

## ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

HAKEA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 37

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Dear members.

Winter has arrived here at Strathmerton, gone are the warm sunny mornings that enticed you to jump out of bed and get into activities out in the garden. Now I spend the first couple of hours after getting up on the computer answering e mails and writing newsletters and reports. In this issue I have included reports from Dick Burns on Hakeas at the Tasmanian arboretum and a letter from Hans Griesser on the frost tolerance of Hakeas. It is a pleasure to receive letters from members and I thank all those that have sent reports to me on what has been happening in their gardens.

During this autumn I have made a number of trips to various locations. One was to Burrendong arboretum where Jim Dutton and Carmel Spark showed me around the arboretum and we spent some two hours checking names of Hakeas. Many have been there a long time and have become large specimens. However I believe there was a greater variety there some ten years ago and drought and lack of maintenance has lead to some dying. It is great to see Jim and his team of helpers starting to build up the collection again. The most outstanding Hakea there would have to be two old plants of *lorea ssp lorea* from Cape York with symmetrical branches and foliage arrangements. Their leaves hang down in long bundles and their grey corky trunks give them great character. They are so different to the *lorea*'s of central Australia. Next visit I must photograph them and include them as a colour photo in a newsletter.

The other visit was to the autumn plant sale in Adelaide and a visit to Max Ewer's garden at Avenue Range. As usual some 600 Hakea plants were for sale covering nearly 100 species. Most were purchased on the Saturday morning and Max and I enjoyed talking to customers as well as catching up with fellow Hakea growers from South Australia and Victoria. On the way home Barbara and I spent a day with Max Ewer walking around his garden between showers of heavy rain. The Hakeas there have grown into quite large specimens with nearly all looking extremely healthy. The flowering season was just beginning with *Hakea petiolaris* being the dominant plant in flower. However I did come across two very striking plants. *Hakea tuberculata* had a great mass of white flowers along its pendulous branches and is a great plant for small gardens. In the wild it grows as a very open plant, but in our gardens it tends to be a much more dense compact plant. The other magnificent specimen was *Hakea rhombales* which occurs naturally at the bottom end of the Canning Stock route near Wiluna. I have great difficulty getting this species to put on growth, but Max's specimen is already one metre high and flowering away profusely. Its red flowers against the grey green foliage make a very showy plant. The question that goes through my mind is how can this Hakea from a very hot dry climate and hard stony soils thrive in a cool summer climate and wet cold winters in deep sand.

## HAKEAS AT THE TASMANIAN ARBORETUM

The December 2005 issue of Australian Plants (vol 23 no. 185) included an article on the Tasmanian Section at the Tasmanian Arboretum. On p171 I mentioned our specimen of locally-collected *Hakea decurrens* ssp. *physocarpa*. We have several other *Hakea* species in the collection that may be of interest to other hakeaholics.

The Arboretum is located near Devonport, on an old farm with soils based on limestone, clay or alluvium. The Tasmanian section is on slopes, so has mostly a clay soil. Major planting in the section started in 1988, with a steady accumulation of species. We boast that the Arboretum contains the largest collection of Tasmanian species anywhere (apart from in the wild, that is). It includes all the State's conifers and *Allocasuarina* sp., all but one species of both *Eucalyptus* and *Leptospermum*. Since there is only one species of *Grevillea*, we could make a claim on that taxon as well, but several subspecies are recognised by the Tasmanian Herbarium.

The following hakeas are growing.

### *Hakea microcarpa*

This was the first species planted. This was propagated at the Arboretum and a number of specimens were planted to fill space. They thrived, growing to large rounded shrubs about 3 m tall and across. At least one specimen produced most viable seed, with the result that many working bees involved pulling seemingly hundreds of seedlings. About eight years ago, some of the original plants were removed and the seeding problem has eased.

*Hakea microcarpa* is a popular shelter for birds and branches reach down to the ground. So to remove weeds such as blackberry and *Coprosma quadrifida* I have to use my old caving techniques and dress the same.

Not my favourite hakea.

### *Hakea decurrens* ssp. *physocarpa*

The flowering season that followed my article, our specimen of this hakea put on a spectacular display, a columnar mass of pink. The specimen is only visible from one direction, so I decided to put in more plants. When I went back to the original site to collect more seeds, the whole grove had been cut down (they were under power lines). Luckily two local nurserymen had found a few more plants nearby and so I was given four more plants.

I planted three on the shaded side of the West Coast Bed, the last on the sunny side. The threesome thrived doubling their height within months, the lone one struggled and was dead within the year. None are of flowering size yet, so I do not know if the pink colour is a consistent trait.

### *Hakea decurrens* ssp. *platytaenia*

I have never seen this subspecies in the wild: it grows on some of the Bass Strait islands. But specimens were donated. They have grown in a shaded spot reasonably erect to about 3 m. Flowers are white and not as prolific as with my specimen of the other subspecies.

