrs. Closs, our Study Group Co-ordinator, has forwarded your letters to me and it is obvious that some of you are new to growing Australian plants while others are very well organised and already keeping excellent records - I fall somewhere in between and as your leader will have to improve my performance pronto! As this is my first newsletter and I have only recently taken over, I think I should devote the rest of this issue to answering the questions of general interest to all members that appeared in your letters.

1. What are the best publications for use in identification?

The majority of hakeas grow in W.A. and I have found "How to Know Western Australian Wildflowers" Part 1, by Blackall and Grieve excellent. However this book was first produced in 1954 and there have been new species named and alterations made to names of old species since then. I understand that a new edition is to be issued shortly, with completely updated information and combining Parts 1, 2, 3, and 4 in the one volume. "Flora of South Australia" by J.M. Black, covers that state, "Plants of Victoria" Vol. 11, by Dr. J.H. Willis, is also comprehensive, but I have no comprehensive records for N.S.W., Queensland or N.T. Tasmanian hakeas are listed in Curtis' "Flora of Tasmania" which I understand is not available at present.

Another source of information is "Australian Plants" Journal. For many years not a mention was made of a hakea of any description but latterly there have been some excellent articles:

Volume 5, No. 44, is almost entirely devoted to hakeas with excellent illustrations.

Volume 8, P. 298, has an excellent article on the H. sulcata group, also H. bakerana.

There are many good articles on hakeas in "A.P." but I strongly suggest that you buy a copy of the "Australian Plants Index" Vols. 1 - 8 to make the most of "A.P." journals.

2. How to identify hakeas?

The majority of hakeas have their seed in woody follicles which remain attached to the plant for a very long period, in some cases it appears that fire is the only thing that will cause them to open. In most cases though, picked fruit will open easily after being put to one side for a few days. Desert hakeas can drop seeds and seedboxes very shortly after maturity and this makes collection a very difficult job.

For identification purposes it is necessary often to know the shape of the wing that either surrounds the seed or perhaps is on one side or another. I had heard Dr. J.H. Willis, former Acting Government Botanist in the National Herbarium, Melbourne, say that hakea seeds were very like fingerprints, no two were the same, and I confirmed that with him recently. However, there is a catch, the differences are sometimes very minute and you can get a wide range of size in the seeds from one plant! In spite of not knowing whether I have collected seed specimens of average size, I feel that in time it will be a valuable aid to identification. So far I have about 40

seeds I am sure of, until I have at least 100 species, this reference book will not be of much use. Incidentally, when buying seed from commercial suppliers, the wing of the seed is badly broken or missing in most packets.

When collecting seed in the bush study the fruit before removal because in some instances the fruit changes shape and appearance as it grows older, and I have found that it is usually the most mature fruit used in illustrations of a species.

There are many needle-foliaged hakeas, over half of the total described so far, and close examination of the flower and fruit is necessary. Many hakeas have very interesting foliage and are often grown in gardens because of this. I refer to *H. flabellifolia* and *H. baxteri*, both with fan-shaped leaves; the stem clasping kind seen in *H. prostrata*, *H. amplexicaulis*, and *H. auriculata* among others; the heavily veined leaves of *H. victoria* and *H. conchifolia*, the strangely dry leaves of *H. smilicifolia*, and I could go on and on. Again you must observe very closely.

Last year on our way home from the S.G.A.P. Biennial Conference in Sydney, we detoured up to Burrendong Arboretum, near Wellington, N.S.W., and had the great pleasure of having Peter Althofer guide us around the hakea section. At one stage Peter showed us *H. prostrata*, there were two forms, both covered in flowers and with similar growth habit, but one had much larger leaves and inflorescences than the other. Nearby Peter showed us another plant which he believes to be *H. pritzelii*, but he warned us about the smell before we reached it. When in flower, this plant has a strong most revolting odour and the only time I had smelt anything like it was when Dr. Neville Marchant showed me a newly described hakea, *H. rubriflora*, during a tour after the 1977 Biennial Conference in Perth. *H. rubriflora* was approximately 3 m. high and with the wind in the right direction, it earned the name "Lavatory Bush" which Neville gave it. I have written to Neville asking about Peter's plant and he replied that there will have to be more work done on *H. prostrata*. It varies considerably and in the Stirling Range area the leaves have a bluish cast, as does *H. pritzelii* also found there, and there is a doubt about *H. pritzelii* being a separate species. I think it is interesting that in the "Descriptive Catalogue of West Australian Plants" by Beard, *H. pritzelii* has not been included in either edition. I cannot find any reference to *H. pritzelii* having flowers with an odour.

3. What is the best way to grow hakeas?

Most people grow from seed and from your letters, some of you like putting the seeds in sideways and some flat. Please let me know if you are getting good results so that we can find the best methods and best seed raising mediums to use.

Hakeas will grow from cuttings quite well. My results have been rather patchy, but I have found hard wood cuttings of *H. cucullata* successful. Again in Perth in 1977, we were taken to a commercial nursery and I was amazed to see that *H. cucullata* cuttings had been prepared from long branches and nothing was thrown away. I could not believe my eyes but I have since raised some myself. I use tip cuttings sometimes but I find that none of them root quickly, perhaps some of you have been more successful.

IN GENERAL

Recently when showing slides of hakeas I was asked if there are any that flower in the summer. I could not think of any, does anyone know if they do?

In Melbourne it is becoming quite common for people buying *H. laurina* to find they have a weeping form. The weeping characteristic does not become apparent immediately, but one belonging to a friend of mine began to weep when it was about 1 m. high. Now it is five feet high and the branches not only touch the ground but are actually lying there! The first one I saw was about 6 m. high, a tall narrow tree and weeping to the ground with flowers at ankle height. Another friend has traced several of the plants to one particular nursery and we hope to make some enquiries there. The tree does not have nearly as many flowers as the usual one, but there is something very beguiling about seeing the long branches in flower wafting back and forth in the wind.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Study Groups are being asked to try to issue three or four newsletters per year and to do this the subscription per member is \$2.00 per year. The postage is the

problem, not the cost of the newsletter which is minute in comparison. some of you have already paid \$2.00, some have paid less, you will find a note with this newsletter explaining the amount owing.

CORRESPONDENCE

Because of the postal charges it will be necessary to send a stamped self-addressed envelope if you want a reply quickly, but if you would prefer me to answer you through the newsletter, a S.A.E. would not be necessary.

SEED BANK

This is something that must be established as soon as possible, all donations of seed should be sent to me with the collection date and place of collection noted please. I want to have a list ready for the next newsletter.

FINALLY

I am very pleased to see old friends among the members of this group, before long I hope I will have been able to meet more of you. I will endeavour to list all your names in the next issue to enable greater contact between us. In closing I would like to commiserate with one of our members, Mrs. Judith Thamm of Two Wells, S.A. who writes: "we lose hakeas just after germination to field mice - they pull out the plants and don't eat them."

Till next time,

Hazel Blackney