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ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING
AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

MELALEUCA AND ALLIED GENERA STUDY GROUP

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NEWSLETTER NO. 17 - JANUARY 1999

Dear member,

I hope you had a pleasant Christmas and that the New Year will be kind to you. To start with a bit of trivia we had a pleasant Christmas day here - fairly cool with a nice breeze but the day after Boxing day made up for it by turning on 40 degrees with humidity in the 70 - 80% range. I totalled up my rainfall figures for 1998 and found that , at 877 mm for the year, we were down some 230 mm on average rainfall. Rain was registered on 88 days during the year with January having the highest number of wet days at 12 and March having the lowest number at 3. The highest 24 hour total for the year was 60 mm on April 15. Before we go to the more serious side of this newsletter I must record congratulations to Derrick Arnall of Malawi who celebrated his 80th birthday in July 1998. I am sure all will join with me in wishing Derrick all the best for the future. Derrick was a member of the study group for a number of years before I took over the leadership and I have found him to be one of our most enthusiastic members. He grows a wide range of Australian plants - mostly with good results.

CALLISTEMON viminalis 'CAPTAIN COOK'

The following article was prepared by Byron Williams and published in the September 1998 newsletter of SGAP Victoria Inc. " this well-known popular small Callistemon cultivar has been available through the nursery trade in Victoria since 1971 (and in other States as well - Ed). These days C. viminalis 'Captain Cook' is one of our best known bottlebrushes , being available at most nurseries and also at the larger supermarkets and hardware stores.

Unfortunately, some time after its release, you could not always be sure that plants with the label *C. viminalis* 'Captain Cook' were correctly identified. Many plants were grown from seed from the original 'Captain Cook' cultivar and distributed under that name. To further confuse things, cuttings were also taken from these seedlings and also distributed as the real cultivated variety 'Captain Cook'. Thus the true *C. viminalis* 'Captain Cook' cultivar became difficult to obtain because sound horticultural practice was not followed by a minority of growers.

It is important that all cultivated varieties of native plants be propagated vegetatively if the true special features of the cultivar are to be retained. This is particularly important with cultivars of *Callistemons* because the chances of obtaining hybrid seed is so very high.

The original *C. viminalis* 'Captain Cook' originated in Qld from a batch of *C. viminalis* seedlings. One particular plant was found to be more dwarf and bushy than the others and developed lots of flower buds at a young age. Propagation by cuttings was started and a stock of young plants was built up. It was originally marketed under the name of *C. compacta*. At the 1969 Nursery Industry Conference this cultivar was nominated for and won the first Shrub of the Year award. It was decided at the conference to name the new cultivar *C. viminalis* variety 'Captain Cook' to commemorate the 1970 Bi-Centenary celebrations in honour of Captain Cook.

Many people don't realise that, unlike the many dwarf and large growing rogue 'Captain Cook' seedlings previously marketed, the true *Callistemon* variety 'Captain Cook' cutting grown cultivar is a medium sized shrub growing to 2m (sometimes a little higher) with a slight weeping habit. The lanceolate leaves are light green, the new growth being tinged with reddish pink leaf tips. In October an abundance of red flowers, speckled with yellow anthers, cover the bush. It is a truly lovely bottlebrush in its true original cultivar form.

Hopefully, those *C. viminalis* 'Captain Cook' plants now available are true to name.

For those members who are interested in history, a semi advanced plant of *C. viminalis* 'Captain Cook' was presented to the then Governor of Victoria, His Excellency Sir Rohan Dalacombe, in Melbourne in March 1970 for planting in the grounds of Government House. Our friends at the Botanical Garden in Melbourne might be able to tell us whether the plant is still there. "

(Editors note - we planted two *C. viminalis* 'Captain Cook' plants in our garden in Rockhampton, Qld in 1973. We drove past that garden a couple of years ago and noted that the *C. viminalis* 'Captain Cook' plants were still there, were about 1.5m high and still looking quite healthy.)

MELALEUCA THYMIFOLIA

The type form of *Melaleuca thymifolia* grows in coastal heathland in sandy soils which are periodically quite wet. The standard form grows to about 1m by 1m and carries mauve-purple, occasionally white, flowers during spring and summer.

There are a number of cultivars of this plant available.

I have two plants in the garden here which are tall-growing varieties. One of these grew to some 2.3m with a very upright habit. This has been cut back to ground level and is coming away nicely from the base. The other tall-growing variety is kept pruned to about 1.3m. Flower colour of these forms is mauve-purple.

There are a number of cultivars of *M. thymifolia* on the market :

- *M. thymifolia* 'Pink Lace' grows to about 1m by 1m and is a fairly open shrub. Flowers are larger than those of the standard form and are pale pink in colour.
- *M. thymifolia* 'White Lace' has similar growth habit to that of 'Pink Lace' except that the flowers are pure white in colour.
- *M. thymifolia* 'Little Beauty' is a small compact form, usually around 1.5m high with mid-pink flowers.
- *M. thymifolia* 'Cotton Candy' is, to my mind, the best of the cultivars. It is a densely foliated plant to about 1m in height (occasionally slightly larger) with a spread of about 2m and with bright pink flowers which are produced over a long period of the year. Flowers are produced in leaf axils along most of the branches and when fully in flower it is quite spectacular.
- *M. thymifolia* 'dark purple form' is similar in growth habit to the type form except that the flower colour is a deep purple.

The type form and the various cultivars are hardy under most conditions in Brisbane. Are they being grown further south? If you have any of the ones mentioned above growing please let me know what degree of success you have had.

MELALEUCA LEUCADENDRON (narrow leaved form)

Brisbane City Council and a number of shopping centre owners in Brisbane and surrounding centres have planted a large number of the narrow leaved form of *M. leucadendra* as street trees, as park shade trees and as shade trees in carparks. Most of these flower around November - December and, in general, produce large quantities of nectar which, in turn, produce large quantities of nectar for nectar feeding birds and insects. The flowers of this form of *M. leucadendra* are more open than those of the broad leaved form and are more of a creamy colour than the clear white of the broad leaved form. The narrow leaved form usually doesn't grow as large as the broad leaved

form and rarely exceeds 7m in cultivation. In its natural habitat it can grow to 15m or so and attain a trunk diameter of 1.5m or more. I have been trying to collect seed of this form for some time but like *C. viminalis* it sheds its seed as soon as it is ripe, in fact, it doesn't hold many of its seed capsules through to the ripe stage. There some very large specimens of this narrow leaved form in the headwaters of the Burdekin river in north Qld. Some of these trees would have a trunk diameter of 4m or more, are better than 20m high and have a spread of 40m or more.

GRAFTED MYRTACEAE

There has been some work done on grafting of *Melaleuca*, *Kunzea*, *Leptospermum*, *Regelia*, *Beaufortia*, *Eremea*, *Calothamnus* and *Hypocalymma* species. Kerry Rathie has collected a number of plants which are grafted on to either *Kunzea flavescens* or *Kunzea ambigua* rootstock. Plants which Kerry has growing on grafts are :

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Kunzea pulchella</i> | <i>Kunzea pauciflora</i> |
| <i>Leptospermum venustum</i> | <i>Leptospermum speciosum</i> |
| <i>Regelia megacephala</i> | <i>Regelia inops</i> |
| <i>Regelia velutina</i> | <i>Hypocalymma puniceum</i> |
| <i>Melaleuca ciliosa</i> | <i>Melaleuca gibbosa</i> |
| <i>Melaleuca spathulata</i> | <i>Melaleuca glomerata</i> |
| <i>Melaleuca tetragona</i> | <i>Melaleuca leptospermoides</i> |
| <i>Melaleuca leiocarpa</i> | <i>Melaleuca lateriflora</i> |
| <i>Melaleuca diosmafolia</i> | <i>Melaleuca tetragona</i> (compact) |
| <i>Melaleuca huegelii</i> | <i>Melaleuca</i> `Georgiana Molloy` |
| <i>Melaleuca violacea</i> | |

The *Regelia* and *Melaleuca* species listed above are planted in a sand bed which varies in height from 0.4m to 2m. Failures included species from the genera *Beaufortia*, *Eremea*, *Calothamnus*, *Hypocalymma* and some species from *Melaleuca*. It will be interesting to follow the progress of these plants over ensuing years. It is of interest to note that grafted *Eucalypt* plants are available in Brisbane now. The plants available are *E.* `Summer Beauty` and *E.* `Summer Red` which are reputed to be hybrids between *E. ptychocarpa* and *E. ficifolia*. Plants currently in the ground are doing well.

CALLISTEMONS IN KEW, VIC.

Byron Williams reports that he has a number of Qld Callistemons growing in his garden which tolerate the cold conditions which can occur in Melbourne. These include C. 'Jenny Wren' which is some 1.5m high by 1.5m wide and flowers heavily each year, C. 'Howies Fireglow', C. 'Red Devil' (a form of *C. pachyphyllus*) and C. 'Hinchinbrook Island'.

CALLISTEMONS AT CRANEBROOK, N.S.W.

The segment on Callistemons as shown on Burke's Backyard late last year was filmed in Helen Galbraith's garden at Cranebrook. I have yet to see the segment but I hope to be able to scrounge a copy of the tape from Burke's Backyard. Helen advises that she visited Mt. Annan Botanical Gardens in October last year and was disappointed with the condition of many of the Callistemons in the gardens. Apparently, many of the species have died and have not been replaced. It is to be hoped that the gardens will be rejuvenated so that a collection of Callistemons can be maintained.

LEPTOSPERMUM STUDIES

The following article appears on the Internet;

" commonly referred to as Tea-Tree , *Leptospermum* is distributed in Australia, South East Asia (i.e. the Malay peninsula, Sumatra, Borneo, Java, Philippines, Sulawesi, Thailand, Flores, Moluccas, southern Burma and New Guinea) and New Zealand. Whilst *Leptospermum* occupies a variety of habitats from coastal dunes to high mountain peaks, it is most commonly found in wet or periodically wet substrates that are acidic and low in nutrients.

Leptospermum is in the sub-family *Leptospermoidea* of family *Myrtaceae* and currently comprises 85 recognised species. The genus was first recognised by Johann Reinhold Forster and his son Johann Georg Adam Forster when they published the name - *L. scoparium* Forst. & G. Forst. in 1776.

George Bentham was the first to treat the genus in his 1866 *Flora Australiensis*. Bentham recognized 20 species and his comments that the ".....species are very difficult to distinguish " and that from "....the dried specimens , whether of the species here

admitted or of the varieties or races, I have been unable to discover any positive discriminating characters" are evidence of the problematic nature of the genus. Doubtless, some of these difficulties would have arisen from Bentham's broad concept of *Leptospermum*, which included species now assigned to *Homalospermum* Schauer, *Neofabricia* J. Thompson and *Pericalymma* (Endl.) Endl. In 1983 Thompson reinstated the genera *Homalospermum* and *Pericalymma*, described *Neofabricia* (based in part upon the genus *Fabricia* (Gaertner) and then in 1989 published a revision of the genus *Leptospermum*. Thompson recognised 79 species with 27 of these being described as new. In 1992 Bean described another two species and clarified taxonomic problems associated with two northern Australian and Malesian taxa. In 1993 Lyne and in 1996 Lyne and Crisp published descriptions of another two new species.

Current research by Lyne and Crisp has identified another new species in north-eastern New South Wales and south-eastern Queensland. A forthcoming paper will deal with this."

SLIDE PROGRAMMES

Slide programmes featuring *Melaleuca*, *Callistemon* and *Leptospermum* slides, together with a written commentary, are available to individuals or groups. The study group will meet the cost of outward registered postage to the borrower. The cost of return postage is the responsibility of the borrower. Postage costs for the largest package, the *Melaleuca* group is usually around \$7-00 to \$8-00.

MEMBERS REPORTS

Trevor Gilbert, Dubbo, N.S.W. has sent in the following report on the status of his *Melaleucas* and *Callistemons*:

- M. *viminea* - continues to be a very successful species here. A very healthy small tree to 3m and extensive flowering just completed (Nov 98)
- M. *radula* - continues O.K. but becomes very straggly and I have pruned it fairly heavily this month (Nov 98)
- M. *elliptica* - has survived well despite very erratic growth spurts, appears to have stopped growing at approx. 2m. Flowered well during Oct and is still going.
- M. *linophylla* - a 1997 seedling planted out last autumn is doing well and is now 1.5m high.
- M. *macronychia* - a number of 1997 seedlings, some of which died in tubes and all of which have looked unhappy - often with tips dying off. One is in the

ground but is not growing, obviously the species has problems here.

M. microphylla - a 1998 seedling recently planted out and growing very fast and healthy - now 0.5m high

M. eleuterostachys - a 1998 seedling just planted out (Nov 98) again not very happy.

M. glomerata - a 1998 seedling , very fast growing

My Callistemons are all O.K.

C. pachyphyllus - all flower and have grown well

C. 'Injune' - continues to be a magnificent large specimen.

C. chisholmii - a young plant which is slow but growing steadily

C. pinifolius - I have just germinated some to try.

MEMBERSHIP FEES

Membership fees are due on July 1st each year . Fees for 1999/2000 will remain at \$5-00 . At present this is sufficient to cover all expenses incurred. A red X on the front of your newsletter indicates that fees for 1998/1999 are still outstanding.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

| Receipts | | Expenditure | |
|---------------------|----------|--------------|----------|
| Balance at 13/11/97 | \$561.99 | Photocopying | \$55.05 |
| Membership | \$287.09 | Postage | \$68.00 |
| Reimbursement ex | | Petty cash | \$77.10 |
| Qld Region | \$16.90 | Reg. post | \$10.10 |
| Bank interest | \$0.57 | Stamps | \$13.50 |
| | \$866.55 | Stationery | \$15.75 |
| Less expenditure | \$242.50 | GDT | \$3.00 |
| | \$624.05 | | \$242.50 |

Balance as per bank statement 02/12/98 \$624.05

I would appreciate more reports from members as to what they are growing and how their plants are performing. In the meantime I will endeavour to collect whatever information I can and pass it on to you. I hope your gardens continue to prosper and that 1999 will treat you kindly .

Regards

Col Cornford
Col Cornford.