



ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

RAINFOREST STUDY GROUP

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"Behold the turtle - He makes progress only when he sticks his neck out." (J. B. Conant).

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS
GLENDA DATSON PO Box 311 Albury 2640

May I introduce.....
L & D MEADOWS 120 Worongary Rd Tallai 4213

A FORTHCOMING ISSUE OF "AUSTRALIAN PLANTS" WILL FEATURE RAINFOREST THEMES

Bill Payne, the editor, recently contacted me with this news and wondered whether any of our Group would like to contribute? He particularly sought items for the "Our Garden" series and I took the liberty of passing on the names of some of you who I know have especially interesting places, as well as referring him to previous N/Ls describing members situations.

One reason for the issue is a concentration on RF Proteaceae; the working list shows 24 genus, many have been covered in past "A.P.s." but Part 2 will include appropriate Grevillea, Hakea and Banksia. Bill asks "Are there any comments pertinent to their (Proteaceae generally) cultivation in particular? Is there a record of success in cultivation area by area? You went to a lot of trouble on Dysosylon. The slides I was offered were taken back so I will have to present it without slides unless you can round some up".

Therefore, I have two requests of you members. (a) Please publicise our 'study' - Rainforest - as best you can by sending something to Bill (860 Henry Lawson Drive, Picnic Point NSW 2213). I would expect that the issue will not be restricted just to Proteaceae so he would appreciate anything you may have that is relevant to RF and interesting. (b) Either loan me, or copy any of your good Dysosylon slides - flowers, fruit, foliage, or the whole plant and send them to me (any species) with your account for reimbursement by the Group. ASAP please.

ADVANCE NOTICE - OUTING TO NSW SOUTHERN RF's IS SUNDAY 16th FEB. NOTE IT IN YOUR DIARY

Geoff and Ann Long have set the date to host a day at Foxground near Berry, south of Sydney. Further details in a later issue, but do make a note of the date - would be good to have a respectable turnout of NSW and travelling members to make it a worthy get-together.

BRISBANE 'BRANCH' EXCURSIONS HAVE ALL BEEN ARRANGED

All start 9.30am for a cuppa, meetings commence at 10 o'clock. Always on a Saturday
13th July Ipswich, Queens Park, (Golby Av.) Looking at specimen planting, reafforestation, bank stabilisation on Bremer River
14th September Mt. Coot-tha Botanic Gardens, Rainforest Walk.
9th November Rollo Petrie RF Walk North Pine Country Park, Dayboro Rd Petrie.
Enquiries to Peter Jurd, phone 3345 1445

OUR SEED BANK - SPECIES CURRENTLY IN STOCK AND SOME QUESTIONS ARE ASKED OF YOU

Seed available -- Araucaria cunninghamii Austromyrtus metrosideros Barklya syringifolia Cassia marksiana Commersonia bartramia Decaspernum humile Ehretia acuminata Elaeocarpus bancroftii E. obovatus Euodia micrococca Ficus obliqua Flindersia australis Hibiscus heterophyllus Lophostemon confertus Macfura cochinchinensis Melia azedarach Notea longifolia Pandorea jasminoides (2 var. - white, normal) P. pandorana (flower colours reversed) Parinari nonda Rhodosphaera rhodanthema Schizomeria obovata Stenocarpus sinuatus Syzigium leuhmannii S. paniculatum Trema aspera. Recent donors; P Brady, O Carter, H Franz, G Nosworthy, G Reed, C Shackel, D Vance, P Bennett, D Jenkinson.

Requests to P. Bennett 20 Belmore Court Pine Mountain Q. 4306 with a stamped SAE please.

Patrick has asked "if you will respond to these questions. * How relevant is the Seed Bank? * Why do you use it? * Why do you not use it? * How do you rate the service? * Any complaints? * Suggestions on improving availability? * What do I have to do to get you to use it?" Please reply to him direct with your replies.

He will collate the info, and we will subsequently publish a summary.

OMENS ARE THAT WE ARE IN FOR A COLD WINTER. RIGHT NOW IS THE TIME TO PREPARE FOR IT

SUE AND BRIAN from 'down the road, over the hill' (Marlee) draw our attention to this saying by early May, they'd already had 4 frosts on their river flats. Europe and America had one of the coldest winters on record. Perhaps we should immediately check our smaller plants to see if they should have frost barriers such as hessian, plastic bags or something as protection.

SOME SUBSCRIPTION RENEWALS ARE OVERDUE

Reminders are enclosed where needed, but it does help me a bit if all renewals are paid on time.

VICTORIAN COOL TEMPERATE RF -- ISLAND CREEK WALK AND THE ADA TREE

"This walk is one of the best for someone who wants a quick, overall impression of Vic's CTRF. It is located just north of Powellite, to the east of Melbourne and is close enough for a day trip. ... The walk begins in wet sclerophyll forest (Mountain Ash & Messmate being the largest of the trees, though other species are there), but quickly drops into well developed CTRF. The track undulates beneath a lowish closed forest of Myrtle Beech, Sassafras, Silver Wattle & Hazel Pomaderris, along with Mountain pepper, Mintbush & an array of ferns. Epiphytes are rare, apart from the climbing Kangaroo Fern though I am sure the orchid Sarcochilus australis would be in the Sassafras, but I haven't seen any.

