

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

HIBBERTIA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER No. 17

Having seen numerous Hibbertia's growing in their natural habitat in varying soils and conditions on my trip to the Eastern States, it reinforces my thoughts that there is a place for them to fill the many small gaps we all have in our gardens. Many of them being small low growing plant such as Hibbertia's Exutines, Fasciculata, Obtusifolia, Pedunculata, some forms of Sericea, Stricta and Virgata can be fitted into these gaps.

Because many of these are difficult to grow or are short lived in various situations it was of great interest when Mrs Pat Shaw of Queensland mentioned that she and her husband have been grafting the difficult to grow species on to the more hardier species. Following are her comments.

"We have had a problem trying to grow certain species of Hibbertia so have had to resort to grafting. Regarding the grafting which is down by Harvey, he used H Scandens as the rootstock, about 75mm in length, and before it starts to trail, at that stage the stem is very succulent. He uses the wedge graft method i.e. splitting the top of the cutting off the tip to about 2cm and placing the scion with the stem shaped to fit the rootstock. The scion needs to be the succulent tips which are meristem tissue and therefore the cambium does not need to be matched. The graft is bound by Nescofilm, self sealing film which stretches and breathes, and breaks down and does not need to be tied. We have just received cuttings of H. Miniata and have grafted 12 of same. Unfortunately the H. Miniata were heavy in bud and it is not the ideal time for grafting, the rootstock and scion should both be at growing stage."

In a more recent letter Pat says the graft of H. Miniata has taken along with H. Stellaris and both look very healthy.

Some other Hibbertia species they have grafted are H. Longifolia, H. Canescens and a unknown species. Pat also mentions that the H. Longifolia that were grafted are much healthier than the one growing on its own roots and flowering appears continuous.

Pat also mentions she has H. Aspera growing and though quite healthy has yet to flower. I also have H. Aspera the round leaf form which has grown from 4cm high to 45cm high by 1m across in 5 years, but has yet to flower. It is in sandy soil in which jarrah sawdust had been added to previously, it receives sun from midday to mid-afternoon then filtered sunlight through the rest of the day. I would like to hear from members who have H. Aspera, on its general growth, flowering, situation and soil conditions.

Barbara Buchanan of Kallista in Victoria writes to say:

"The big success has been *H. Lasiopus* which is spreading far and wide and spilling down into a storm water drain where it is layering. I presume this is happening in the bed so intend to pot some up. The plant did not flower quite as well as hoped and is a bit scabby in the centre, though the new tips are all green and healthy. This also applies to other *Hibbertia* and I feel it is due to lack of sun in our garden."

I do find myself even though many *Hibbertia*'s are under-shrubs in their natural habitat they require full sun or light shade for maximum flowering. *Hibbertia Hypericoides* is an example, I have numerous in varying situations, those in full sun produce more flowers over a longer period, two in particular have been flowering since April and will continue into November. One in a protected and shaded position has only had the odd flower, and has very few buds at this time.

*Hibbertia Cuneiformis* although a shrub up to 2m, which grows in open coastal situations and in the Karri Forrest in shade seems to flower in the open situation from August and all through summer. Once again I would like information on flowering habits of *Hibbertias* in sun and shaded situations.

The first *Hibbertias* I noticed on my trip during September 86 were along the Eyre Highway some 27 kilometres west of Kimba in South Australia. In this location *H. Stricta* was growing in a white sandy soil in ditches along the roadside. Numerous plants with large numbers of flowers from seedlings up to plants 25cm high were growing in an open situation and on to the edge of mallees and other plants. Another *Hibbertia* hiding in the undergrowth was a sprawling plant up to 8cm high by 25cm, the leaves 4mm by 5mm and petals 6 to 8mm long. This *Hibbertia* I have not identified, if anyone can from that brief description please let me know. *H. Virgata* was also seen in large numbers, plants up to 32cm high growing in an open situation.

