

THE NATIONAL MINT

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Newsletter of the Prostanthera & Westringia Study Group

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Brian Timmis

STUDY GROUP

Membership

Fees Now

\$10

Due June 30

2005

Welcome to another edition of the National Mint.

Two Regional Botanic Gardens are featured in this edition of the National Mint: The Hunter and The North Coast Botanic Gardens. The articles provide a brief overview of the gardens attributes and contact details. Both institutions have well developed web pages which display detailed information about garden layout and the facilities provided.

WHAT'S ON includes a calendar of events for the Hunter Regional Botanic Garden. The Grevillea Park Open Days are provided below.

Two exciting successes have occurred in the long term development of the Illawarra Grevillea Park – the development and marketing of a new outstanding Grevillea hybrid and the gaining of a grant for plant labels. Angus Stewart will launch the release of "Bulli Beauty" on 23rd July.

A number of talks have been arranged for the 2005/6 year including Australian Plant Society **North Shore Group** NSW, Australian Plant Society **Maroondah District Group** Victoria and Australian Plant Society **Menai Group** NSW.

Correspondence features a selection of e-mail trains requesting assistance from various members of the public.



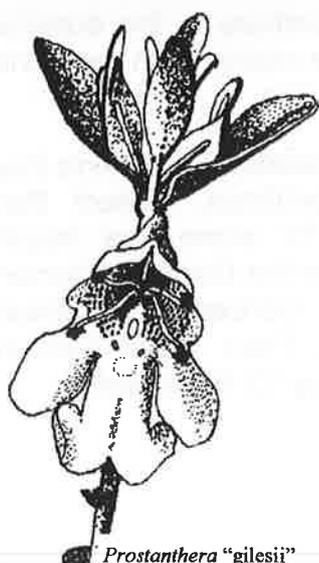
The Illawarra Grevillea Park Open Days

2005 Open Days: July 23 & 24 July 30 & 31 September 24 & 25
October 1 & 2

Working Bees: To assist in the maintenance of the Grevillea Park are held most Mondays.

Volunteers are always welcome but should contact **Robert Miller** on 42 846768 or **Ray Brown** on 42 849216 to confirm, before attending.

Web site address : <http://www.grevilleapark.org/>



Prostanthera "gilesii"

Do you know where a Prostanthera or Westringia grows in the wild?

Why not document its location by taking part in

ATLAS OF PROSTANTHERA & WESTRINGIA

For an electronic copy of a survey sheet e-mail me at janrob@fishinternet.com.au

ASGAP STUDY GROUP COORDINATOR RETIRES

Jan Sked has carried out the role Study Group Coordinator admirably for six years, that is three consecutive terms. The Study Group Coordinator is an elected officer of the ASGAP Executive. The ASGAP constitution dictates that elected officers may only hold office for three consecutive terms. Election of office bearers will be held on 1 October 2005 in Perth at the ASGAP Conference.

The *Prostanthera* and *Westringia* Study Group wishes Jan all the best and thanks her for undertaking the role of Study Group Coordinator. It is hoped that the new office bearer will build on Jans efforts and continue to try and gain a greater recognition within the society of the vital role performed by study groups and the need for greater funding and support.

STOP PRESS:

Jan informs us that **Nita Lester**, a Director and inaugural President of Myall Park Botanic Garden in Queensland is willing to accept nomination for the position of Study Group Coordinator

WHAT'S ON

Hunter Regional Botanic Gardens

If you are passing through Raymond Terrace drop in to the Hunter Region Botanic Gardens and look 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. Details about the Botanic gardens can be viewed on their Web Page. **The Hunter Regional Botanic Gardens internet address is www.huntergardens.org.au/**

The Hunter region contains a diversity of mint-bush species. *Prostanthera* is the dominant genus of native Labiate in the living collection. The mints displayed are mainly from the Hunter Region with a few *Plectranthus* and *Westringia* species in the gardens also.