The track crosses Island Creek via a small bridge over the clear stony water - the atmosphere at this site is superb, a real fairyland! Over the creek, the RF continues under an absolutely enormous group of Ash trees. While the vast majority of the Central Highlands has been logged extensively and was severely burnt by the 1939 fires, this area was obviously untouched. The trees here have by far the largest un-butressed trunks I have ever seen. The track goes to the base of the largest - the Ada Tree - where there are seats and a boardwalk to protect the tree's roots. (Although I suspect the big signs telling people not to walk around the tree only spark further curiosity to do so!) The tree stands at about 76m with a circumference of 15m, 1.5m above the ground. Although its top is damaged, like most old Ash trees, it is still remarkably healthy. I remember doing work experience at this site a few years ago with a seed crop expert, who was amazed to see such a massive crop on so old a tree.

Of extra interest is another small track that leaves the walking path, and leads to an old mill site. A few bits of iron, some bricks and garden flowers are all that remain. If you follow this track for a few kms, you pass some tramway equipment before crossing a number of creeks. In most of these gullies, old wooden trestle bridges remain - and look quite startling. The track continues through narrow, moss covered tram cuttings to Starling Gap camp site.

Apparently a lot more of the tramway system survives away from the tracks. I met an old guy (Jack Adams) who worked as a logger in the '40's, who said at least until a few years ago a tunnel and its protruding air vents remained, but I've not yet located it. Jack showed me photos of the area and its mills, dating back to the early 1900's. As David can testify, the area was packed with bizarre, rickety mills and criss-crossed with thrown together tramways. The same old fellow boasted about felling (no chainsaw) a tree equal in size to the Ada, along with meeting an escaped circus boa constrictor in the Starling Gap camp ground! - and I think that is a good note to finish on. A surprising place indeed."

Submitted by STEVE SINCLAIR of Mt Waverley who would be happy to give anyone further directions. (Ed. Thanks Steve, that is a great description and should encourage us all to visit the place should we be in the vicinity.)

GROWING RF SPECIES ON VICTORIA'S MORNINGTON PENINSULA

JOHN TRUEMAN of Main Ridge says "In reply to your request about my experiences with CTRF plants, this is my progress so far. I have also included notes on WTRF species. The site of our RF garden is on rich, red soil which drains well but rarely dries out due to constant seepage from neighbouring blocks. Rainfall is over 1000mls p.a. and recent summers have been wet and humid. The garden is well protected - the cold SW winter winds blow over the top, while the hot northerlies don't seem to eventuate now. Frosts are not a problem here.

The area has been heavily mulched; for sake of convenience and planning, a path separates the WT from the CTRF. The designated CT section tends to dry out more during summer, causing us to hand water during a dry spell. But in winter it receives less sunshine so stays wetter. It took us several years to establish some system to what we were trying to do and I really feel we are now making good progress. Here is an outline of our achievements over the past 4 years. --

Eupomatia laurina (planted '91) Several plants growing - first plants have flowered - been regularly pruned - doing well.

Eucryphia moorei and E. lucida (pl 95) Both growing well.

Hedycarya angustifolia (pl 91) Vigorous growth - has flowered - regularly pruned.

Nothofagus cunninghamii (pl 93) Several plants now growing well

Rapanea howittiana (pl 91) Slow steady growth - yet to flower.

Tasmannia insipida (pl 93) Steady growth. Telopea oreades (pl 96)

Acmena ingens (pl 92) Steady growth - healthy - yet to flower - regularly pruned - 3m high.

A. hemilampra (pl 93) Slow growth - healthy.

A. resa (pl 94) Steady growth - healthy.

Archirhodomyrtus beckleri (pl 92) Steady growth - 2nd flowering this year.

Brachychiton acerifolius (pl 88) Have several specimens to 6m - seem to enjoy the location.

B. discolor (pl 93) slow but steady growth.

Backhousia citriodora (pl 91) Excellent growth - has flowered.

B. anisata (pl 94) Had initial poor shape so pruned back to ground - vigorous growth since then!

B. myrtifolia (pl 95) Good growth.

Buckinghamia celsissima (pl 94) 2nd attempt - Slow but steady growth - looks to be surviving our winters.

Ceratopetalum gummiferum (pl 90/92) Both in unsuitable places. Poor growth - will try again this spring.

C. apetalum (pl 95) Slow starting - steadily growing now.

Diploglossis cunninghamii (pl 94) Slow but steady - looks healthy.

Eugenia myrtifolia (pl 91) Consistent growth - looks good.

Ficus macrophylla (pl 89) Planted for our 2 children. I realise that in 50 years they will be too big, but they are majestic. Very good growth - flower buds developing. (Over the past few summers we have had some dieback, seemingly fungal based. They have re-shot lower down the diseased branches.)

Hymenosporum flavum (pl 88) Grown extremely well - flowered for several seasons - has become leggy so I'm in the process of pruning to develop bushiness, though some branches are too high to reach - 6m tall.

