

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING
AUSTRALIAN PLANTS
HIBISCUS AND RELATED GENERA STUDY GROUP
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Seedling L 02 'Apricot Mist' X Hibiscus splendens 'Rose Pink'

Bloom Image on Newsletter Cover

This seedling, hybridized in 2002 coded C02 'Apricot Mist' x *Hibiscus splendens* 'Rose Pink' is still in its container. Flowering this season commenced in the last week of June 2006 and looks set to continue well into spring. The main attraction apart from the bloom is handsome foliage and no prickles. Indications are a large plant if grown in the ground, but of course pruning would control the size and shape.

Proposed Spring Field Trip

This will definitely take place on Sunday 15th October 2006.

We could meet up at Landsborough at 9 am or preferably at David and Olive Hocking's property at 9.30 am for morning tea.

To locate Hockings property proceed 1 ½ km towards Maleney from the Montville turnoff. You will find Burgess Ave. on the left – continue ½ km and cross a small creek. The entrance gateway is on the right displaying the Hockings sign.. The house and nursery is located 100 meters from the road at the end of the driveway turning second left. The phone number is 0754943385.

There is plenty of interest to see at Hockings including the nursery and the large number of *Hibiscus* that have been planted out in recent times.

A visit to the Maroochydore Bushland Botanical Gardens is proposed prior to proceeding to Fairhill Native Plant Nursery for lunch at their restaurant. If desired we could proceed to Mt. Tinbeerwah off the Noosa/Cooroy Rd., where ***Hibiscus splendens*** grows and a magnificent view can be appreciated. Return via Buderim to collect cuttings and seed from your S/G Leader if required. S/G Members and other SGAP Members interested in this spring field trip, please confirm with me at 0754451828 or Email bannh@bigpond.net.au

***Hibiscus vitifolius* L.**

On 5/3/05 S/G Member Walter Willcox of Bowen and myself climbed Inkermen Hill Lookout approx. 30 km south of Home Hill, Nth. Qld. and were quite excited with the discovery of ***H. vitifolius***. 6 only plants in decline were found about 2/3 rds up the hillside on the left side of the road in the shade of small trees amongst granite boulders. The leaves were 3-5 lobed similar to a grape leaf hence the name vitifolius. The leaf margins were coarsely toothed, the leaf colour being dull green and densely hairy. A few globular, hairy, ridged, beaked seed capsules were still present and some seeds were recovered. The seed was given to David Hockings, who reported no germination in due course. However they did germinate eventually and I viewed some fine images of the bloom on his computer. The small blooms are yellow in colour with a dark red central blotch. It is hoped to obtain copies of the images for inclusion in the next Newsletter. I have not ever seen any published photos. of this species.

Hibiscus heterophyllus* (yellow from near Mackay) x *Hibiscus meraukensis

In Newsletter N0 7 it was reported that this vigorous seedling was in bud. The flowers were not cleistogamic (as were ***H. meraukensis*** at the time) and opened fully to reveal a bloom similar to ***H. meraukensis*** on a plant that will probably be perennial. So far the seed capsules are holding which could be a bonus for further breeding. The object here would be to try and reduce the size of the plants thus making them more suitable for home gardening. An image of the bloom is reproduced on the next page.

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Leaf of Hibiscus vitifolius L. H. heterophyllus (yellow from near Mackay) x H. meraukensis

During May 2006, Jan Sked kindly sent me an article which is reproduced below :-

Hibiscus 'Pink Ice'

Jan Sked

Some years ago I planted seed of **Hibiscus splendens** which came, I think, from the SGAP Seed Bank. Only a few germinated and amongst the grey-green, woolly foliage plants appeared one with dark green, more finely lobed and spiked leaves. This one I planted in the front garden, where it thrived and quickly out-grew the other form of **H. splendens**.

In 16 months it had reached a height of 3 metres and began to flower, putting on a beautiful show for 4 months, from August to the end of November. In December when the flowers tapered off and it began to set an abundance of seed, I pruned it back hard to the main trunk. Within a few months it had again achieved a pleasing rounded shape and become more compact than ever. The next September it began flowering once again and was even more prolific. This time I did not prune it and after a heavy flowering season to December, it continued to flower intermittently all year round. This it did for the rest of its life, but still with that magnificent flush of blooms from September to December each year.

I named the plant **Hibiscus 'Pink Ice'**. It appeared to be a hybrid between **H. splendens** and **H. heterophyllus** and, in my opinion, was superior to both. It was outstanding when in bloom, with its large pink flowers framed against the dense, dark green foliage. These flowers were 15cm across and opened much wider than other forms of **H. splendens**. At first glance they appeared to be a delicate, shell pink, but on closer inspection, they revealed a deep, rose pink on the overlapping edges of the petals, shading to white towards the base, with deep pink, longitudinal veining. The basal part of the corolla was crimson with an oval tuft of short, wine coloured hairs opposite each sepal. Flowers were either terminal or in the axis of the leaves towards the ends of the branches.