COMING EVENTS AT THE HUNTER BOTANIC GARDENS - July Tuesday 5 Children's Day - Propagation Classes, Craft Classes, Treasure Hunts, Art Competitions, School Band Performances. **September** Sunday 4 Fathers' Day - Bring Dad for some foot tapping Traditional Jazz. Devonshire Teas, Guided Tours, and Plant Sales from the Gardens' Nursery. Thursday 15 Night Walk Sunday 25 Spring Fair - Brass Band Concert, Photography Competition, Bush Tractor Rides, Devonshire Teas, Guided Tours, Plant Sales from the Gardens' Nursery, Trash & Treasure and other stalls. **October** Thursday 13 Night Walk

WHAT'S ON

ILLAWARRA GREVILLEA PARK GETS LABELS

An application to the Australian Plant Society for funding to purchase name plates for the Grevillea Park has been successful. 600 UV resistant plastic labels with inscribed plant names have been ordered. The Grevillea Park Trust is funding purchase of stakes which will be pop-riveted onto the name plates. It is expected that a labeling & dedication ceremony will occur within the September/October open day period.

WHAT'S ON

ILLAWARRA GREVILLEA PARK OPEN DAY - Saturday 23rd July Angus Stewart to launch the release of "Bulli Beauty"

The July opening will see the release of "Bulli Beauty" a new hybrid Grevillea into the nursery market. The official release will be performed by well known horticulturist, commentator and author Angus Stewart at 2pm on Saturday 23rd July.

"Bulli Beauty" has been propagated from a Grevillea seedling that germinated in the Park. It has fern-like dense foliage and bears beautiful pink toothbrush like flowers.

Revenue raised from the sale of "Bulli Beauty" will assist in future development and maintenance of the park which houses both the Grevillea and Prostanthera and Westringia Study Groups living collections.



TALKS

A number of district groups have kindly invited me to present a talk on Prostanthera & Westringia in the upcoming 2005/6 season.

8 JULY 2005 APS NORTH SHORE GROUP NSW at 8 p.m.

The North Shore Group has invited me to be guest speaker in July where I will present a talk and slide show. Special emphasis will be placed on the Prostanthera species known to exist in the North Shore area but will include other species indigenous to the greater Sydney Region. There is a number of historical collections of mint-bushes in and around Sydney Harbour and northern suburbs including type collections. These species are now extremely rare locally, in the case of *Prostanthera marifolia* probably extinct. It is hoped that this talk will inspire closer examination of local bushland by members of the society and result in the relocation of yet another "LOST" species.

18 NOVEMBER 2005 APS MAROONDAH DISTRICT GROUP VICTORIA

The proposed talk is titled *Mint-bushes and Their Habitat*. This will give an insight into the diversity in size, foliage and flower colour, and the range of habitats mint-bushes occupy. Horticultural requirements including practical propagation tips will also be discussed. I hope to be in a position to take part in a field excursion with members of the society.

2005 APS MENAI GROUP NSW - Date to be advised

The proposed talk will be a slide show featuring the spectacular coastal scenery of the Nadjee Nature Reserve. *Prostanthera lasianthos* and a taxon most frequently referred to as *Prostanthera aff. mellisifolia* are known to occur in the general area.

Wish to book a talk on *Prostanthera* and *Westringia*?

Groups can email me at janrob@fishinternet.com.au to arrange a suitable date.

The North Coast Regional Botanic Gardens

Established in 1981, the North Coast Regional Botanic Gardens has become widely recognised as an outstanding attraction. Visitors can enjoy the beauty of native and exotic plants in formal garden settings or relax in natural bushland areas. A well signposted, extensive wheelchair accessible pathway system gives easy access to many areas.

Features of the garden include:

- A one hectare main display area featuring colourful native and exotic plants.
- An interpretive walk along a mangrove boardwalk.
- An endangered species collection of over one hundred rare plants considered threatened in their natural habitats.
- A rainforest display where the beauty of five typical regional rainforest types of the north coast is being created in a garden setting. Over 1200 plantings make it one of the most important man-made rainforests in NSW.
- A sensory garden full of fragrant exotic and native species. Displays also highlight the culinary, medicinal & scented properties of plants.
- Non Australian plantings cover the northern end of the garden. World zonal regions are being planted for America, China, Japan, India, Africa.

The Botanic Gardens is situated about 1km east along High Street from the City Centre Mall. Parking and entrance is located at the end of Hardacre Street.

Open: 9am to 5pm every day of the year.

Admission: is free, however please support the Garden with a donation.

Information Centre: Opens 10am to 2pm week-days, 9am to 5pm week ends, and public holidays.

