

# THE NATIONAL MINT

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Newsletter of the Prostanthera & Westringia Study Group  
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Patron



Brian Timmis

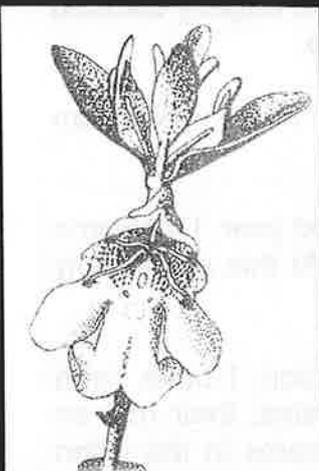
## STUDY GROUP

Membership

Fees Now

\$10

Due in June



## Have a Merry Christmas and a Safe, Happy, Healthy & a Minty New Year

### THE YEAR THAT WAS — 2002

2002 has been a year of stark contrasts. Good soaking rains in late summer / autumn and now drought and devastating fires across much of eastern Australia.

Conversely, the production of our newsletters was plagued with continuous computer problems for more than 12 months (2001-2002). Frustratingly, everytime a newsletter was almost ready for printing, the goblins would descend and corrupt the files—allowing neither printing or editing to be possible. It wasn't until my finances allowed the purchase of a new 80 gig, 512 MB RAM computer system and the fourth attempt at producing *Lasianthos* that we were successful. Thankfully, the goblins have not returned.

### WEB PAGE DEVELOPMENT

A major project that has also been undertaken is the development of a web page for the study group. This will compliment the existing excellent society study group site. It is hoped the web page will showcase a rotating selection of articles from the Study Group Newsletters and promote the study groups objectives. **The final fully working version should be on-line in the new year.**

**P.S.** Members should get online and peruse the Australian Plants Online website (if you have not already done so) and view Brian Walters efforts. While you are there, look up the article on **Prostanthera**, courtesy of the Global Garden internet gardening magazine. This includes great photos of a number of mintbushes!!!

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## TALKS

A number of impromptu talks/tours were undertaken around the Grevillea Park at Bulli looking at the Prostanthera collection with members of the public.

The 2001-2002 season has seen various groups request for me to present talks or tours in 2002—2003. In July 2002, I guiding members of the **East Hills Group** around the Illawarra Grevillea Park. In August, I presented a talk and slide show to the East Hills Group and a similar presentation to the **Menai Group** in September.

The talk consisted of a selection of slides of habitat areas in and adjacent the Wollemi National Park, NSW. This photographic presentation illustrated the theme of the articles presented in the current edition of *Lasianthos*. A summary of my presentation was reported in the East Hills Group's newsletter and is kindly reproduced, with permission, on **page 8** of this newsletter.

The **Blue Mountains Group** invited me to attend a memorial service for the late Les Taylor at the Glenbrook Gardens. An overview of this memorable day is reported on **page 7**.

## IDENTIFICATION SERVICE

A number of inquiries were received on the identity/cultivation of *Prostanthera* and *Westringia* plants from the general public as well as Australian Plant Society members. Commonly requested information has included name of species, conservation status, propagation techniques – seed germination and cuttings, cultivation techniques, and where to purchase plants.

## FIELD TRIPS

No official outings were organised in 2002, but Individual members have undertaken numerous trips, but most have yet to put pen to paper. These articles are eagerly awaited and hopefully one day these exploits can be included in a newsletter or two.

Some members, especially Brian Timmis, are also endeavouring to make herbarium collections and take field notes.

It is hoped that at least one study group field trip can be organised for next year. I welcome suggestions from members and groups on possible venues and dates. At this stage, July onwards would be best for your leader.

**WHERE HAS THE YEAR GONE?** In between work and other distraction, I have been assisting my wife Janice who is doing a Ph.D. on Freshwater invertebrates, their role as biological indicators and the impacts of logging on upper catchment streams in the Eden area. The field collection and subsequent laboratory examination of the bugs has resulted in at least seven new species of freshwater invertebrates to science being uncovered. Jan has examined an estimated half a million bugs to date with 250,000 of them identified to species level. **WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO? Let Us Know In Time For The Next Newsletter!!**

The year has also seen my time increasingly being spent on fighting numerous environmental and Aboriginal cultural desecration's which afflict our beautiful coastline. This ultimately has resulted in the first Green's member, Michael Organ, being elected to represent the people of Cunningham, a federal seat within the Wollongong LGA.

