

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

HIBISCUS AND RELATED GENERA STUDY GROUP

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NEWSLETTER NO 1

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Who is this person who has chosen to lead the ‘Study Group’? I hear that a number of SGAP Members have asked this question, therefore an introduction seems to be in order.

In 1955 I graduated from the University of Western Sydney thence to the Australian School of Pacific Administration in preparation for a career in Agriculture that took me to Papua New Guinea for 20 years. I worked on many agricultural and horticultural projects, becoming particularly interested in **Hibiscus** and other ornamental plants as a hobby.

Upon returning to Australia, I became self employed as a nurseryman at Buderim, Qld. dealing in all ornamental plants, but particularly **Hibiscus**. I was a member of SGAP in the 1970’s, The Australian Nurseryman’s Association and was founder of a group that led to formation of the Sunshine Coast Branch of the Australian **Hibiscus** Society Inc.

I bred a number of **Hibiscus** from 1965 onwards producing two winners of the **Hibiscus** of the Year Competition, namely ‘Red Robin’ and ‘Silver Rose’.

A Hybridizer’s Manual written in 2001 is being serialized in the ‘Hibiscus International’ which is the Official Publication of the International Hibiscus Society – (www.internationalhibiscussociety.org).

I was a guest speaker at the International Hibiscus Society Conventions held in 1985 and 1990.

For a number of years I served as Nomenclature Officer for the A.H.S. Inc. and International Registration Authority for Cultivar Names in **Hibiscus rosa-sinensis** for the Royal Horticultural Society, London.

In 1988 I became a Fellow of the A.H.S. Inc. and continue at the present time as an Accredited Judge.

What has all this to do with native **Hibiscus** you may well ask? All along I have been aware that they are the forgotten cousins of our well known exotic **Hibiscus** and that they have just as much potential if developed horticulturally as ornamentals. The **Hibiscus rosa-sinensis** group have nearly 200 years start in a breeding programme, that continues on a huge scale in many parts of the world to this very day.

Some of us, particularly Colleen and Geoff Keena have put a considerable amount of work into collecting and growing native **Hibiscus** and I am sure that a big effort through this ‘Study Group’ will realize valuable results and exciting times. Members joining our ‘Group’ will have had much experience which hopefully will be combined with enthusiasm and participation.

I feel that many of our native **Hibiscus** species need to be collected soon and preserved through cultivation and location in Botanical Gardens, National Parks etc. While a species may not be under threat as a whole, it is the genetic variation that could be lost in the many isolated populations. Take for instance **Hibiscus heterophyllus** that can be found from south of Kiama in N.S.W. to Cape York Peninsula in Qld. Throughout this huge range – (from 15 degrees south to 30 degrees south, a distance of nearly 1,500 miles or 2,400 kilometers), can be found low sprawling shrubs to trees of 7 meters with flower colours ranging from white through pink to yellow. What a gene pool exists for the Hybridizer with some imagination and an appreciation of what gems could be created for gardens of the future. To this **Hibiscus heterophyllus** we can interbreed the magnificent **Hibiscus splendens** and **Hibiscus Barambah Creek** along with

Hibiscus divaricatus, **Hibiscus meraukensis** and perhaps others within the Section **Furcaria** – (a sub-genus of **Hibiscus** that may interbreed)

At the SGAP Autumn Plant Sales on 13/4/03 at TAFE Grovely Campus a pink **Hibiscus heterophyllus** called “Rosie” originating from near Rockhampton was being offered for sale by Jan Glazebrook and Denis Cox. It is virtually free of prickles, with handsome 3 lobed, leathery leaves and large rose pink blooms produced in spring. Apart from the blooming potential of **Hibiscus heterophyllus** and many other species there is the medicinal , food and fiber qualities that are recognized. We will look at all this and more in future Newsletters.

Also at the Plant Sales it was good to see **Abelmoschus moschatus** Medicus,F.C. (1787) (variety Mischief?) and **Abelmoschus manihot** (L) Medik., being offered for sale. This somewhat confused genus of the Malvaceae Family will be written up for the next Newsletter. Any help from ‘Group Members’ would be appreciated.

Our ASGAP Hibiscus and Related Genera Study Group is starting off with 15 names of people intending to be Group Members – see below.

It would be very desirable to attract members from Western Australia, Northern Qld. and the Northern Territory, where important centers exist for naturally occurring species. We seem to have at least 50 species of **Hibiscus** in Australia and many more species within **Abutilon**.

Gossypium, **Sida** etc. It will probably take a considerable time to compile a comprehensive coverage, that could lead to a SGAP publication. A very active Group will hopefully guarantee continuity and execution of our aims well into the future.

I would like our founding members to help define and/or endorse our aims and activities.

The suggested aims are as follows:-

- (1) To research, record and exchange information on all aspects of Australian species and hybrids included within the Plant Family Malvaceae.
 - (2) To record distribution and description of species.
 - (3) Selection of superior forms for preservation in Botanical Gardens, collections etc.
 - (4) Selection of superior forms for horticultural uses, including breeding programmes.
 - (5) Record cultural techniques including germination trials, propagation methods, nutritional requirements, pest and disease control, cultivation, weed potential etc.
 - (6) Encourage a comprehensive breeding programme aimed at definite objectives for improvement.
 - (7) Conduct trials of promising hybrids, with the intention of making the very best available to Native Plant Nurseries, collectors etc.
 - (8) Maintain a seed bank and source of properly identified propagating material.
 - (9) Investigate all plant uses e.g. food, medicinal etc., as well as ornamental prospects.
 - (10) Liaise and confer with botanists, Herbaria and professional plant people to ensure accurate and up to date information is obtained.
 - (11) Build up a Herbarium of pressed specimens and a photographic record.
 - (12) Conduct field trips to observe plants in their natural habitat. Assist with scientific study if requested to do so.
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Our founding members of the Study Group are as follows:-

Geoff Harvey, Harry Laidlaw, Colleen and Geoff Keena, David and Olive Hockings, Heather Knowles, Arnold Rieck, Peter Bevan, Elwyn Hegarty, Jan Glazebrook, Denis Cox , Beth McRobert. Lyn Craven, and Barbara Hansa.

Thank you all for your support at this very early stage. Membership will commence as from 1st July. 2003 and will be \$5.00 Aus./\$10.00 Overseas/\$5.00 Email.

Regards,