HAKEA STUDY GROUP

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Hello Everyone,

The first reasonable rain fell in Melbourne late in March and fairly steadily since to allow my garden to look refreshed and green. However, the rain has not fallen in the catchment areas so we shall probably have water restrictions for months to come. Should we have heavy falls, as happened when the drought broke in 1967, all plants weakened by the long dry will be at risk. That year, leptospermums were the chief victims and have never regained their former popularity.

In December, in a desperate bid to save some of the very young plants, I planted thirteen in the garden, none over 10" high. The rest I left in pots and placed under a large apple tree, protected from the harsh north winds by a brush fence. Of those planted out, one died but the rest are healthy, some revelling in the conditions. Of the hundred or so under the apple tree, only about forty survived and I do believe this was due to the heavy shade proving too dark for most plants. In W.A. most hakeas grow in full sun and I think they need plenty of light to grow and flower well.

MOST POPULAR SPECIES. In order to know which hakeas are least grown and buy seed when possible, I have re-read all your letters and plant lists and found that three species stand out: laurina, petiolaris and sericea as the most grown with H. purpurea close behind. There are 29 species growing in four or less number of gardens, and a remarkable 21 species that no-one is growing. As most of these latter species come from central Australia and remote desert areas it is not surprising we cannot get seed to experiment with. However, some come from southern W.A. such as H. dolichostyla, oldfieldii, florida, linearis, loranthifolia, and megalosperma, and it is surprising that travellers have not collected seed and grown plants for themselves. I have H. linearis in the garden but it has never flowered and is still well under a metre tall. It has very narrow, toothed leaves about 1½" long, and is reported to have white flowers. H. lasiantha is another rarely grown species which I found in bloom just out of Albany on our last trip to W.A. We found a clump of several shrubs more or less 2 m. tall, but flowers were sparse on all of them. This may have been the end of the flowering season because there seemed to be no unopened buds, and no fruit whatsoever on them. The flowers were creamy-white and obviously woolly and it looked promising as a garden subject. In compiling this list, I omitted Alf Salkin's large plantings at Cranbourne where he is trying to grow eight specimens of each species in a sand dune.

SEED FERTILITY I would like to hear from members who have grown hakeas from seed kept for several years. This was prompted from remarks of a friend of mine who has confirmed that seed from many myrtaceae species remains good for ten years and sometimes longer. I had some seed of H. dolichostyla (identification may not be correct) collected in W.A. on our 1973 trip, so tested it in March and two of the three seeds planted have come up. I cannot remember anything about the plant now, but the fact that the seeds germinated gives me a sporting chance to find out.

BUSHFIRES have been a grim fact of life in Victoria and South Australia this year and our hearts go out to all the families affected, but in particular I must mention Ken Stuckey's loss. Ken had the best native garden in Australia featuring proteaceae species until fire swept through destroying his home, gardens and his invaluable records. The hakeas may regenerate from lignotubers but the overall loss is difficult to comprehend. The only good news was that Ken and his wife escaped injury.

Following on from the bushfires, I was surprised to hear on ABC radio

an expert claim that hakeas were "fire retardant", and last week another speaker praised hakeas for being fire resistant. I had thought the fires were so hot that all vegetation would have perished but perhaps this is not so.

CORRECTION In the past I have always listed H. minyma as having cream flowers. Bill Cane wrote saying he had heard of pink and red flowered forms and I have just had word from W.A.W.S Eastern Hills' Branch, that their minyma seed is from pink flowered stock.

NEWS FROM MEMBERS:

Graham Forster of Zillmere, Brisbane, reports planting a variegated form of H. salicifolia, he also has a H. fraseri over 3m., five years old.

Kaye Bartlett of Jervois says that last year frosts proved fatal to a number of things but hakeas were hit least of all. "H. obtusa was the only large plant which had any damage and a small one died. Of a hundred odd small plants there was quite a bit of damage, a number died but some shot away from the base and then died, I think perhaps more from lack of moisture. A few are still growing but one thing I find hard to explain with these plants, is where they were growing within a metre of each other, the same species, one might die, another have tip damage and one not touched. This happened to several species. Temperatures were down to -5', I feel being on a slope helped but certainly the hakeas had the least damage in the garden." Watering had to be kept to a minimum because of the high salt content.

Allan Foster mentions that he has planned several seed trials and when these are done intends doing some grafting experiments with the young plants onto Kunzea ambigua. This is new to me Allan, good luck!

Pauline Tully, who has her own nursery at Nicholson, (V), has found both H. francisiana and multilineata difficult to grow and believes they should have alkaline or neutral soil to do well. A plant of H. francisiana was existing and did manage one flower spike before meeting an untimely end when it was run over by a salesman. Two H. platyspermas were trampled by an enthusiastic customer much to her fury as she grew this at Balnarring and thought the flowers rather pretty.

Frank Prichard of Lockhart, N.S.W., is growing H. tephrosperma, a plant rarely grown. It is superficially similar in general to H. leucoptera, but differing in having curved points on the leaves, minutely hairy flowers and a dark-coloured seed wing. Frank comments on his three plants, planted about June, 1980, 2.4m x 1.2, 1.2m x 1, and 1m x 1, " the latter only, has suckered up to 2m from the plant. All very healthy, they have a very erect growth whereas I note that Wrigley & Fagg's "Aust. Native Plants" states that the plant is pendulous with branches arching to the ground."

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS: Mrs. Pauline Tully, Rhys Wright, Ms Dianne Culgan, Paddy V. Lightfoot, J.E.Real, Chris Duffy, Frank Prichard.

SUBSCRIPTIONS for 1983 ARE NOW DUE. I have had to raise the subscription to $3.00 due to the higher printing and postal charges.

SEED BANK Please send a S.A.E. with requests for seed. Spare seed is welcome.

Amplexicaulis (1-2m), bucculenta (2-3m), commutata (3-4m), coriacea (2-3m), corymbosa (1-2.5m), cristata (up to 2.5m), cyclocarpa (1-2m), cycloptera (1-2m), dactyloides (2m), eriantha (7m), florulenta (2m), gibbosa (1-2m), laurina, leucoptera (3m), lissosperma (3m), erinacea (1-2m), macreana (3m), minyma (2m), muellerana (1-3m), multilineata (3m), nitida (2-3m), nodosa (2m), orthorrhyncha (2m), persiehana Q, petiolaris (up to 5m), prostrata (1-2m), purpurea (2m), pycnoneura (up to 3m), ruscifolia (1-2m), salicifolia (3m), scoparia (2-3m), smilacifolia (2m), stenocarpa (1m), stenophylla (3-5m), strumosa (1-2m), trifurcata (2m), ulicina (up to 3m), undulata (1-3m), varia (1-5m depending on the variety).

Thanks for seed is due to: Kaye Bartlett, Pauline Tully, Tom Story and Graham Forster.

I hope you all experience good rains and good health.

HAZEL BLACKNEY
23 Devon Street,
Eaglemont, 3084.