Ph: 02 - 6648 4896, **Visitor Centre:** 02-6648 4188

Fax: 02-6652 1773

Email: coffs.council@chcc.nsw.gov.au

Web Site:

<http://botanicgarden.coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au/HomePage.html>

Friends: Friends of the North Coast Regional Botanic Garden Inc

Friend's Address: PO Box 648 Coffs Harbour 2450

Friend's Web Site: -

<http://botanicgarden.coffsharbour.nsw.gov.au/HomePage.html>

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 email address janrob@fishinternet.com.au or on disk. Hard copies should be preferably typed, hand written short articles are also accepted.

Contribute now!

Your observations are
important!

CORRESPONDENCE

The following correspondence items are a selection of e-mail trains received from various members of the general public over the past year requesting advice. I have included them in this edition as the content discussed may be of use/interest to, or may evoke discussion or further advice from members.

Their inclusion also demonstrates the diversity of often unseen work that the study group performs on behalf of the society.



Clair emails

Dear Robert,

I am a nursery worker at Barambah Environmental Ed Centre. We are trying to propagate *Westringia fruticosa*, *Westringia* "Morning Light" and *Westringia* "Wynyabbie Gem" (*W. fruticosa* x *W. eremicola*) to put on our sale lists, but so far we haven't had much success. Our method of propagation has so far been cuttings, treated with either rooting powder or rooting liquid. Do you have any tips for us?

Hello Clair,

I am glad to offer you advice but it is very much like asking the doctor what's wrong when he cannot examine the patient. If you could give me more details on what is going wrong - i.e. are the cuttings dying from the bottom up, or appear to be drying out etc. etc? What plants are you growing that you are having success with and what facilities you have etc?

Generally speaking, the *Westringias* you are trying to grow are easy to propagate - use semi hardwood cuttings up to 10cm long with 2/3 of the leaves removed. Use a cutting hormone e.g. strength Yates No 2..

Hello Robert,

Here's the info you asked for:

We are having success with *Plectranthus graveolens* (Mountain Violet), Native Violets, *Scaevola*, *Goodenia ovata* (Hop Goodenia) and *Myoporum* cuttings. Our *Grevilleas* failed miserably, as did our *Westringias*.

We had the best success with *Westringia* "Morning Light". *W. fruticosa* and *W. fruticosa* x *eremicola* "Wynyabbie Gem" are the two we are most concerned about - we did them up in the standard way that you suggested, then put them in our hot tunnel (it gets about 30% light) for



**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

addressed envelope .

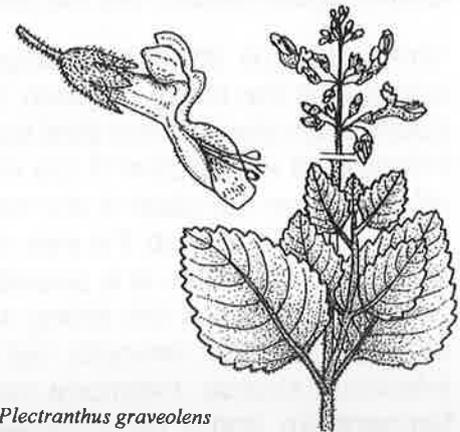
two weeks, after which we moved them to our shade tunnel (it gets 50% light).

We used both rooting liquid and powder. The liquid was mixed with bore water – is it possible this killed them? Everything else that we have used the liquid on has been unaffected. Some shot and then died, but most never struck. All the leaves fell off and they mostly died from the bottom up.

Is it possible they were getting too much water? They were watered every day using the automatic sprinkler system we have installed. Water wasn't dripping out the bottom of the pots.

There was fungus on the stems, but I think that only started after the cuttings died – the cuttings that struck showed no sign of fungus at all. When we noticed it, we started spraying with fungicide as a preventative.

We have grown them successfully in the past – one of the teachers at the Centre did a batch last year, and only lost one out of a tray. We aren't sure if that's a fluke or not, but we have recently done a batch the way he did and are waiting to see if they will be successful. Hope this helps the doctor – Clair



Hi Clair,

Firstly, I am about to put out a newsletter and will include you e-mails in the correspondence section. This may gain you assistance from other people.

Thanks for the info it is definitely of help. As you can see there is a lot of variables and each of them could definitely be the factor that has led to your lack of success. I can still only give you some ideas - it will still only be trial and error until you get it right. These comments should put you on the right track.

- The majority of the plants you appear to be having success with as a general rule have a greater shade tolerance than most Grevilleas and Westringia. This may suggest that the light levels may not be optimal. Most Grevillea and Westringia grow in full sun. I am assuming that you have 70% shade cloth - 30% light appears to be too low - (especially in winter) but this is dependant on the intensity of the outside light. Is there other shading influences e.g. buildings or trees.?
- Is the hot tunnel a polyhouse and the shade tunnel just shade cloth? If so - could you increase the light levels in a portion of the hot tunnel to 50% or more? This may help. Note: increasing the light levels will also increase the temperature! Therefore the cuttings are likely to need more watering and greater ventilation.
- If the shade tunnel is just shade cloth it is also very likely that moving the cuttings out after two weeks is too soon. Try leaving them in the hot-tunnel until the first signs of rooting.
- When moving the cuttings out to the shade tunnel it is also likely that the humidity levels would be significantly different to the hot tunnel. Care is needed to prevent desiccation i.e. the cuttings possibly need more frequent watering for a week or two???? Note: I am assuming that you are using a free draining cutting mix.

Clairs observation: "All the leaves fell off and they mostly died from the bottom up".

This evidence although meager suggests two possibilities - but more likely the second scenario is the major problem. Leaves falling off can be simply from drying out but since the cuttings appear to have died from the bottom up this suggests either hormone burn or fungal infection. It is not clear if the bottom of the cutting was infected/dead before the leaves fell off. It is also not clear if the hormone used on the successfully propagated plants was the same batch and also if it was applied within the same period of time i.e. with a few days of one another. There is a possibility that if the hormone was a different batch it could have been formulated at the wrong strength. Also using bore water could be a factor due to salts or other mineral deposits but more significantly - it is not sterile!!!! This could be an infectious source. Hormone needs to be treated carefully. It will go off - over time - with temperature and if contaminated. Always use sterile containers and use only a little at a time. Don't place left over hormone back into the container for later use. Time of the year can be a determining factor - however the plants you wish to grow should strike at any time of the year ranging in time from 4-8 weeks in warmer months to 12 weeks in winter to get roots.

A major unknown factor is your cutting mix and your method e.g. do you use individual pots 1 cutting per 50mm or smaller pot or community pots or trays. All these factors can also be significant. Many people use coco peat as a more environmentally friendly component to peat in the cutting medium. I have had good success using this at some times of the year and with some species - however I have also had terrible results at other times of the year. I do not have access to pasteurising equipment other than my oven - consequently I do not pasteurise my medium. I often have far greater success just using propagating grade sand. It is all trial and hopefully over time increasingly less error. I hope these comments are of some help.

Lynda Hanlon emails: "I need a diagram of a irregular flower with simple fruit."

Hello,

I found your website on the internet and wondered if you might be able to help me. I am a first year Horticultural student at Melbourne Uni's Burnley Campus and have an assignment in which I need to find an irregular flower with simple fruit. The *Westringia fruticosa* certainly has the irregular flower - easy to see - and by all accounts from what I have read, its fruit is simple, but I cannot find a diagram anywhere to show or explain why the fruit is simple.....are you able to assist me, please?

Any assistance you can give would be very much appreciated, and naturally your group would be mentioned in my Bibliography.

Hello Lynda,

You are correct to have identified *Westringia* as having an irregular flower and also a simple fruit. I am assuming that by simple you refer to the fact that *Westringia* possesses a single flower and does not have an aggregate fruit e.g. Like raspberry or a multiple fruit such as occurs with *Banksia* or *Casuarina* - therefore being simple.

I do not know of any reference which depicts a *Westringia* in the form that you are after. A couple of references however that maybe of some use are "The Language of Botany" by C. Debenham (undated) A publication of The Society for Growing Australian Plants and Helena Curtis (1984) "Biology" Worth Publishers Inc.



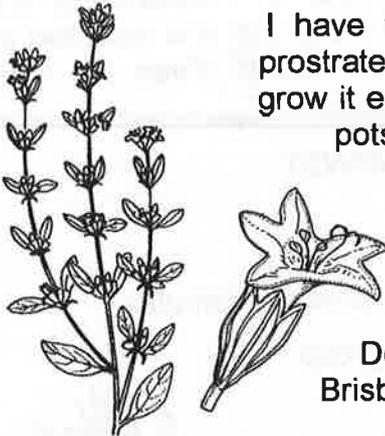
Probably the best thing you could do is to get some flowers/fruit and dissect them under a microscope and draw what you see.

