

Region

THE NATIONAL MINT

ISSN 1039-3560

July 2003 Volume 2, Issue 5

Newsletter of the Prostanthera & Westringia Study Group

Leader: Robert Miller 13 Park Road, Bulli NSW 2516 Phone/fax 42 846768

Patron



Brian Timmis

STUDY GROUP

Membership

Fees Now

\$10

Due June 30

2003



The Study Group Web Page is Now Online!

It can be viewed at <http://farrer.csu.edu.au/ASGAP/mints/>

Be patient, the front page opens slowly with some browsers—this problem will be remedied, hopefully in the near future !

The construction of the web page would not have been possible without the assistance of my daughter Danica, and Web Master Brian Walters who have provided technical expertise to the project.

The main focus of the web page is to advertise the existence of the Prostanthera & Westringia Study Group and thereby increase the awareness of the diversity of the Australian Labiates. The web page has also the possibility of attracting new members.

The current format contains a **Front-Page** display providing contact details and buttons to view extracts of our newsletters. The cover pages have links to various articles contained in our publications *Lasianthos* and the *National Mint*. There are also links to other interesting related sites e.g. National Parks & Wildlife Service and Royal Botanic Gardens. Other links will be included in the future.

It is my desire that the web page will be updated regularly, however this task appears to be more time consuming and complex than I had realised and therefore such endeavours will rely on input from my daughter.

I welcome comment on the web page especially if you have any ideas for inclusion. The first update I plan to achieve is a **WANTED** link **HAVE YOU SEEN THIS PLANT?** The idea is to display high quality images of Prostanthera or Westringia which are rare and which have not been collected or observed for many years. Some examples are *Prostanthera marifolia* and *Prostanthera* sp. (Upper Lane Cove River). The Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney has a number of specimens assigned to *Prostanthera marifolia* most of which were collected from areas which are now highly (cont. P.2)

BARGIN SALE—THE CRADLE OF INCENSE JUST \$10

If any member of the Study Group would like a copy please send a cheque/credit card details to Leonie Farrugia, Office Convenor PO Box 744, Blacktown NSW 2148, Phone 9621 3437, Fax 9676 7603 or E-mail: office@austplants-nsw.org.au

WEB PAGE (cont.) urbanised e.g. Middle Harbour, Hunters Hill and Lane Cove. There is unresolved confusion to which taxon the name *Prostanthera marifolia* should be applied to. *Prostanthera* sp. (Upper Lane Cove River) was collected by George Althofer who assigned it to *Prostanthera marifolia*. This species is nevertheless a distinct taxon, which is only known from the original collection. The good news is that the species is in cultivation. George has a picture on page 88 of *The Cradle of Incense*.

It is most probable that these species are extinct in most places, however there has been a number of other rare species e.g. *Haloragodendron lucasii* and even *Prostanthera junnonis* which have been "rediscovered" in recent times through the undertaking of specific targeted surveys. It is hoped by highlighting such species on the web page that enthusiasts may "rediscover" these and other "lost" plants.

Study Group Visit

11am **24 August at the Hunter Regional Botanic Gardens**

The Hunter Regional Botanic Gardens internet address is www.huntergardens.org.au/

I have arranged for the Study Group to visit the Hunter Regional Botanic Gardens on the 24th August. Kevin Stokes has kindly offered to show us around the *Prostanthera* and *Westringia* collection. The Botanic Gardens is well worth a visit as it contains a wide array of native and exotic plantings. Below is an extract from the Hunter Botanic Gardens Web Page.

Lamiaceae Garden

This garden is devoted to the Australian members of the Lamiaceae family, a large and world-wide family which contains many of the traditional culinary herbs, such as *Melissa* (lemon balm), *Mentha* (mint), *Lavandula* (lavender), *Origanum* (oregano and majoram), *Rosmarinus* (rosemary), *Salvia* (sage) and *Thyme* (thyme) from southern Europe. In Australia there are about 250 species in 38 genera, most of which are endemic, and central New South Wales, including the western part of the Hunter Region, has a high species diversity, particularly in the *Prostanthera* genus.

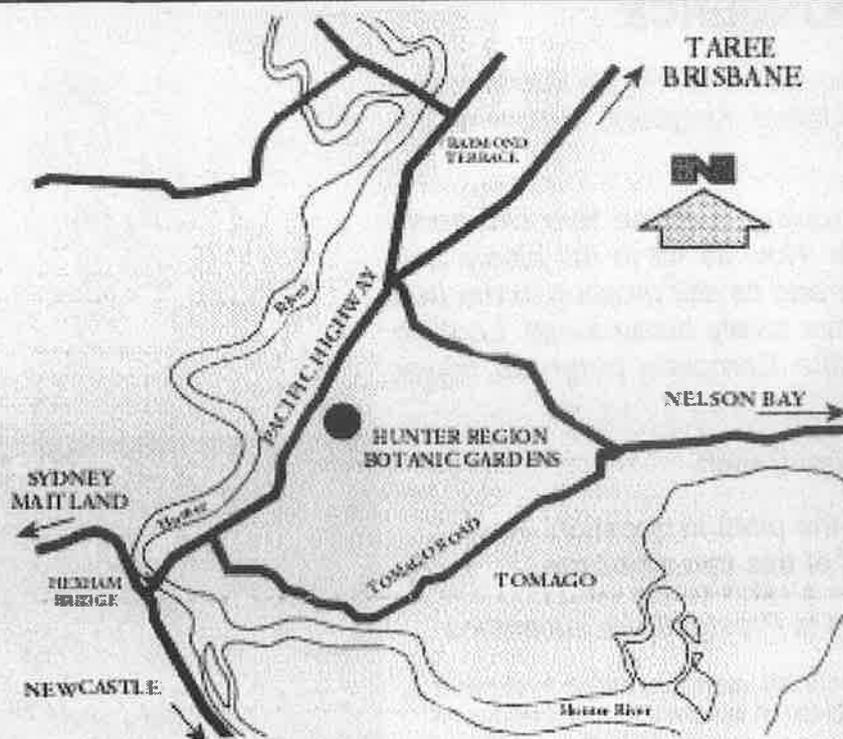
The plants are mostly small to medium size woody shrubs with some small herbs and low trees, and most have aromatic oils in their leaves. Well known genera include *Ajuga*, *Hemigenia*, *Mentha*, *Plectranthus*, *Prostanthera* and *Westringia*.