A visit to Newcastle where Allan Foster was kind enough to show me around the district proved of great interest. At Warners Bay sprawling its way through grasses and low shrubs was *H. Empetrifolia*, whilst at the edge of grassed areas was *H. Pedunculata* in bud with an odd flower. The situation apart from low shrubs was open, facing north, the soil being heavy grey clay. Moving further north to Nelsons Bay more *Hibbertias* were seen. Amongst the secondary sand dunes which were covered with a large range of plants such as Eucalypts, *Hakea*, *Correa*, *Dillwinia*, *Ricinocarpus*, *Pultanea* and numerous other species were several *Hibbertias*. At the base of Stevens Peak was *H. Scandens* sprawling its way through the undergrowth and climbing into the various plants. Further up *H. Fasciculata* and *H. Obtusifolia* were found alongside the tracks, mostly small and straggly with numerous buds but very few flowers, and looking quite healthy in the sandy soil.

Moving away from coastal areas of N.S.W. and into Victoria an area with The Grampians in view some 25 kilometres south of Horsham quite a large number of Hibbertias were to be seen. Along the road verges in open areas facing north, growing in grey clay and gravel were numerous *H. Fasciculata*'s from small seedlings up to 20cm high, *H. Sericea* in full flower was also in abundance with plants up to 1m high by 1.2m wide merging into the taller vegetation.

The climax of my trip was Kangaroo Island (a trip worthwhile for all wildflower enthusiasts) where the diversity and colour of the local flora was well worth the visit. Some of the many species in flower were *Boronias*, *Grevilleas*, *Epacris*, *Lasiopetalum*, *Lhotzkya*, *Adenanthos*, *Dillwynia* and the beautiful *Tetratheca* *Halmaturina* which stood out in the bare gravel areas. Hibbertias were also well represented, the sparse and almost prostrate grey leaf form of *H. Sericea* growing in limestone along the windswept cliff edges, whilst further inland it was seen in gravel soils more erect and compact. The green leaf form much taller and compact was found growing in limestone in more protected situations. *H. Stricta* a compact plant, difficult to separate from *H. Sericea*, though generally found as a larger plant in limestone and ironstone in open to semi-shade areas. *H. Virgata* was also found in large numbers particularly in recently cleared areas creating a sea of pale yellow amongst the rough limestone, plants being up to 30cm high by 70cm wide. Also seen and photographed were several prostrate Hibbertias growing in gravelly clay similar to the unidentified species near Kimba. Lastly a small straggling plant in gravelly clay with only one flower and several buds which appeared to fit the description of *H. Aspera* Var. *Parviflora*.

Having had queries from members on the identification of several species of Hibbertias, I was able to see first hand the difficulty we amateurs have trying to pick up the subtle differences between similar species.

The following descriptions of *H. Sericea* and *H. Stricta* should therefore be of some help.

H. SERICEA - N.S.W., Vic., S.A., Tas.

A small shrub, procumbent to erect up to 60cm high, the branches villous, leaves narrow oblong, margins revolute almost to the mid-rib with blunt apex.

Var. Scabrifolia - Leaves 4 to 12mm long, scabrous above with rather long simple stiff hairs, more cunate towards the base than in the type, the margins usually reaching the mid-rib and some times so in-rolled as to conceal it and give the leaf a linear appearance. The flowers closely sessile outer sepals villous but scarcely silky, 6 to 9mm long, ovules 4 to 6 in the 2 carpels, with 8 to 14 stamens on one side of the carpels. This appears very similar to *H. Stricta*.

H. STRICTA - Qld., N.S.W., Vic., S.A.

An erect shrub up to 80cm X 80cm with pubescent branches or almost glabrous. The leaves vary from narrow linear with pointed ends or narrow oblong or obtuse 5 to 15mm by 2 to 4mm wide, scabrous or almost glabrous dark green in colour. The flowers sessile or on peduncles 4 to 12mm long.

Var. Canescens - Leaves and sepals grey with a close soft stellate pubescence, linear, obtuse 5 to 10mm long. The petals and sepals are about 8mm long. The 10 to 14 stamens are on one side of the 2 pubescent carpels which have 4 to 6 ovules.

The other area of variance are soils particularly between W.A. and the Eastern States. The following are definitions of W.A. soils used for planting purposes. I would like to receive similar for Eastern States soils for next newsletter.

SAND - A loose open soil one metre or more in depth. The surface 300mm can be leached grey sand but sub-soil must be yellow through to deeper shades.

LOAM - A soil of heavier texture than sand but one which does not compact hard when dry. It should have a depth of 450mm before reaching clay.

HEAVY LOAM - A heavy textured soil (not clay) that compacts hard when dry. Also included in this category are loams or sands less than 450mm in depth over a clay base.

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