Harpulia pendula (pl 93) Survived 2 winters - slow growth - 30cm high.

Melia azedarach (pl 86) Several plants - flowered for a few years - slugs & snails a real problem when new seasons buds develop - yet to produce a good crop of fruit.

Macadamia tetraphylla (pl 92) Has grown well - 3m high.

Meterosideros queenslandicus (pl 92) Consistent growth - been regularly tip-pruned - yet to flower - 2.5m tall.

Neolitsea dealbata (pl 96) 2nd attempt but this also looks to have died.

Rhodosphaera rhodanthema (pl 91) Really struggled up to this summer. Tremendous growth this season - looks like it will develop into a beautiful tree.

Rhodamnia 'Rib fruited Malletwood' (pl 91) Steady growth - lovely shape - haven't pruned this one - flowered last summer - delightful flowers.

R. spongiosa (pl 91) Has struggled - slow growth.

R. maideniana (pl 92) Planted in a well protected location - has done very well and is about to flower - do have to be careful it doesn't dry out.

Stenocarpus sinuatus (pl 87) Grown extremely well - yet to flower.

S. salignus (pl 93) Made very good growth - about to flower, very surprising as it is so young.

Syzygium wilsonii (pl 91) Slow growth, probably in the wrong spot; too dry. Have planted another.

S. leuhmannii (pl 91) Grown extremely well - sensational new growth - regular tip pruning - yet to flower - 2m high

S. endophloium (pl 91) Slow growth - looking better after a ground cover around it was removed - 35mm tall.

S. gustaviooides (pl 91) Steady growth - healthy - 1m high.

S. australe (pl 92) Grown quickly - regular tip pruning - 2nd flowering.

S. francisii (pl 94) Consistent growth - healthy plant.

S. Hodgkinsoniae (pl 93) Slow growth - has passed through that odd, distorted look - appears healthy now - is in a well protected spot.

S. fibrosum (pl 95) Just surviving - planted from a tube - this coming winter will be a test.

S. wilsonii ssp cryptophelbium (pl 95) Looks OK presently - again, this winter will test.

Sloanea australis (pl 92) A nearby Gum slowed the growth - looks better since Euc removed.

Tristani laurina (pl 86) Growing near 2 Melias - looks healthy enough - quite bushy - has flowered - 3m x 2m.

Lophostemon conferta (pl 84) Wonderful specimen - 5m high.

Toona australis (pl 92) Really struggled to this year - doubled its height this summer - 30cm tall.

Vesselowska rubifolia (pl 93) Doing well - has flowered, which is unusual - in a well protected spot - tends to dry out late in summer.

Waterhousea floribunda (pl 92) Terrific specimen - beautiful weeping habit - strong growth - 3m tall - recent first flowering.

W. unipunctata (pl 94) Been through a winter & survived so put in another - interested in how they will cope.

Observations on developing a RF on the Peninsula. You do need to select a site carefully. A CTRF is easier to establish than WT, however planning is still essential. Both types require protection from wind. Mulching is crucial as it helps conserve moisture. Plenty of sunshine needed for WT. Underground seepage a big advantage in maintaining moisture levels. Deep red soils, and good drainage could be crucial.

We have been lucky with our RF site selection as it is virtually wind free, reasonably humid, adequate sunshine and does not suffer from extremes in the weather. If you can find the correct location a wide selection of RF plants can be grown. We use Nicholsons' RF Plants Vols 1 - 4 extensively. Been a wonderful reference. 90% of our plants have been purchased at Kuranga Native Nursery, Ringwood."

(Ed. Thank you John for that most comprehensive description of establishing a Victorian RF garden.

ALPHITONIA EXCELSA -- A QUESTION & SOME OBSERVATIONS AS WELL

Is there a 'secret' to propagating Alphitonia wonders BART HACOBIAN ? "Where we live, in the northern beachside area of Sydney, it occurs (rarely) growing on clay soils in protected sites. It is the host plant of the beautiful little RF Butterfly Danis hymetus, the Green-Banded Blue, which has its southern breeding limit in this locality (it ranges from here, up the east coast to Cape York). I have been trying to interest the local Council in using A. excelsa in bush regeneration plantings, but none of the local nurseries seem to have been able to propagate them. Any ideas from readers experiences?

Incidentally, I have planted 4 specimens in my garden, two of which were transplanted root suckers from Gladstone, Qld. while the other 2 were from Qld nurseries. Although not dazzlingly fast growing (under a metre a year), all four of the 2 year old plants were well and truly chewed up this summer by the butterfly caterpillars. The adult butterflies seem to like to hang about the margins of my tiny garden RF patch, and help me pretend I'm not really in Sydney! Butterflies do wonders for the atmosphere of a RF garden." (Ed. Bart, I fully agree that this is truly a beautiful little butterfly. We saw our first specimen, here in March this year. Have often wondered what eats Alphitonia leaves, some years they are really tattered, though presently they are in almost mint condition. Propagation-wise, I've had reasonable success by 'nicking' the seeds red, glassy coat and soaking them overnight in water prior to sowing. Even so, they are slow in germinating..... What experiences have others had?

MOTH OF THE MONTH -- GRANNY'S CLOAK MOTH, SPEIREDONIA SPECTANS

This is a large grey-brown moth with a wingspan of about 7.5cm. It has large eye spots on the upper wings and small spots on the lower wings. I have read that the food plant of the lava is unknown but is thought to be various wattles. At my place they feast on the White Cedar, Melia azedarach, helping the white cedar moth Leptocneria reducta to defoliate it. reference - Ryan M 1995 Wildlife of greater Brisbane (Qld. Museum, South Brisbane)

(From JUDITH BRASS Karalee Q.)

SUCH BIG PROFITS MADE BY DEVELOPERS CAN GIVE THEM AN ABILITY TO WIELD HUGE POWER AND INFLUENCE

In Sydneys CBD, the well known old Farmer & Co store, a large and centrally located site is to be demolished and a 29 storey office tower and retail complex erected in its place. The SMH (23/2/96) reported that "the tower will cost an estimated \$343 million to build and is forecast to be worth \$470 million on completion, throwing up a \$128 million profit on development." (sic).

That is a huge return, and while everything is no doubt above board in this case, it is an indication of profits to be made by developers, and of a vast amount of money sloshing around in the system. No wonder there is so much corruption of our administration, the huge returns available make it very worthwhile to be 'shared around' and encourages offers to be both made, and hastily accepted. No wonder few battles are won in endeavours to protect wonderful old buildings, vital agricultural land, and important habitat areas. Obviously this is part of the answer to our bewilderment that certain seemingly odd decisions are made.

Another concern of our development fetish is that those vast profits are made by the few, but associated expenditure in the provision of infrastructure is generally met by the taxpayer, or the general public. The 5 fastest growing Councils in NSW have the

majority of the State's coastal RF within their boundaries and are all growth mad. They are Tweed, Ballina, Lismore, Coffs Harbour and Hastings and yet none supposedly have sufficient income or borrowing capacity, or the desire to enforce developers to meet the cost of infrastructure. They are pressuring the NSW govt. for funding of \$50 million to meet the immediate needs of roads, bridges water supply and sewerage to enable subdivision of prime food producing land, bush, and wetland. Personally, I am extremely annoyed that any portion of my minuscule levies are devoted to such stupid and destructive activities, and I wonder why the bulk of the population goes along with such transfers of their income. Either through brain-washing or stupidity I suppose.

Examples of urgent developments supposedly held up by lack of infrastructure are Cobaki Lakes (?LRF) and Koala Beach (known Koala habitat) in Tweed Shire; flood-prone land in Lismore; Heath/Wallum at Ballina; chemically polluted Banana plantations and adjacent STRF near Coffs; dry and wet sclerophyll forest, remnant patches of RF, and high quality volcanic-derived soils of the Hastings that were previously used to grow food for our sustenance.

A relevant fact included in the Greenpeace 'Guide for the '96 Election' showed that in the top 10 donors to parties in 1993, Lend Lease Corporation was the largest disclosed public company donor to Labor with \$109,000, though \$129,000 to the Liberal/Nationals was merely their 6th highest benefactor (other than those who bypassed the disclosure rules via a [legal] cover-up). The other declared big donors were trade unions to Labor, and big business to the other conservative parties, as would be expected.

The final piece of this jig saw is disclosed in AESP's March '96 N/L where the Dept of Planning & Urban Affairs latest plan for the future of Sydney determined that 640,000 new dwellings must be built by 2020 because of the expected population increase - so much for the Premier's previous statement that "Sydney is already too crowded". Many of these new homes are to be "multi unit" - every developers dream!

More people = more development = greater pressure on the forest and other natural resources.

JUST A FEW OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS RECENTLY RAISED

Ocean litter is still increasing, particularly of plastic materials. An international convention (MARPOL) has been agreed to by most nations, and like Oz, have legislated to ban the disposal of plastic from ships. This has kept the amount of garbage down (has it?) and it is estimated that currently, at least a minimum of 450,000 plastic containers are dumped each day from shipping vessels. It is recognised that persistent plastic debris in the marine environment causes widespread mortality of many marine animals, including birds, seals, turtle, fish and crustaceans. Our beaches, rivers and estuaries are usually littered with such garbage and it is obvious that our own laws are neither complied with, nor policed. (From "Waves" V2 No4. [edited])

* * *

We shouldn't worry too much about the Greenhouse Problem, our decision makers seem unconcerned. Greenpeace tells that a 120 megawatt coal fired power station that will generate a fifth more gases than other existing stations has been approved in NSW despite a national commitment to reducing greenhouse emissions. A Land and Environment Court appeal failed to stop construction "because Australia's greenhouse gas policy is not legally binding". NSW currently has an oversupply of power, and to take up this capacity there is a constant appeal to consume more, increase industrial development and at the same time bring down costs to business to enable them to waste more energy, rather than pass on savings to the consumer. A further cost to the community will be the vast amount of debt required to pay for this new power station, no doubt to be borrowed from overseas to add to our constantly growing foreign debt.

