

AUSTRALIAN NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY, AUSTRALIA

HAKEA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER NO. 49

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Dear members.

I start this newsletter on the coast of northern NSW, where in winter it is a good place to be as the warm sunny days invite you to linger and walk along the lovely sandy beaches and enjoy the sub tropical flora. Around Bonney Hills in the heath *Hakea teretifolia* ssp *teretifolia* can be found facing the sea in gravelly clay soils, and further north of Coffs Harbour *Hakea actites* grows in soils that retain moisture. Inland in the coastal forests there are stands of *Hakea sericea* and *Hakea laevipes* ssp. *laevipes*.

We also went searching for *Hakea archaeoides* in the Comboyne area where the rich red volcanic soils and high rainfall support pockets of rain forest. However I did not bring details of known locations with me, so did not locate it. It is in the mountains from Taree to Kempsey, often at altitudes above 600m. Because there are few listed locations of it, it is considered vulnerable.

Here at Strathmerton the big wet of February/ March has given way to a dry warm autumn and we could now do with a decent fall of rain to keep the moisture levels up. However the new growth on the hakeas has been phenomenal and many of the hakeas have started flowering early. *Hakea cycloptera* from the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia has been in flower now for two months and shows no sign of stopping yet. *Hakea lorea* from Central Australia have also started flowering and will continue right through to October. The Mount Ragged forms of *Hakea pycnoneura*, *Hakea scoparia* and the hybrid forms between these two have flowered off and on right through the summer/autumn period and are perhaps the best small to medium shrub for our gardens if you want something to flower a number of times each year.

One of our Hakea Study group members, Royce Raleigh and his wife Jeanne stayed with us in April. Royce was taken by the flowers on *Hakea petiolaris* ssp. *angusta* which remain a lovely cream colour throughout the flowering cycle. Other forms of *petiolaris* tend to have a purplish tinge to them as the flower ages.

Hakea weekend in WA.

I had mentioned to some of the WA members of the Study Group that I planned to be in WA in September and hoped to catch up with them between visiting relatives. Bev Lockley from Katanning has decided that my presence there should be taken advantage of and is organising a Hakea weekend on the 15th./16th. of September . I know she is inviting Jenneifer Young and others to be part of the presentation team. It will probably be in the form of talks on Saturday and site visits on Sunday to various reserves where Hakeas grow. As details come to hand I will let the WA members know and any other interested members who may be in WA too.

Welcome to new members.

For the first time we have an international member. Francesco Dalba comes from northern Italian province of Trentino and has been growing Hakeas for some time. He has *nitida*,

laurina, bucculenta, florida, anadenia and others in his garden which he describes as being cool to sub tropical depending on the season. He also grows Banksias, Kunzias and Eucalypts. I asked him where he had acquired his plants from and he replied that he had sourced seed from suppliers in Australia via the internet. It will be interesting to hear how other species of Hakea grow as I will send him seed from the seed bank. If any member is touring northern Italy I am sure he would appreciate a visit and the exchange of information on growing Hakeas etc.

Also the library of the Royal Botanic Gardens Canberra has become a member too and has been sent back copies of the newsletter.

Adam Hill from the Reedy Creek Pastoral Company is the new owner of Max Ewer's garden at Lucindale and we hope he will continue to maintain Max's Hakea collection.

Financial report.

Balance forward 29 th . of February, 2012	\$2508-09
Income	55-00
Subscriptions	
Expenditure Printing and postage of Newsletter No. 48	89-00
Balance as of 30 th . June, 2012	\$2474-09

Subscriptions are due on 1st. of July for the period July 2012 to June 2013. For those receiving this newsletter by mail I will include a renewal notice. For those receiving it by e mail, I will e mail you a renewal notice if subscriptions are due.

Weed control.

Some of the Study Group members will have read the article by Cliff Wallis in the NSW journal on how he prepares his garden beds for planting neat Merimbula. I will precis it here for the benefit of our members. Cliff has some 230 Hakea species growing in his garden.

Cliff digs a small trench at each end of his garden bed. He lays a black cloth mulch mat (not the plastic type) over the ground and secures it at the end in the trenches. He does not bother to dig the garden bed over as he has sandy soils. In heavier soils I would prefer to add some gypsum to help break down the clay. He then lays 100mm of forestry mulch from the tree loppers over the weed matting so that the moisture underneath is retained there. This is then left for six months. When he comes to planting he just cuts a hole in the matting and waters the plant in. Looking at his garden this method seems to work as his Hakeas have grown very well. Because he is surrounded by bush the Kangaroos come out to graze on the grass and hence 1.2m high wire netting fences have to be erected around the garden beds to keep them out. After watering in Cliff generally does not have to water again, such is the climate at Merimbula. In dryer areas some additional watering in the initial growing stages would be required, however this method certainly saves a lot of weeding and seems to keep the moisture in the ground. Perhaps other members would like to comment on this method, especially if you have tried it.

Propagation reports.

