

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

HAKEA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER NUMBER 29

Dear members,

I am honoured to have been appointed the new leader of the hakea study group and I would like to thank all the people near and far who gave their support. I hope I don't let anyone down. After I was notified of my new position; my first job was to write to all regions introducing myself and stating the aims of the group.

I said I wanted to encourage more people to grow and cultivate hakeas and pass this information on through the newsletter. Although I am the leader, it is you the members who are the backbone of the group, hopefully supplying any information and experiences in growing hakeas; both success and failures.

Some members want to grow all the hakes while others are content to grow a few. I feel that practical experiences are one of the most important things to record and learn by. What are some of the things we need to know? As we are a scattered lot, we are bound to have a broad range of soils, climates etc, so growing conditions will be quite different.

Seed germination is an important item, like how long is hakea seed viable for, does it vary from species to species, how many people use the paper towel and saucer method, does everyone have a special seed raising mix, does anyone use smoke treatment.

How do our northern species perform in southern climates with cold wet winters?

How do W.A species perform in the east coast?

Do south eastern species grow in W.A?

Do any species self seed in your garden?

What is your yearly rainfall and when does it fall?

Have seasons changed over the years while you have been growing Hakea?

Is your garden subject to frosts, if so how many and how severe?

Are your Hakeas prone to any pests and diseases?

What wildlife do they attract?

What has been the lifespan of your Hakeas?

Have you found some species impossible or very difficult?

Any snippets of information regarding Hakeas will be welcome. I am not a scientist or botanist but I love Hakeas and I want to find out everything I can about them.

People often ask how and why I got interested in Hakeas so here it is.

At Strezlecki where I grew up my dad was a fairly keen gardener but from memory it was mostly exotics. One of the natives he grew was Hakea laurina which with high rainfall, deep grey loam soil and excellent drainage grew massive. So as a kid I was introduced to the genus.

Later on (about 25 years) I started my own garden and two of the plants I wanted to grow were Eucalyptus Ficifolia and Hakea Laurina. The Hakea grew well but the Eucalyptus was a dismal failure. Incidentally the nice smaller eucalyptus have been very disappointing here.

At a local nursery In 1981 I picked out a specimen with terete foliage which looked interesting. The nursery men actually gave it to me as people weren't interested in them. It turned out to be our local species known as Hakea Fraseri but now known as Hakea Lorea. More on it later.

As I got to know more people interested in native plants I learnt more about Hakeas. As they where impossible to buy out of nurseries I learnt how to propagatae and then my collection really started to grow. Generally they have proved reliable, frost hardy and drought hardy. From what I have seen this seems to be the case for other areas. Another bonus is that flowering occurs through the cold to cooler months that brightens up a winter garden.

Our District known as the south Burnett is mostly known for its rich red volume soils and production of peanuts and navy beans. It is a tableland area with Kingaroy being approximately 420 metres above sea level. Winter has cool to cold nights with quite a number of frosts. This year we had five minus 9 degree temperatures and combined with the extreme dry it has been a tough year. These frosts are usually followed by warm sunny days reaching 28 degrees so there is a big variation in temperatures in just 24 hours (there are some areas in the district not subject to frost). Although it is supposed to be a summer rainfall area in reality it has been very erratic. Rainfall average is 28 inches per year with the driest 13 inches and the wettest 47 inches since we have been here. Our soil is a light loam with some stone and little clay content. It has good drainage and can dry out fairly quickly.

HAKEA LOREA

There is only one Hakea recorded for our district known as Hakea Fraseri but since the revision it's now Hakea Lorea. It differs quite a bit from the species that occur further west. Most of the Lorea's I have seen grow naturally in open woodland but our "local form grows in thick scrub in light, deep snuffy red soil. Melaleuca Groveana, Phebalium Notti, Boronia rosmarinifolia and a number of other desirable shrubs also occur in the same area.

In cultivation in my own garden the oldest shrub is multi trunked and is about 8 metres tall. With long terete leaves and typical corky bark it is an attractive plant. In a good season here it flowers from late February to September making it a very long flowering period indeed. The flowers are large in form being white with a purplish base. They have an undesirable smell up close but attract a large variety of insects, sugar gliders, honeyeaters and lorikeets. Seed capsules are bright green before ageing to brown as they approach opening. Like all the Lorea Group seed is released on maturity but can be picked when it looks on the green side, as the seed is mature before the capsule shows. The winged seed is easily germinated using fresh seed in same season. Seed is available to anyone that is interested, usually available early in the year.

Yours Faithfully

Len Coe