* * *

There really is nothing on this planet that is sacrosanct - or perhaps valueless in our system. In March, it was announced by a Canadian research group that one of our few plentiful remaining animals, the Coat-of-Arms Emu, is worth an absolute fortune for its 'oils' that would be of use as lubricants in such things as aircraft engines and other machinery, replacing the synthetic oils presently used. The spokesman said that such a huge demand for the product could be created "that the total number of Emus in the world today would be unable to satisfy the quantity required".

* * *

The front runner in the "1996 Most Cynical Decision Stakes" was the approval of the gold mining proposal around the edge of Lake Cowall in NSW (refer N/L No 31). At the very same time as the Ramsar International Wetland Conference was being held in Oz, a Commission of Enquiry determined that this mine, based on the use of large amounts of deadly cyanide to process the ore, should proceed. Virtually all of the company's conditions were approved, many of the EPA's precautionary recommendations were either ignored or overruled. Lake Cowall is one of the country's largest, generally reliable, and most important water bird refuge and breeding area, but it seems that extremely short term gains to a powerful company (but not to society generally) overrides a vital ecosystem, fundamental to the very survival of many animal species. Just 2 weeks later, the NSW govt. announced that it would not approve the project, with the miner concerned (Norths) predictably complaining long and loudly that this was a most unfair decision and would result in leaving 2 million ounces of gold in the ground to either rot away, or be vaporised into the atmosphere, they insinuated.

* * *

The term 'kangaroo shooter' deemed 'politically incorrect'. In an endeavour to improve a poor public image, their spokespersons have chosen 'wildlife harvester' as a preferred title.

* * *

Included in the donor list to that oddly named Shooters Party is the NSW Forest Products Assn, said to have a membership of 250 sawmillers and logging contractors, with \$10,000. The question arises as to what the deliberate killing of animals has to do with exploiting plants? Do they contribute anything to the care of rare or common animals displaced by their activities, to forest pollinators, researching useful predatory species, independent scientific investigations? Like to know.

* * *

Not very many jobs in woodchips is the message from two recent reports. In Gippsland, Vic. between 30 - 35 people are employed in chipping 35 - 40,000 trees p.a. An (admittedly) small mill in Tasmania has just one operator to process its output.

The Koala "not endangered, or even threatened" stated by our new govt. a mere 2 months after it was elected. Justifying their refusal to extend protection of the species under Commonwealth law last month.

* * *

Uranium mining in National Parks? Of course it is safe, we are continually told. Fortunately the Olympic Dam mine in SA is not in a NP, because its tailings dam was leaking for around 3 years, due to its incompetent design. The operators, Western Mining Corporation, would have fixed it up earlier if they could have done it cheaply. They have now been forced to correct the situation, but for the past 3 years a vast amount of contaminants has 'leaked' into the natural underground water system.

A NEW NATIONAL PARK IN INLAND NSW SURELY CONTAINS RF SPECIES AND A SPECIAL ECOSYSTEM

One of the new Parks promised is known as "Gunderbooka", 40,000ha (eventually to be 90,000ha) about 70km SE of Bourke, important to Aboriginal people and where an initial survey has found 170 bird, mammal and reptile species. The proposed Park is one of the few areas that has escaped extensive cropping common to other inland floodplains. It offers a diverse range of vegetation including the largest area of coolabah woodlands in NSW, river red gum communities and small areas of threatened brigalow and gidgee woodlands.

WHICH LEADS ME TO CANVAS AN OPINION THAT THERE ARE MANY SURVIVING RF SPECIES IN OUR ARID AREAS

My original interest in Oz natural communities was of inland areas and it was a toss-up whether I became involved with arid environments, or RF. Living on the east coast (Sydney) it was obvious that close accessibility was certainly RF, as getting to interesting places to the west was at least 6 hours travel each way and one would need a couple of days in between to make it worthwhile. Of course I still maintain curiosity of such habitats and do at times compare species that have common ancestry, and wonder at what once may have been. And often become frustrated at not being able to get to such places because of so many other commitments.

There is a chapter in "The Rainforest Legacy" (Vol 1) titled 'The dry RFs of Terra Australis' with a table of examples of RF genera with species interspersed in open sclerophyll woodland in Nth.Aust. just one example from each of 28 families. Another basic reference "Plants of Western NSW" confirms (to my mind anyway) that species of the family Capparaidaceae such as the distinctive Warrior Bush Apophyllum anomalum; Capparis mitchellii, the Wild Orange - have a look at a photo of its flower and note how almost identical to C. arborea it is - are recent RF escapees. The description of Wild Orange is that young plants form a tangled spiny growth from which a single stem or stems develop and even down to such leaf-basal spines, just like C. arborea. Another of our close 'relatives' would have to be the Leopardwood Flindersia maculosa that also grows from an untidy tangle of spiny branchlets and has a mottled looking bark, as do many of our familiar RF friends.

We could continue on with such plants as Brachychiton populneus, Clematis microphylla, Alstonia constricta, Duboisia hopwoodii, Eremocitrus glauca, Geijera parviflora, Heterodendrum oleifolium, Owenia acidula, Pittosporum phylliraeoides, that come to mind with a little gentle prodding and researching. And what of those widespread Wattles - Gidgee and Mulga? Check them out, and see if you agree that these are, or could very likely be, RF species surviving in what must now be an unsuitable climate.