I have tried cuttings of Hakea tuberculata, placed in a round tube in a well drained potting mix with a plastic cover tied over the pot. The cuttings were taken in March and rooted in four weeks with new growth appearing as well.

Royce and Jeanne Raleigh also took cuttings of this Hakea and many other genera as well and have reported a very good strike rate using bottom heat control. So March is a good month for trying

cuttings of Hakeas, especially of the varia group which includes tuberculata, varia, horrida, ilicifolia, lasiocarpa, oleifolia, and florida.

Barry Teague from Swan Hill has germinated many Hakea species from seed this autumn by putting one seed in each tube of potting mixture and keeping just moist in a shady location.

News from members.

The plant sale at Bacchus Marsh was a great success. All the Hakeas produced by the Melton/ Bacchus Marsh group were sold.

Whilst at port Macquarie I visited John and Annette Houseman whose garden on the banks of the Hastings River at Wauhope has a lot of interesting native plants. They are in a warm temperate climate and Hakeas such as actities and sericea grow well in deep loamy soils. They also have a plant of Hakea francisiana looking very healthy despite being subject to 2m plus rainfall.

Seed bank.

I have fresh seed of mitchellii, lorea and plurinervia. I have posted seed out to members who I know would like to grow a particular Hakea but have not been able to obtain plants.

The news you do not want to hear!!

Recently Barbara and I have found the effort required to maintain 18 acres of garden was starting to be too much for us, especially in the hot summers we have up here. As we get older our stamina is not the same and we would like to see more of our relatives and grand children. So we have made the decision to downsize and buy a place where we can still have all the Hakeas and Banksia species. However the collection of Eucalypts and Melaleucas will have to be left behind. If you know someone who would like to own our arboretum please let me know.

Hakea undulata Group.

In the previous newsletter I wrote about Hakea undulata and anadenia. Another species in this group is Hakea elliptica. It is very localised, occurring in granitic soils in the Albany region and some off shore islands. The leaves 50 to 100mm long by 15 to 55mm wide are quite elliptic in shape with three to five major veins top and bottom in the leaf. The new growth is very bronze in colour. The plant grows into a bush up to 2.4 m high and at Albany is subjected to cold harsh winds and 1.5 m of rain, falling more in winter/ spring than at other times. It does not like hot conditions and here at Strathmerton it struggles in the summer heat, even in a shady position. It is frost hardy to minor frosts, down to minus 2 degrees C. The white scented flowers are borne in the leaf axis in spring. The ovoid seed capsule up to 37mm long tapers to a blunt beak. The stem supporting the seed capsule is bent appreciably. This species grows very well in areas such as the Mornington Peninsula, the Mount Gambier region of South Australia and the Otway Ranges.

I enclose an article from Cathy Powers on ASSASSINS in my garden. Most of us have problems with the Grevillea Looper caterpillar unless we have a large population of wattle birds. Thanks Cathy for the article.

The June days have been cold and I am waiting to see if Hakea macrocarpa and divaricata which grow naturally north of Alice Springs are going to flower for me. They are now more than five years old and looking very healthy. Nearly every other Hakea species has flowered here, so it would be great to see these two flower and perhaps produce some seed. I hope you all enjoy watching your Hakeas flower as the winter season progresses.

Regards, Paul.



ASSASSINS IN MY GARDEN

Most of us that have *Grevillea* and/or *Hakea* species in our garden are familiar with the Grevillea Looper Caterpillar. It comes from a moth known as Hakea Moth or Pink Bellied Moth but the moth's scientific name is *Oenochroma vinaria*.



One or two of these per plant is not much to be worried about but when a large number infest a plant, it can cause significant leaf damage. I usually keep a look-out during the summer and autumn to ensure that numbers per plant remain anywhere from zero to one.

This summer I noticed that a large number of the caterpillars were on a plant but they were dead. I accused my gardening partner of spraying them only to realize that the only spray he uses is a herbicide for noxious weeds so since the plant was still alive (unlike the caterpillars) it must not have been him. I did not give it much thought after that, assuming that one of us was mistaken.

Last week I noticed a different plant (*Hakea gibbosa*) had quite a few caterpillars on it and the foliage was showing abuse. Upon closer inspection, some of the caterpillars were looking pretty unhealthy. I found out the cause – it was an Assassin Bug.



These bugs get their common name due to the way they feed on prey. The adult bugs are brown in colour and ambush any unfortunate prey, often from behind. The Assassin Bug will stab the prey with its spiky mouthpart (called a rostrum) and inject an enzyme which will cause the prey's inner organs to dissolve. The Assassin Bug then feeds on the fluid. A friend of mine offered the comment that they feed on anything with fluid. Yikes!!

My understanding is that they don't like to be handled and will pierce your skin in self-defence. This bite can be very painful, similar to a bull-ant bite, and results in swelling of the area which can last for a few days. I have not experienced it myself and not one to test the theory but I am happy to take notes if anyone else wants to try.

So I guess the moral to the story is – we should be aware of nature's natural controls.

Cathy Powers