**SANDON POINT**— Stocklands, a major development company, is destroying a 4000-year-old Aboriginal tool site with consent from NSW NPWS. The Sandon Point area has great spiritual and cultural significance to the local Aboriginal community who set up a Tent Embassy in December 2000, in protest, and to protect a 6,000-year-old burial site. The tool site area has been describe by Prof. Peter Hiscock, Senior Lecturer and the Head, School of Archaeology and Anthropology, Australian National University, Canberra as:

- *"the development area contained an enormous archaeological site, containing several million artefact fragments. Such sites are extremely rare along the Australian coast and even if the context of these artefacts was heavily disturbed this represents an assemblage of unusual and valuable qualities", and*
- *"this site is one of only three or four coastal sites in NSW with artefact assemblages of this size", and*
- *"The preliminary judgment (by the developers consultant) of the archaeological material contained within Stages 1-6 underestimates the likely potential of such an immense and complex assemblage. It remains possible, even likely, that this site should be considered of national importance for questions of ancient technology and economy".*

Sandon Point has also **important remnant vegetation communities** including Beach Sand Spinifex, Coastal Sand Scrub, Estuarine Alluvial Wetland, littoral rainforest and a heritage listed remnant Turpentine forest. The wetland community forms part of an Endangered Ecological Community under the NSW TSC Act - Sydney Coastal Estuarine Swamp Forest Complex. This remnant vegetation is also of cultural significance (food, medicine and building materials) to the Aboriginal community.

**Yes, and it also contains a few plants of *Prostanthera sieberi*** (but the Steak knives aren't free)!

## THE LIVING COLLECTION

The major emphasis of the study group over the last two years has been the re-establishment of a living *Prostanthera* collection at the Illawarra Grevillea Park.

Consequently, the mintbush plantings at the Illawarra Grevillea Park are slowly but steadily increasing. Routine maintenance of the collection includes watering, pruning, fertilising weeding and re-propagating.

As reported in the last newsletter, approximately 100 tubes were planted in April 2002 and subsequently another 200 have since been planted. The majority of the mints have taken but losses of older and new plants have occurred due to the severe drought conditions.

The last two months has been busy with watering, pruning and propagation. Approximately 500 cuttings have been set down in Ray Browns igloo with many more to be done in the next few weeks. This is in preparation for extensive re-plantings to be undertaken in late summer and autumn. Many areas of the park are in need of selective replanting as the drought has hit hard. Donations of plants (especially hardy spectacular forms) for this project would be greatly appreciated.

It is hoped however, that most of the mints will bounce back if we get good autumn rains

Working bees to assist in the maintenance of the Grevillea Park are held most Mondays. Volunteers are always welcome but should contact **Robert Miler on 42 846768** or **Ray Brown on 42 849216** to confirm, before attending.

# CORRESPONDANCE

**Jeff Irons, Australasian Plant Society, England**

I've just been reading the section on *Prostanthera* in Volume 8 of Elliot & Jones. It has raised some questions.

E&J do not include *Prostanthera* "Badja Peak". It was mentioned in *Australian Plants* a few issues ago, and I brought it back to England in 1992. Can you tell me anything about it? I believe that this plant (bought from Dealbata Nursery at Dalgety) is a natural hybrid. I gave it to a Welsh Alpine Nursery, whose owner describes it as "a cracking plant that shrugs off winter, and sell on sight".

According to the key in Vol. 3 of the *Flora of NSW* *Prostanthera incisa* is synonymous with *P. sieberi*, however E&J differentiate them. Can you elucidate? E&J also list a plant that they describe as *Prostanthera* sp. Mount Canobolas. Am I correct in assuming that this is *P. sp. C* of the *Flora of NSW*. E&J also state that mauve flowered forms of *P. cuneata* are probably hybrids with *P. melissifolia*. That seems very odd. How does it explain the forms mentioned in both the 1st & 2nd editions of *Kosciusko Alpine Flora*? Where does my plant from Lake Mountain (Vic) fit into this?

Dear Jeff,

Unfortunately, there are a number of significant impediments that constrain my attempt to answer your first and fourth inquiries.

The most significant is that I do not possess a copy of Elliott & Jones and secondly Australian plant nurseries have an appalling record of labeling plants correctly. I am not implying that Dealbata Nursery falls into this category, as I have not had any dealings with this organisation. It is possible however, that your plant may not be *Prostanthera* "Badja Peak". I have not grown this plant; as such, I have not attempted to trace its origins. I suggest that you contact the Canberra Botanic Gardens as I am told it has a cultivar register, which should include all origin details and a full plant description.

As indicated in *Kosciusko Alpine Plants* there are natural colour variations in *Prostanthera cuneata*. I do not know where Lake Mountain is and have not seen any plant material from that locality. As such, I cannot specifically answer this query. *Prostanthera* do hybridise readily in a garden situation. As for E&J assumption, I feel that this is not the case in most situations. Natural hybrids are rare, but there may be natural hybrids where these two species overlap, however I have not seen any. I have recently been informed by a Victorian botanist of the possibility of a "new" species of *Prostanthera* which has previously been referred to as a possible hybrid between *P. cuneata* and *P.*



SHARE  
YOUR  
IDEAS,  
TIPS  
&  
STORIES

WRITE TO

Robert Miller  
13 Park Rd  
Bulli  
NSW 2516

BUT

for replies  
please include a  
stamped self  
addressed  
envelope.

*melissifolia*. He has promised me some plant material and to keep me informed of the outcomes of his field trips. At this stage, I do not know if this is the plant of your inquiry.

Please find enclosed two extracts from past *Prostanthera* & *Westringia* Study Group Newsletters Lasianthos No.1 & Lasianthos No. 2, which will more than adequately answer your second and third questions.

### Help Needed from Members

Does anyone know the origin of *Prostanthera* “Badja Peak”? Do you have any thoughts on *P. cuneata* colour forms or know anything about the Lake Mountain plant?

### *Prostanthera aspalathoides* colour forms

In response to my request for cutting material of *Prostanthera aspalathoides* “Yellow Flowered Form”, Sarah Mackinnon has written that Kurunga Native Nursery has four forms of *Prostanthera aspalathoides*: crimson, yellow, green, and orange. You can view their catalogue at [www.kurunga.com.au](http://www.kurunga.com.au)

Thanks Sarah

**Members please send details of any other interesting Mints being grown so this information can be included in future newsletters.**

### Lyn Thompson NSW Study Group Liaison Officer - Extract of letter, 10 December 2002

Robert, I did appreciate your booklet. I have read it with even greater interest as it touches on areas which are known to us. I am sending a copy of the material to my niece who now lives at Martindale. Her property extends to the National Park from the creek on either side of Martindale Rd. I haven't yet walked on the property but I am assuming that the natural parts may bear some similarities with Baerami and Widden areas.

Merle and I have explored quite a bit of the northern area you worked in as that is the area which is so significant for conifers—what Merle calls her “conifer circle”. There are more species around Bylong, Wollar, Corricudgy than anywhere in northern or central NSW. Some are not found until the Murray/Riverina areas and into SA.

Our own property is at Boguee on the northwestern rim of the Capertee Valley. We regularly drive through parts you explored and we are prompted to take a detour around the loop of the Mount Vincent Rd. when the weather is less hot. As the crow flies we are quite close to Mt Vincent but there is no road through. I found the comment in the report about Mt Vincent most interesting and wonder how frequently that has happened. I know we went prowling on the south coast and highlands looking for *Callitris oblonga* entirely in the wrong place because a botanist got the areas confused.

We have a clear view of Genowlan from our land and all the mountains behind the valley, cutting out just before the crown. We haven't been able to explore our own forest as much as we would like. We took on the painting of our house ourselves until winter, then summer then the drought came. I don't have enough knowledge to compare the habitats as yet but I shall certainly let you know if we find any mints or their relations. You are welcome to come and prowl if you think you would find things of interest.

Let me know if there is any way in which I can help you.

## Study Group Newsletters—*The National Mint & Lasianthos*

The Study Group wished to continue the tradition, and hopefully improve on, the high standard of newsletter produced when Brian Timmis was Study Group leader, aided and abetted by Barry Conn as Editor.

Barry Conn and myself, in early 1993, discussed the format of our future newsletters. We decided to produce two types of publication - a general informal newsletter *The National Mint* and a more scientific and botanical publication *Lasianthos*. The journal would focus on all the Labiates, not just the genera *Prostanthera* and *Westringia*. The first edition of *Lasianthos* was printed in October 1993.