### *Hakea epiglottis* ssp. *milliganii*

**Flora of Australia** vol 17B, gives on pp 97-98 the only distinction between this subspecies and ssp. *epiglottis* as being brownish hairs on the limb of the flower, and its occurrence on the west coast. In the field, those that I found flowering also had larger fruits and thicker leaves than plants on the east coast. They also grow taller. Seeds collected were propagated by my friendly nurseryman and plants are now close to 4 m tall. Paul in another newsletter expressed concern about their proximity to the

*Hakea decurrens* ssp. *platytaenia* but available space was restricted. I need to take note of the two taxa flowering times.

*Hakea lissosperma*

The seed source for the two specimens of this species was the Tasmanian highlands, but both are growing vigorously. One was a pot-bound plant I found in the Arboretum nursery when I took over. I planted it anyway, and it thrived. It is now a well-shaped conical shrub, about 4 m tall. A spreading form I found in the south east of the State has not yet made its way into the collection.

*Hakea megadenia*

This autumn-flowering east coast hakea can make a good flower display. The Arboretum specimens are happy but sparse-flowering.

*Hakea nodosa*

Three specimens were introduced into the Tasmanian Section only last year, 2007. They are growing vigorously.

I have places set aside for *Hakea epiglottis* ssp. *epiglottis* and *Hakea teretifolia* ssp. *hirsuta*. I hope to collect them before the next planting season. I have seen *Hakea ulicina* once in the wild, but material is elusive.

**Dick Burns**

Thanks Dick for your article. Flora of Australia Vol.17B lists *Hakea ulicina* as occurring on Flinders Island, but no mention in Tasmania, so I will be interested where you come across it. *Hakea megadenia* has proved to be the most tolerant of all the Tasmanian Hakeas to the hot dry conditions we have here. The remainder like to grow in semi shaded positions and receive some summer moisture. The plants of *Hakea decurrens* ssp. *platytaenia* that I have seen grow usually within one km. of the coast in grey sandy soils probably overlying clay loams. It flowers in March which is much earlier than the other species of *decurrens*. It is recorded as growing on Flinders Island and if it is to be found in Tasmania I would be looking along the north east coast line. I hope to get over to Tasmania in the not too distant future and meet up with Dick to look at the Tasmanian species of *Hakea*.

Hans Griessner has sent me the following letter.

I am writing to enquire about the APS Hakea Study Group. I am an APS member in SA; my "home" group is the Para Districts Group, located just north of Adelaide. My property of 10 acres is at Gumeracha, in the northern Adelaide Hills, at 350 m elevation. I have been growing Hakeas for a number of years, at first only a few, the commonly available species, but over the last 3 years I have increased the number of species thanks to seeds sourced from various gardens. A key factor in my growing fonder of Hakeas were the hard frosts of the winters of 2006 and 2007, which, with temperatures as low as minus 10 degrees, killed or stunted many plants in my garden, including most *Melaleucas*, *Beaufortias* and *Eremaeas*, and the majority of the about 40 *Banksia* plants. Most Hakeas, however, came through the frosts with no or only minimal damage; the exceptions were *H. archaeoides* and *H. bakeriana*, but both of these were very young plants and perhaps had not hardened off yet (damage to stems that have not hardened enough seemed to be the major cause of death of many plants). In addition, Hakeas are doing better than *Banksias* and *Dryandras* in my soil, which is on the heavier side. Even *H. francisiana*, *H. coriacea*, *H. purpurea*, *H. invaginata* and *H. multilinea* are growing very well on their own feet, and all of these had no problems with the heavier than usual frosts, to my surprise.

And in summer, when I refuse to water plants more than a year old ("Darwinian gardening", I call it), I find that Hakeas do very well, after I have encouraged them to grow their roots downwards rather than sideways.

One reason for my interest in the Hakea Study Group is to learn more about Hakeas from experienced growers. For example, frost resistance – which species would have difficulty even in a “normal” winter here, when the mercury goes to minus 6 degrees on several nights. Or climate – for example, would the Hakeas from Central Australia (*H. eyreana*, *H. lorea* and relatives) have a fighting chance here, or would I waste my time trying? Learning from others would save me making mistakes that others have learnt from, or encourage me to try some “risky” species that others might have cultivated successfully in spite of scepticism. I have plenty of space to try growing many plants, and the native birds appreciate what I have done so far. I'd love to learn now, and would hope to contribute my experiences with hakeas down the line.

Another reason for enquiring about the Study Group is that I'd like to increase the range of Hakea species, but can't source seeds. I have sourced various Hakea seeds from the APS SA seed bank, but most of them were not viable. After failure to germinate, I peeled a couple of seeds from each lot, and most were yellowish and some shrivelled. Probably too old. Thus, I would be interested to know whether the Hakea Study Group engages in swapping or providing seeds.