Moving northwards where often the climate is also inhospitable, but usually better rainfall though on a seasonal basis, we find an increasing number of equally interesting species, and plant communities, though sadly a lot of valuable but unique habitats have suffered to some extent from opportunistic and unsustainable agriculture in recent times. Plants that have particularly stood out in areas that we have seen include Atalaya hemiglaucia, Gyrocarpus americanus, Ficus opposita, Erythrina vespertilio, several Brachychitons, Gardenia vilhelmii. There are others that I cannot presently recall, and many more of obvious RF ancestry that we were unable to identify.

Such vegetation/communities are a fertile field for research, no doubt some work has been done on them. Does anyone know of such study and are you able to contribute findings and/or theories to a later N/L, or can you direct us to appropriate references?

INADVERTENTLY WE MAY BE ENHANCING THE POSSIBLE IMMORTALITY OF PLANTS CONSIDERED "WEEDS"

There is regular mention of likely dangers in the trend to solve just about any problem by genetic manipulation. It seems that one of the forecast events has now occurred; brought to our attention with the sensational headline "Superweeds may spell crop disaster" announcing in March that 'the spectre of superweeds engulfing the world's crops and wild areas, and this includes RF, has been raised by the discovery that genes artificially engineered into a food crop have crossed into a weed. Danish researchers sent shockwaves through scientific circles, confirming the concerns of the many neutral researchers and environmentalists who feared weeds equipped with enhanced survival traits could spread, out of control, in agriculture and environment.'

This was referring to a genetically modified oilseed - Canola (or Rape) - with a herbicide-resistant gene that escaped to a weedy relative. A particularly worrying aspect of this movement was that 42% of the second generation of weeds carried the resistance. This finding has alarmed Australian scientists who question the increasing number of proposals to transfer herbicide-tolerance genes to crops. A leading CSIRO plant geneticist described the Danish findings as "not entirely unexpected" adding transfers would only occur in cases where a crop was close to a wild, weedy relative. He stated that "every crop we work on is very carefully considered from this perspective." (Ed. I believe a similar assurance was given on the Rabbit Calicivirus, and is just one very good reason to prevent a big % of so called scientific research and experiments from being carried out. Perhaps it will be to our long term personal detriment and an unaffordable economic cost. Such warnings though are generally ignored, and those publicising them are often belittled, as there is a lot of money and many personal reputations at stake in these activities.

RAINFOREST - WISE, THINGS ARE IMPROVING AROUND LISMORE IN NSW

Added protection has been given to some of the 'Big Scrub' remnants by their inclusion on the Heritage Register. The report that I heard did not name the actual locations and I wonder whether our local correspondents could tell us which patches were involved, and if other locations should also have been listed? At the same time our friends at the Big Scrub Environment Centre were promoting RF species as ideal for planting in local gardens, and even had the wide ranging stock available blessed by a lady from the local RC church's Presentation Order. That particular batch should really take off!

Regarding the Big Scrub back in history, and as a prime example of how the bureaucracy can completely get things wrong, how is this for a forecast? -- In 1847 Commissioner Fry of the NSW Public Service informed a Commission of Enquiry that "the Big Scrub could not be cleared within 5 or 6 centuries". In fact clearing began in earnest in the 1880's, and by 1900 it was all gone. Timber that today would be worth millions of dollars was destroyed for nothing, merely to support for a very short time, a dairy industry worth a mere fraction of the value of those now-vanished timbers.

WINE IS NOW BEING MADE FROM VARIOUS CISSUS SPECIES

And personally exciting is that two trial batches - one from C. antarctica and another from C. hypoglauca are being made from 'Booyong' material. The experiments are being done by viticulturalist Richard Smart, well known in his industry and follow on from his first Cissus vintage,sourced also from this area. He explained to me that it was a heavily viscous fluid, though quite palatable. Richard feels that producing such a wine from wild berries would be appropriate to go with 'bush tucker' food.

AROUND THE STATES WITH SGAP -- ITEMS OF RELEVANT INTEREST

The SA Journal Nov 95 included an item on **Potting Mixes For natives** that is really compulsory reading for everybody who propagates whether habitually or just occasionally. A summary. - The usual native plant mixes do not include phosphorus, an omission catering for the Proteaceae which are unable to tolerate much of that element. However, lack of P. means that seedlings of most other families will not grow unless a fertiliser containing P. is used. There is a controlled-release product 'Nutricote Blue' with an effective P. content of 1.3%; some users add this at the rate of about 3 grams per litre which is adequate to produce sensitive plants of reasonable size, but it is still not enough for young seedlings of many other species and is the reason why many seedlings remain tiny and do not develop.

If you are growing species that you know are not sensitive to P. (e.g. many Myrtaceae, and no doubt most RF plants), they advocate adding ground superphosphate to the potting mix before using it. Rate is 0.5 grams per litre (two heaped teaspoons per 22L bag), mix thoroughly. Or add control-release fertiliser if that is your preferred method of adding further nutrients. Otherwise, pot up and apply liquid fertiliser, especially one containing Nitrogen. (All original N. can be lost before using any mix that contains bark, as the N. is used up decomposing it). So by the time you even start to use the mix, there will be no soluble N. left for the seedlings. Furthermore, the seedlings will be unable to get any N. from the controlled release fertiliser until their roots make contact with some of the granules. That all adds up to the recommendation that you apply liquid fertiliser to your non-phosphorus-sensitive seedlings each week for several weeks, whether you have, or not, used slow release fertiliser. The first application should be made as soon as the first seedlings appear.

Examples of soluble fertilisers that can be used are Aquasol (1/2 recommended strength), Nitrosol (slightly less than 1/2), and Thrive Indoor (normal rate); but do apply a reasonable drench to ensure a sufficient quantity penetrates the potted material, as a light sprinkle that barely wets the leaves will not provide enough nutrient.

Seedlings of P-sensitive plants will benefit from some extra P. once they are well established. Application of one drench of any of the above, at about a month after germination should provide enough to produce a plant of good size by autumn.

* * *

Qld's Dec 95 'Bulletin' explains a rather bizarre State's "Nature Conservation Act" passed in 1992, and the regulations to operate with this Act came into force in Dec 94. The item covered 3 pages, and comment on the legislation by Merv Hodge took another 3 pages. As an outsider, a 'southerner', I am rather bewildered at the intent of this law. It seems that as with fishing limitations, there is a "bag limit". A 'recreational harvesting license' (harvesting? - what does that really mean?) limits the taking of no more than 20 plants a month, up to a total of 50 plants per year. Surely 'taking' something from the wild cannot conceivably be considered as harvesting? But the strangest thing to many 'southerners' is an apparent emphasis on bureaucratic minutiae with such requirements as 'necessary permits, licences, tags, or movement advices' to be obtained.

It should be pointed out, once again, that much time, effort and expense is legislated to a surely worthwhile purpose - protection of biological diversity - but in such a minute approach? While around a half million ha of the States bushland is being bulldozed every year? Merv Hodge's comments in the same Journal that the main reason for loss of plants, and other life is the clearing of land for such supposedly important things as real estate, forestry, farms, roads etc; and the associated pressures of society like using bushland for dumping rubbish, earth moving, trail bikes and 4wd vehicles, domestic animals and stock, frequent fires. (Ed. All these things go on continually, never any even temporary respite - progress, growth, and development no matter what the obvious immediate cost, and in total ignorance of a certain future disaster that will overwhelm the population of that time.)

There is not a lot of logic around any more, or so it seems.

* * *

I did like one of the 'Quotable Quotes' in Tasmania's "Eucryphia" of McH '96 which they lifted from the Bill Tulloch Memorial Lecture presented by Glen Thomas in Brisbane last year. "In the early days the botanic names whizzed through us like machine gun bullets but gradually more and more stuck. I realise now, of course, that Linneaus was really responsible for one of the worlds most successful employment creation schemes. Generation after generation of taxonomists in every country are guaranteed jobs forever, changing the names of plants the moment that they sense the maximum number of people can pronounce and spell them." which is a delightful lead-in to Rhoda Jeavons informing us that

THE BLOODWOODS ARE NOW CORYMBIA -- NOT EUCALYPTUS

This was mentioned in their local Central Coast SGAP N/L, in turn sourced from the N/L of 'Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens'. The genus includes Bloodwoods, Spotted Gums, Ghost Gums as well as the well known C. ficifolia. This new genus now contains 113 species, of which 33 are newly described. We trust there is no truth in the rumour that now these have been sorted out, the team will turn to all RF families and send them popsy-turvy? And me too.

IF YOU WANT TO TAKE PLANTS FROM THE BUSH YOU'VE GOT TO DO IT IN A BIG WAY

Also from Rhoda, initially reported in the Fern Study Group's December N/L. Applications have been made in Qld. to exploit for export, 3 fern species from a number of State Forests. The three are Sticherus flabellatus, Gleichenia dicarpa, & Dicranopteris linearis. It is proposed to remove 2 million stems !! of each of these 3 fan ferns.

Be interesting to see if this is approved, to thus make a mockery of the States 'Nature Conservation Act' described above, and of those who would like us to believe that State Forests are there to produce timber sustainably, while also maintaining conservation and wildlife values.

LEGISLATION PASSED IN N S W GUARANTEES THE RIGHT TO HARVEST TIMBER FROM PLANTATIONS

All timber will eventually be produced from plantations, just as is virtually all of the worlds grains, meats and generally every food product we consume. There are just far too many of us to continue to plunder nature and expect anything (us too) to survive.

Courtesy of Rhoda once again, any bona fide timber plantation owner (Euc., RF, or whatever) can apply for accreditation and will be guaranteed the right to harvest the crop on maturity. The government says that this is a key element of a 'Forest Reform Package'. At this rate, all remaining Old Growth should be set aside in the very near future - certainly enable the promised 15% minimum of all forest types to be quickly protected, as promised and without dispute.