The collections in this Garden are predominantly *Prostanthera* species mainly from the Hunter Region with a few *Plectranthus* and *Westringia* species.

COMING EVENTS AT THE HUNTER BOTANIC GARDENS - September Sunday 7 Fathers' Day - Jazz, Devonshire Teas, Guided Tours Thursday 11 Night Walk **October** Sunday 12 Spring Fair - Brass Band, Tractor Rides, Stalls **November** Thursday 6 Night Walk

THE LIVING COLLECTION - First the drought then the rains

Overall the drought had minimal impact on the living collection housed at the Illawarra Grevillea Park. There were a number of losses and many plants suffered dieback of foliage and became rather scruffy looking. Then came the rains. Initially the rain was very welcome but unfortunately as the old adage states "it's either drought or flood". Many of the new plantings, which were thriving in the drought period subsequently, died. (Cont. P. 3)



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.

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 LIVING COLLECTION (cont. from P. 2)

Plants up to 1.5 metres high including *Prostanthera discolor*, *P. linearis* (Woy Woy form), *P. Ragged Robin*, *P. cineolifera*, *P. cryptandroides* etc. all turned up their toes. This has set back the replanting program considerably. It has also provided a new dilemma of whether the allocated beds where the losses occurred are suitable for Mintbushes.

Interestingly though, new plantings of *Prostanthera aspalathoides* and *P. microphylla* are still thriving. These species are usually very difficult to grow in a garden situation in coastal NSW. The success to date is also surprising as the bed in which they are planted, although new and in full sun, is comprised of very heavy clay soil and is heavily mulched.

Despite the setback, the mintbush plantings at the Illawarra Grevillea Park are still slowly increasing. The last six months has been busy with pruning and propagation. Approximately 500 more cuttings have been set down in Ray Brown's igloo. 100 Mints were planted this month with approximately 300 more tubes to be planted in the next few weeks.

Donations of plants (especially hardy spectacular forms) for this project would be greatly appreciated.

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.

CORRESPONDENCE

Brian Walters has kindly forwarded on to me an identification query he received from the United Kingdom. Below is the extract:

This plant came over to UK growing in a tree fern Dicksonia antarctica. It was about 1ft high. Now its 6ft in full bloom and beautiful. It survived our winter and its still growing in the tree fern. Its leaves when crush have lovely herby smell. Looking at previous query its not unlike Dampiera purpurea flower shape, only much lighter.

thanking you in anticipation, Tom Beach.

Tom has also sent a picture of the plant in question. Any member who would like a copy of this can email me.

Both Brian and I agree the plant is *Prostanthera lasianthos*.

COMMENT: it goes to show how unsophisticated quarantine systems are. No wonder there is an increasing problem of weeds and diseases world wide.

TALKS

My wife has almost finished her thesis; as such I envisage that we will have more time in the near future. Any Group who wishes to have a talk on *Prostanthera* and *Westringia* can email me at janrob@fishinternet.com.au to arrange a suitable date.

FIELD TRIPS

Rodger Bagley (a Study Group member) lives on the North Coast of NSW. He inquired about the identity of a mintbush he bought from a local nursery, sold under the name of *Prostanthera incisa* originating from the nearby Pillar Valley. It is one of the few mintbushes that grows well at his place.

To aid in identification, Roger found the locality of origin, collected fresh material and forwarded it to me. I know the taxon from a number of other localities, e.g. at Laureton, and Yarrahapinni Mountain. I suggested he refer to the mint as simply *Prostanthera* "Pillar Valley" as the taxonomic resolution of the *Prostanthera incisa*, *P. ovalifolia* and *P. lanceolata* groups is problematic. All members when growing

wild sourced plants should always ensure origin details remain recorded. **Rodger by collecting and recording the locality details of this plant has contributed to the understanding of this complex group of species.**

The Nurseryman concerned should be congratulated for recording source details. He is also correct to label the plant as *P. incisa* as this is what it would key out to. It would be helpful to also include Pillar Valley on the nametag to help ensure origin details are maintained through the nursery trade.



SHARE YOUR
IDEAS, TIPS
&
STORIES

WRITE TO

Robert Miller

13 Park Rd
Bulli NSW 2516

Or email

janrob@fishinternet.com.au

BUT

for written replies
please include a
stamped self ad-
dressed envelope