It was obvious that subscriptions would not cover the cost associated with our endeavours. The East Hills Group made representations, suggesting that state and federal bodies allocate funding to study groups for this purpose. Unfortunately, and for various reasons, this did not eventuate. The following is an extract from our September 1994 newsletter:

*"The study group is still alive and well, although a re-think as to the presentation of our newsletters has been necessary due to financial constraints. The distribution of The National Mint every second month has been put on hold temporarily so as to accrue sufficient funds to allow for the production of another addition of Lasianthos ahead of the extrapolated date of 1996-7 as outlined in the last National Mint Newsletter.*

*Our request for funding to the New South Wales Region was apparently received well with the committee members acknowledging the standard of presentation and content of the publication. Discussion was made concerning the financial outlay of publication (cost, as outlined in The National Mint December 1993) as to whether or not this could be justified when a less costly format would also disseminate the same information. It was also suggested that the utilisation of existing Society resources may well prove to be a viable proposition by lowering the cost of production thereby enabling us to continue with the same quality of presentation. Lyn Thompson kindly offered to look into this further and will be discussing the idea with Les Taylor."*

As a result, it was a resolution of our members circa 1994, that when sufficient funds and articles accrued, the Study Group would continue to publish a quality bound Newsletter rather than a few flimsy pages of chit-chat. This resolution enabled funding to be accrued to meet the printing costs of the subsequent editions of *Lasianthos*.

Unfortunately, this arrangement appears to be no longer possible. A major requirement outlined within the study group by-laws is that two newsletters per year be produced. At present *Lasianthos* does not appear to be acknowledged as either a newsletter or a publication.

The current \$5 membership fee is inadequate to fulfill the current running costs and administrative requirements of ASAGP i.e. bank charges, postage, two newsletters a year, financial reports, etc.

If we are to continue as a Study Group, and wish to produce *Lasianthos*, 1 or 2 things must happen: membership needs to increase to \$10 and we need to again explore the possibility of acquiring **funding from Federal and State bodies to offset printing and postage costs.**

The current level of postage and printing costs have resulted in the study groups funds being all but consumed. This is without being reimbursed for phone calls and the like. This edition of the *National Mint* will see our finances, for the first time, enter the red side of the ledger.

A \$10 subscription fee, should however, allow for two additions of the *National Mint* to be produced per year but it is **unlikely that another edition of *Lasianthos* will be able to be produced until late 2004 with this funding arrangement.**

## Memorial to Les Taylor

I was fortunate to attend an informal ceremony in memory of Les Taylor on Sunday 1 September. A widespread representation of society members also attended the function including members from the Fern Study Group, Prostanthera & Westringia Study Group, East Hills, Parramatta & Hills, etc.

This fitting memorial to Life Member, Les Taylor, who passed away in September, 2000 was organised by the Committee of the Blue Mountains Group and the members of the Glenbrook Native Reserve Trust.

Tess and Les's daughters Pauline and Therese were delighted by this form of recognition and enjoyed a wonderful barbecue lunch with the estimated 50 attendees. Three beautiful wooden outdoor seats were acquired which will be installed at selected sites throughout the Reserve as a permanent memorial to Les.

I encourage members to visit the Glenbrook gardens and take time to reminisce on Les Taylor's exploits whilst viewing his beloved Mints.

*Prostanthera prunellioides* (Blue Mountains form) and *P. incana* (large leaf form); two Blue Mountain endemics have become naturalised in the gardens. The latter forming a myriad of hybrids with a range of other mints.

## Study Group Meeting

A glorious sunny winters day ensured that the Prostanthera Study Group meeting held at the Illawarra Grevillea Park, Grevillea Park Road, Bulli, NSW on Sat. 20 July was enjoyed by those who attended. As usual, Rays band of volunteers had the park looking immaculate. A spectacular array of winter flowering Grevilleas and other native species were a delight to observe. In addition, the extensive variety of plant for sale added further interest.

The walk around the garden concentrated on highlighting the various new plantings of Prostanthera and Westringia now scattered in a number of beds throughout the reserve. Thanks go to Sid Pinner for supplying a range of cutting material and Kyrill Taylor and Harry and Jean Brian, members of the East Hills Group for making the day a success.

### NSW NPWS Rare Plant Survey cont. from page 8

As an aside, Robert stressed the importance of conducting assessments at times when the subject of interest is active and more likely to be found. For example, it is futile to conduct frog audits at times of the year when they are inactive as this will give an inaccurate picture of their existence on the habitats of interest (e.g. in areas designated for development). Unfortunately, the impatience of developers combined with the vagaries of government funding (i.e. the need to spend this year's budget by the end of the financial year, which is usually winter, precisely when the frogs are inactive) means that these audits are not always done at the correct time. Consequently, these audits are not necessarily accurate.