My plant reached about 5 metres in height, with stout green trunk and green stems that curved upwards and were clothed in fine, sharp prickles. The leaves were mostly entire, although some were 3 or 5 lobed, paler on the underside, covered in fine hairs and with fine, sharp hooks running

down the lower surface of the prominent midrib. The margins were finely serrated. Leaves measured 10-15cm in length (lobed ones almost as broad) with petioles up to 5cm. It was very adaptable, cutting grown plants having been tried successfully in a range of soils, from poorly drained to quite dry. Fairhill Nursery took cuttings and had it for sale at one stage. It could withstand strong winds (makes it an excellent windbreak or hedging plant as well as a good specimen shrub.) It was particularly easy to strike from cuttings. Seeds were very fertile and seedling plants produced a range of flower colours from deep pink to white.

Considering the ease with which it could be grown from cuttings, its robust nature, pleasing shape and striking appearance when in flower, I considered **Hibiscus 'Pink Ice'** to be a very worthwhile garden cultivar.

However, over the years I realised that it was a very 'hungry' plant, and other plants in the vicinity began to look starved. Eventually, after about ten years, I regretfully removed it to give the other plants a chance.

During its lifetime, it provided protection and nesting sites for a number of small birds and the doves. In fact, the day we cut it down, we found a dove's nest and an occupied honey-eaters nest. We had to quickly relocate this one into another reasonably prickly shrubby plant.

Jan

Thanks to Jan for this interesting account of **Hibiscus 'Pink Ice'**. I obtained a plant from Fairhill Nursery some years ago and used it for hybridizing. We get similar plants occurring naturally on the northern parts of the Sunshine Coast. Closer settlement, road construction farming etc has upset the normal habitats of **H. heterophyllus** and **H. splendens** resulting in numerous natural hybrids. If time permits we may view some of them during our October field trip.

Field trip through outback Queensland

This trip took up most of June and I have not long returned. Though it was principally a Gem Club fossicking venture, the opportunity did arise on occasions to look for Hibiscus and related Malvaceae Genera. My very tolerant passenger must have been impatient with the many times I turned around to examine a plant seen from the vehicle – alas mostly false alarms. The most universal plant within the Malvaceae family was **Malvastrum americanum** that can be found at most roadside stops. The small orange/yellow flowers emerge from the dense, clustered head during the afternoon. It is a naturalised plant originating from the Americas and does not appear to be grazed by animals.

Gossypium australe was found in abundance to the north of Boulia on the road to Dajarra and south of the Selwyn Range in the vicinity of Chatsworth. It is certainly a very common plant and I was surprised to find it blooming so well in the last week of June 2006. Obviously many of the dry climate plants respond to rainfall regardless of the time of year.

Though Boulia was drought stricken with cattle being trucked out for agistment, other areas to the north had benefited from Cyclone Larry with grasses and vegetation in abundance. Farmers from the Richmond/Cloncurry districts were buying cattle from Roma for restocking.

Hibiscus meraukensis was located 20 km east of Torrens Creek and 40 km west of Pentland on a red basaltic plateau and were mostly in the early stages of blooming. They were located again in similar country amongst roadside wattle 110 km north of Belyande Crossing and 155 km north of Clermont or 20 km south of Belyande Crossing. Some of the plants were 1.8 metres high (the largest I have seen) with bronzy basal foliage and main stem. The blooms were more pink than white with a pronounced petal stripe, as frequently seen in **H. heterophyllus** and **H. divaricatus**. In other areas **H. meraukensis** is normally confined to floodways and alluvial soils.

Hibiscus sturtii and **Gossypium australe** as well as two species of **Abutilon** and one sp. of **Sida** were seen 10 km from Lark Quarry where the dinosaur footprints are well worth the guided tour. One of the **Abutilons** was **A. oxycarpum**.

A giant bloomed yellow **Abutilon** of about 6.5mm diameter was observed alongside the Basalt Byways Road 18.7km from Hughenden. The blooms probably open flat but had closed up when seen at 1.30pm.

The showy pink **Hibiscus brachysiphonius** F. Muell was admired in grassland 15km from Hughenden on the Porcupine Gorge Rd. It is a low spreading woody plant, the blooms being a little larger than a 20 cent piece. It had been recorded previously on the Barkly Tablelands N.T. **H. trionum** (1 plant only) was found growing near the roadside 10km from Hughenden on the same road. It was a coarse spreading plant with white blooms – yellow centre, slightly larger than a 50 cent piece. It resembled **H. trionum var vesicarius** that I had observed at Bowen on the Nth. Qld. coast and on the Barkly Tablelands of the N.T.

H. ficulneus was common along the Flinders Highway from Cloncurry to Charters Towers, particularly in floodways and low lying areas where soil had been disturbed.

Apart from the **Malvastrums** and **Gossypium australe**, I saw 6 **Sida spp** and 5 **Abutilon spp** to the south of Dajarra. Identifications include **Sida cleisocalyx**, **Sida fibulifera** and **Abutilon andrewsianum**.

Malvastrum americanum

