

# THE NATIONAL MINT

PROSTANTHERA & WESTRINGIA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER

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Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants

PATRON:

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Dear Members,

I thought that it was appropriate to dedicate this issue of our *Newsletter* to our former Patron, Mr George Althofer, who died on the 8th March 1993. Mr Leslie Taylor, the founder of the *Prostanthera* Study Group kindly provides the following tribute to George.

## Vale George W. Althofer O.A.M.

I feel as though all *Prostanthera & Westringia Study Group* members should bow their heads and reflect for a moment on a truly knowledgeable person.

I have known George as a friend and informative person on *Prostantheras*, as well as other plants for well over twenty years. In all that time, he always had time to write to me or have a talk whenever I visited Burrendong Arboretum or his home in Wellington.

Learning about *Prostantheras* from George was very interesting because he knew so much about 'mints'. He had combed the country-side and collected and grown so many different species and forms. We spoke often, especially when he was writing his book, 'The Cradle of Incense'.

When I first decided to start the *Prostanthera Study Group*, it was George who gave me the encouragement to push forward. So, when I asked him if he could help he, "Whatever information and/or cuttings he could help with, he would". It was then that I asked him to be our 'Patron', to which he said that he would be proud to accept.

I have always had a very high regard for this man and will forever hold George Althofer in very high esteem. Amen.

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Barry Conn provides the following comments.

I was pleased to be able to perpetuated George's name in the botanical literature by describing the then new species, *Prostanthera althoferi*. When honouring George by this new species, I wrote, 'This species honours the naturalist G.W. Althofer whose contribution to the cultivation of Australian plants and, in particular, his profound admiration of the genus *Prostanthera*, has significantly increased public awareness of the Australian flora.' How true!

I first heard about George by being handed a letter by the Curator of the State Herbarium of South Australia, Dr John Jessop. This letter was a request for information on *Prostantheras* by George Althofer. It was a request for detailed information, something which I was quite unqualified to provide. I had just returned from a five year position in Papua New Guinea and I had only just learnt that *Prostanthera* actually existed! I did my best to answer his probing questions and learnt a great deal in the process. It was many years before I had the opportunity of meeting George. It was a day that I will never forget. We talked at length about *Prostanthera* and *Westringia*, sitting around the kitchen table with a never ending supply of tea and biscuits. By this stage, I knew a little more about the group! We spent some time at the Burrendong Arboretum with Peter and Hazel Althofer, looking at the many species in cultivation.

I am sorry that I never had the chance to see George again, but we corresponded fairly regularly for many years. Although George never saw *Prostanthera althoferi* growing in Western Australia, I was glad that I was able to give him a plant for his garden. He wrote to me frequently about its' progress. I remember how delighted he was when it flowered.

Many of us have lost a true friend, but we have all lost a dedicated naturalist who dared to grow Australian Native Plants when it was not fashionable.