We all need to be vigilant and observant of our own environments to ensure that we are aware of the plants and animals within it and fight for their protection. Remember, we can, as individuals, lodge nominations under the Threatened Species Act with the NSW government.

## LASIANTHOS

Contribution to our publication *Lasianthos* is always welcome.

Members can forward articles for publication electronically to my wife's university email address z7133782@student.unsw.edu.au or on disk. Hard copies should be preferably typed, hand written short articles are also accepted.

Contribute now!

Your observations are important!

### THE PROSTANTHERA & WESTRINGIA IDENTIFICATION & CUTTING EXCHANGE SERVICE

For those of you who do want to know "what plant is that?". Its easy!

For plant identification send as complete a specimen as possible - preferably fresh, including material suitable for cuttings. These can be wrapped loosely, in lightly dampened absorbent paper enclosed within a milk carton. Prior notice by phone is advisable before dispatch via overnight post. Alternatively, a dried specimen can be posted between sheets of stiff card. In both cases, origin details, size and features such as flower colour should be included.

### NSW NPWS RARE PLANT SURVEY - *Kennedia retrorsa*, *Prostanthera cryptandroides*, *P. discolor* & *P. stricta* sens. lat.

Below is an excellent and amicable account written by Karl Schurr of my talk as reported in the East Hills Group newsletter.

Robert Miller presented a talk and slide show of a recent journey that he and Colin Gibson went on in search of rare and endangered plants around the Sydney Blue Mountains region. By way of introduction Robert briefly discussed the Threatened Species Act which requires that a recovery plan be developed for species identified as being threatened.

However, to develop an effective recovery plan it is necessary to not only identify the threatened species but also to record where it is currently found as well as the conditions in which the plant is found, such as soil types and companion plants. In other words to describe the ecological profile of the plant. From this information it may be possible to anticipate where the plants are likely to be found and to be able to establish successful regeneration plans. Unfortunately, the current endangered species list is not as complete or as accurate as is necessary to provide this information.

Robert mentioned some of the potential inaccuracies of the existing databases used by the NPWS and Botanical Gardens to identify endangered plants in NSW. Many of the specimen records are old. Consequently questions such as: Does the plant still exist in that region? Is the plant location accurate? What changes have occurred since the recording was made? In what conditions does the plant grow?. What are the current environmental challenges? Location records were often either inaccurate or inadequate. For example, records for some plants mentioned only the nearest town as the location. Alternatively, some were recorded in places which occur in more than one location (e.g. Mt Vincent) without information as to precise location. To complicate matters, the NPWS and Botanical Gardens each use different ways of recording plant locations so it is easy for inaccuracies to creep in when information is shared between the organisations.

The plan for this current review of endangered plants was to examine the present records, to establish the veracity of those records by doing a field search, determine the current population status and note present threats such as grazing, clearing or weeds. On finding the plants they also describe the conditions in which it was growing to help establish an ecological profile for each plant.

So, armed with the information they were able to obtain from the existing records, as well as topographical and soil maps, they went off in search of a number of endangered plants including *Kennedia retrorsa*, *Prostanthera cryptandroides*, *P. stricta* and *P. discolor*. They went searching in some wild and beautiful country west of Sydney which Robert shared with us using slides.

What did they find? Well, they found all of the above plants growing in a variety of places, but not necessarily where the plant records had indicated. *Prostanthera stricta* for example, was found growing in a variety of conditions including full sun on rocky pagoda heath outcrops with skeletal soil as well as an understorey plant alongside *Lambertia formosa*. Characteristically *P. stricta* grew at changes in soil margins such as basalt/conglomerate sandstone or shale/sandstone interfaces. As they began to recognise the types of conditions these plants were likely to be found Robert hypothesised from their maps where they would likely to be found. Armed with this data, enthusiasm and a four-wheel drive they were able to confirm these hypotheses as well as explore some breathtaking places.

The final outcome of this exercise is to help update the database of endangered plants. The database includes current accurate plant species location, as well as soil types in which they are found, companion plants and current threats. Hopefully this database will help people to recognise and preserve the diversity of plant species and provide information to help moderate/modify our insatiable appetite for changing this wonderful landscape. (Cont. page 7)