My only other suggestion is to do a literature search by Barry Conn who is a Lamiaceae research botanist. I think he has contributed to the Flora of Victoria (I am not quite sure if this is the exact title as to date I have not purchased or seen the publications).

I hope this is of a little use. I found it very interesting that there were plenty of diagrams depicting aggregate fruits etc. but not of simple fruits.

Good luck

Jenni Blackburn emails: Subject: *Menthus diemenica*



Mentha satureioides

I have two plants, one from Sydney and one from Brisbane of this prostrate, slight aroma plant and am wondering about best conditions to grow it e.g. full or part sun and moisture. I am keeping them very moist in pots. I am finding it difficult to find much information on them unlike imports such as Pennyroyal. My e-mail address is ausmint@yahoo.com.au

Hi Jenni,

Do you know the origins of your plant material? When you say Brisbane and Sydney - is it from wild source or nursery trade?

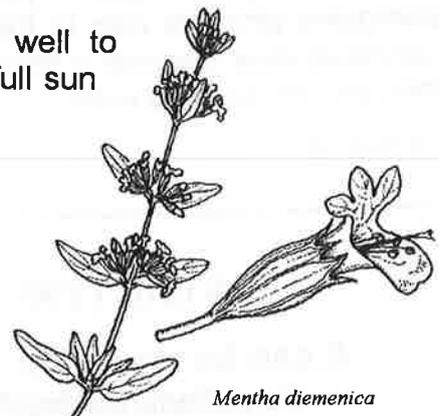
The correct spelling of the plants is *Mentha diemenica*. The taxonomic resolution of this species is uncertain. Some botanists infer that this species is part of a morphological continuum with *Mentha satureioides* others recognise a number of undescribed forms. Put simply, like many of our native genera, research dollars are required to sort out this mess. Currently it is recorded from all states excepting WA. In NSW it is recorded to occur in the botanical subdivisions of NC CC NT CT NWS CWS SWS. With such a widespread distribution from the coast to tablelands and slopes to answer your question accurately origin details are required. I have observed this species growing in heavy clay soils in western Sydney as well as in alluvial areas - it is also known to grow in sandy soils. It is mostly observed in a diverse herb/grassland environment.

Generally speaking it is a hardy species which response well to general garden culture like most plants - fertilise, water and full sun to part shade. Different clones will respond differently.

I hope this is of some use.

Cheers

Robert M



Mentha diemenica

Chris Phelps e-mails

Hi Rob,

I have been given your contact details from an officer from NSW NPWS who told me that you are one of the 'experts' re: *Prostanthera*.

I think this is a *Prostanthera nivea* (Snowy Mint Bush) it has no aroma in the leaves. Found on rocky outcrop called Limb of Addy near Denman. I have forwarded electronic images of the habitat and the plant.

Would be pleased if you could id it for me.

Hi Christine,

Nice to receive a worthwhile email for a change! (Your's was the only one out of 100 spam). Your id looks fine to me. Have observed *P. nivea* in the Denman vicinity e.g. at Myambat Army Camp.

Please send any other *Prostanthera* queries. I am keen to know of *Prostanthera* and *Westringia* locations as there are many undescribed species and many that are recorded as widespread species which appear to have suffered from loss of habitat. Even the most common mint-bushes are not common as they are often habitat specific.

P.S. curious to know your interest in *Prostanthera* do you work for NPWS?

Hi Rob

Happy to oblige. If you send me your mailing address I will send you pressed samples.

No I don't work for NPWS, just a crazy community member with a group that is working on ID of Fauna and Flora at Wybong in the Upper Hunter. We received an envirofund grant and NPWS has been working closely with us. She gave me your details. We have thus far found of interest, *Goodenia macbarronii*, which was previously unknown this far east, *Diuris tricolor* and a new small population of *Pomaderris reperta* which has only recently been described.

Hello Christine,

Thank you for the photos etc.

It is definitely *Prostanthera nivea* var. *nivea*. Please keep your eyes peeled for *Prostanthera cryptandroides* which is also in the area - at Myambat and other localities near Denman it grows normally on or near the ridgetops on very skeletal soils.

Cheers Rob M



Prostanthera nivea var. *nivea*

Visit The Study Group Web Page

It can be viewed at <http://farrer.csu.edu.au/ASGAP/mints/>
Be patient, the front page opens slowly with some browsers.