Best regards,  
Hans Griesser

I have marvelled at the efforts some of our members from the New England area go to grow Hakeas. The gardens of John and Barbara Nevin at Armidale and Baid's McIntyre at Tamworth experience heavy and numerous frosts to at least the same level as Hans. The Nevins use tree cover to protect many of their Hakeas and Baid's goes out every night during the frost season and puts hessian covers over her young plants. Both have been successful in growing a large variety of Hakeas. *Hakea archaeoides* grows on the coast and adjacent ranges near Port Macquarie and *Hakea bakeriana* in a similar location near Newcastle. Both these areas would experience no frost or very light frosts back in the ranges where the climate is temperate to sub tropical. *Hakea bakeriana* grows out in the open here at Strathmerton and weathered frosts as low as minus 6 degrees C. *Hakea archaeoides* is grown up against a brick wall facing east and the night heat radiation off the wall limits frost damage. Both plants do not mind growing in heavier soils.

Hakeas that I have found to be frost tender include all the northern species such as *macrocarpa*, *arborescens*, *perishana*, *pedunculata*, *stenophylla* ssp. *stenophylla*, *chordophylla* and those from the forest areas of South West Western Australia such as *lasianthoides* and *lasiantha*. The remainder once established seem to be reasonable hardy and says something about why Hakeas should be more often grown in our gardens, especially in this time of drought and water availability. I admire Hans method of only watering plants for twelve months and then leaving them to fend for themselves. We probably do over water our native plants.

*Hakea eyreana* and *Hakea lorea* should grow for Hans but they would require some frost protection for the first couple of years. These inland Hakeas of the corkwood group are very slow growing and may take upto ten years to flower. The other factor to take into consideration is that they flower in winter and sometimes again in October, and *Hakea lorea* from Central Australia has had its flowers burnt off at minus 6 degrees C here at Strathmerton despite the flowers being 3.6 m above the ground. The flower spikes are about to open now and I just hope the frosts stay away. Hans could try the south east Queensland form of *lorea* which I believe would be much more hardier to frosts.

New members.

I welcome, Hans Griesser, RMB 23 Gumeracha, SA 5233. Dan Ossedryver, 9 Banksia St Dee Why, NSW 2099. Ben Lockley, 100 Drummond St. Bedford WA

6052, Carmel Spark, "Wombat Gully" 1729 Cox's Creek Rd. Rylstone, 2849. Phil trickett and Cantriona Bate, PO Box 4201 Ainslie ACT 2602.

Membership alterations. My apologies for the errors.

Would you please amend your list sent out with newsletter No.36.

Ronda Aitcheson should be Ronda Atkinson.

Chris Willis should be Cliff Wallis

B & E Williams are at 9 Louise St. Kenmore , not 11.

Seed bank.

Further trials with seed from the seed bank has shown much of it is no longer viable. Hence requests for seed will be sourced off plants that I have in the garden or from fellow members. In this way we can be sure that the seed is fresh.

Subscriptions.

Subscriptions are now due for the 2008/2009 year. They will remain at \$5 per single member or family membership. As some have paid for a number of years, I will insert a box and if it has an " X" in it you will know that your subscription is now due. In the October Hakea newsletter I will forward a receipt to acknowledge those who have paid.



Financial statement.

Balance as at 20 <sup>th</sup> . February, 2008	\$1668.14
Subscriptions received	20
Total	\$1688.14

Expenditure.

Printing and postage costs, newsletter No. 36	83
Balance as at 1st. June, 2008	\$1605.14

Hakea excursion.

Only one couple has indicated their intention to be part of the Hakea crawl in October 2008. If there are any others interested, please let me know by the 12<sup>th</sup>. of July.

As indicated in the last newsletter I would look at some Hakea species that require special attention to be grown successfully.

The first of these is Hakea lasianthoides. I came across this species growing in dense forest north of Walpole in the south west of Western Australia. The rainfall is about 1.5m and predominately winter /spring very wet and the climate cool to mild. It grows in clay loam soils that have a lot of humus and receives dappled shade.

Attempts to grow it successfully elsewhere seem to rely on a shady location, clay loam type soils and the addition of moisture in summer in areas like Strathmerton where the temperature can reach the high thirties day after day. If planted in the open in hot climates the leaves will quickly wilt and burn. It grows quite fast and flowers at around two years of age.

Our garden.

After good rains over summer (190mm) the drought again set in and only 44 mm fell in the next three months, mainly in light showers. Just when we thought the summer heat had gone, the last fortnight in March was extremely hot and plants that had gone through the summer all of a sudden started to wilt or the leaves loose that green lustre which is the signal for some moisture to be applied from the hose. We lost a few Hakeas such as ferruginea and cucullata which come from a high rainfall and cooler climate area from around Albany in western Australia.

The Grevillea looper caterpillar continues to be a pest eating the new growth of the Hakeas. So I sprayed on some Dipel which seemed to quickly put an end to their appetite. Some just curled up and fell to the ground as soon as the spray hit them. I will repeat the process again in the spring when new growth again starts to emerge. Apart from the newest named Hakea, all the other species of Hakea are growing here. Four more plants of Hakea lorea ssp. borealis from northern Australia have been planted. It is considered to be the most difficult plant to grow in southern climates because the night time temperature probably does not drop below 10 degrees C. With plastic covers around them and hessian covers over the top, we will see how they survive our cold winters.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter, please keep your notes coming in on how the hakeas in your garden are going.

Regards, Paul.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul".