

# THE NATIONAL MINT

PROSTANTHERA & WESTRINGIA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER

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Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants

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Dear Members,

Spring is well upon us and our Prostantheras are beginning to flower, many of them a little later than most years, however I'm sure we will all be rewarded for our nurturing over the past 12 months. Now is also a good time to gain the identity and record exactly what species or form (colour variation, cultivar, locality) each of us have in cultivation and possibly putting pen to paper or even just some rough notes on your successful culture and/or mistakes and to share these valuable tips to our fellow members by contributing a short article for *The National Mint*.

I would like to share an exciting success with you. A few years ago, I collected a number of colour forms of *P. staurophylla* (previously *P. teretifolia*). One of them, a white-coloured form has turned out to be a most rewarding plant. It has taken a number of years to get this plant established due to the condition and lack of original cutting material which was slow to establish. Once suitable material was obtained it was grafted onto *P. nivea* (Eugowra Form). This plant in the wild was hanging onto life by a thread, a couple of near leafless sticks growing in a tiny skeletal pocket of soil its few white flowers the only things to turn my head away from the spectacular display of nearby plants of the normal colour. Now for the possible failure, and a lesson I hope I have finally learnt. Make sure your plants are suitably labelled. An exquisite musk-pink form of *P. staurophylla* may have been lost from the collection due to inadequate labelling. I normally do not label every plant in a batch of cuttings of the same species, merely the first and last to be potted with a white plastic tag. Sometimes the normal run of the mill nursery trade plants do not get labelled at all. This method mostly works well.

However, I am now well aware of the pitfalls. Occasionally, the labels disappear, as now seems to be the case. So when this batch of plants began to die, I assumed stupidly :- no label, nursery trade form, who cares! I am now awaiting for all the plants to flower to see if any have survived that may have been placed with other nursery trade plants.

The other possibility is that the intensity of the pink colouration is chemically dependant as last year I had many more plants of the pale pink form than I remember propagating.

The Motto of the story LABEL YOUR PLANTS WELL to save confusion. I am now in the process of using Permo Tags as well as the white plastic labels which I hope will solve the disappearing label problem. Sid Cadwell once told me labels were a wast of time at his place, unless they were buried as the animals took a fancy to them.

Has anyone had any experience with colour variation in *Prostantheras* possibly due to pH, or absence or presence of nutrients?

#### CUTTING EXCHANGE

Last seasons cutting exchange was full of success with most members having an encouraging strike rate thereby increasing the number of species in their collections.

I am keen to continue the exchange program, however this is an EXCHANGE program, without input into the main collection the availability of species or forms is limited to those that survive well in Sydney or that I have recently concentrated my attentions on. The main collection is poorly stocked with species from arid areas and interstate species and forms, however a number of very rare species eg. *P. verticillata* from W.A. are growing well and limited cutting material is available. Also an undescribed species from the Gibraltar Range is available - a very rare white form which makes an excellent grafted specimen. A few requests for cuttings are still outstanding, do not worry you are at the top of the list. It would also aid despatch if members could send payment for freight of cuttings with requests. This is about \$10.00.

A cutting exchange programme has been established with Mt Annan Botanic Gardens. Staff have recently taken material from many species in the Study Groups main collection. The cuttings are all reported to be doing well and we look forward to seeing a stunning mintbush garden in the future. I would like to hear from members who are willing to propagate material gained from Mt Annan at some stage in the future as they have a number of unusual and rare Labiates that I would like to see brought into wider cultivation. Initially preference would be given to those members who are willing to attempt grafting, label plants well and keep records of the origin of this plant material and are R.B.G. collection number so as to assure the identity of the plant material and are also willing to disseminate excess plants to regional Botanic Gardens such as Burrendong, Myall Park and the Hunter Regional Botanical Garden.

#### MEMBERS FORUM

Brian Timmis is amongst the mints in the Mid-north Coast and has found a number of species including *P. caerulea*, a number of interesting *P. ovalifolia* forms and even *P. rhombea*. He has also put on a display of Mints at the local Wildflower Display.

Jan Schellingerhout from the Netherlands has sent a copy of his Lamiaceae species inventory of over 800 species and is very interested in increasing his Australian component which is relatively small.

Bruce Grose of Eltham, Vic suggests we should compile the best of past issues, selling them in a booklet form as does the *Eremophila Study Group*.

Valerie McConchie reports only being unsuccessful with 3 species out of a large batch of species dispatched to her in August 1991. Successful species were planted out in Autumn with all doing well despite a wet and very cold start to winter.

Chris Prosser writes she would like to see the old style newsletter kept, being brought out 3 or 4 times a year and feels the fees are too low and should be increased to cover costs.

Jan Sked Study Group Coordinator writes I would like to see the study group expanded to take in others in the Family of Lamiaceae. I would certainly like to know more of the Genus *Plectranthus* and *Mentha*, as they seem to produce good ground covers. I am always looking for reliable ground covers in my work as horticulturalist for a firm of Landscape Architects.

Jim Thomson of Parramatta NSW writes, 'My wife and I look forward to participating in the groups activities, especially a propagation workshop on grafting. We would certainly like the old style newsletter to continue if this means a fee increase so be it'.

A big thanks to those members who have already sent me a list of what they are growing. Well done! This sort of response is encouraging.

#### STUDY GROUP ACTIVITIES PROGRAMME

**SAT. Oct 10 Study Group Meeting at Bankstown City Wildflower Garden, 7 Sylvan Grove, Picnic Point.**

A discussion of the groups direction, plant and cutting exchange, identification and inspection of the living collection at Sylvan Grove.

**SAT. Oct 31 Propagation Workshop at Sylvan Grove:-** cuttings for dissemination to Regional Gardens, Grafting Demonstration and Workshop. B.Y.O. B.B.Q

#### COMING EVENTS

Visit to Mt Annan inspection of Nursery Complex and Lamiaceae Collection  
B.Y.O. B.B.Q.

Autumn Propagation Day Venue to be Determined.

Visit to the Glenbrook Native Gardens

Visit to the Wetlands Centre and Hunter Regional Botanic Garden.

Mintbush field trip Newnes Plateau NE of Lithgow.

See You Soon  
Robert Miller

P.S. All members are welcome to visit Sylvan Grove anytime (I am in attendance at the Garden of a weekend till the end of Nov.), the next 3-4 weekends will be the best to see most mints.