THERE HAS BEEN ONLY ONE REPLY TO THE OFFER 'TO AIR YOUR GRIEVANCES' MADE IN THE LAST N/L.
GEOFF & MERLE GOADBY, when renewing their subs. stated - "We would appreciate it if you could gather your political comments in a separate rear section of the newsletter, making it clear that the views expressed are not necessarily those of the ASGAP or its members".

(Ed. Thank you Geoff for making your concerns public. I know that you have been troubled with this aspect for some time and it is good that we may now have some discussion on the matter.)

I wonder whether other members may care to contribute to this particular attitude? How many members want our Group to take a totally different direction to established policy ?

Happily, all the other correspondence has been either appreciative, constructive or informative.

RICHARD LOGAN ELABORATES ON SOME VIEWS THAT WERE INCLUDED IN OUR LAST N/L "My comments on the Jan N/L question is that the content was great, but maybe a couple of 'profile sheets' on various RF species, and/or sites, showing known cultivation, habit, flowering, etc. could be included."

(Ed.) A terrific suggestion Rich, just the thing I have been imploring, begging, cajoling and sundry other urgings over the past 6 1/2 years! And there were even contributions from a couple of dozen loyal, long term members as well as a few temporary affiliates. Perhaps I should reiterate - it is a members N/L, and it does make it vastly easier for me if you all pass on to me to disseminate whatever you find interesting or exciting, rather than have me spend many hours a day perusing papers, listening to a wireless (because all my 'radios' are battery powered anyway, and I very much oppose the Americanisation of our language) or watching TV to glean facts (or misinformation) for your entertainment.

"My feelings on RF/Preservation/Conservation ... All fragments of naturally occurring RF should be protected with Preservation status (not mere conservation). My next statement could be very controversial with the general public: that is RF on private property should come under protection of the National Trust or similar agency. As unique buildings should not be bulldozed, nor should our RF fragments.(although I would rather see an old building destroyed - at least it took only a few months to reach maturity) . In addition to RF protection, adjacent natural 'buffers' should be maintained, and surrounding ecosystems be regenerated.

As to logging, a very fast phase out should occur in less sensitive areas but should cease immediately in and near RF. The RF should have land to expand and contract, as would have occurred before the Europeans stuffed this country. Everywhere I seem to travel for holidays I see massive areas of pine plantations - why not eucalypt or RF plantations? A shift to cannabis fibre for clothing, (instead of the environmentally disastrous cotton) and plantation grown trees for any timber needs, although cannabis can be used for plywood, fuel, car panels, etc.

Governments should make concerted efforts to stocktake flora & fauna species not only in our RF but in all ecosystems. But since RF is the most diverse and probably the most disturbed it has a special urgency to maintain biodiversity within the environment. The interactions and reliance between flora and fauna should be investigated, as this is essential to the biodiversity of various ecosystems. Should government portray the environment as a means of bribing people to accept the sell-off of public assets?"

Richard mentioned that he is presently experimenting with Castanospermum australe indoors, with anything down to 1 - 2 hours of light per day and the plants are growing beautifully after 2 months of this treatment. He recently obtained seed of an Erythrina from Pine Mountain, an unnamed species? Can we confirm this?

Another question. One of the biggest problems I have is with propagation. Do you try cuttings, or is this futile ? What of seed - is this also futile due to short viability ? "

(Eds reply. Many of your concerns were covered in earlier N/Ls and answers to some of your questions can be found there as well. You will be able to check them out on your forthcoming stopover at "Booyong")

AND GWYNNE HOLDGATE ADDS FURTHER COMMENTS TO HER R F INTEREST AND EXPERIENCES "As a new member of the RFSG I was delighted to receive my first 2 N/L's and read of so many active people. Love the N/Ls and appreciate what a lot of work is put into them. Since joining the Group we have put our place on the market (sadly, population pressures are squeezing this valley at a rapid rate, Wyong being only a comparatively short drive from Sydney) and are looking at buying acreage around Wingham - Wauchope area and are currently considering a place at Kendall, though its vegetation has been reduced to clumps of Flooded Gums with Camphor Laurel and Privet taking over the rest, though maybe a few Waterhousia floribunda remain. The rest has been cleared for cows and the trees originally left have suffered from isolation and exposure. There is a knoll with a SE slope too steep for cattle (though it had been cleared and now has a light covering of Bracken.) This is where I have hopes of the first stage of regeneration with a belt of appropriate Eucs and then working inwards and down towards the river flats with suitable RF species. Any comments and experience from the RFSG for guidance would be helpful !"

Responses to items in the previous N/Ls. "We also had severe frosts last year and the list of affected, and resistant species in your N/L was reassuring - much the same as here where we have planted such species. Pittosporum rhombifolium although from further north suffered no damage, while the local P. undulatum was affected but recovered as did the non local Buckinghamia celsissima and Grevillea baileyana. This spring and summer have seen flowering of more species than for years, as reported from "Booyong" and the growth rate since November has been amazing.

John Wenk's views on wilderness areas were fascinating (because I agree with them?) The oldies are crucial for doing anything with what's left and the battle might as well be fought where there is more chance of some success. The outskirts of Sydney are largely lost. The changes on the central coast over the last few years are a disaster and this with all kinds of regulations which those with ways and means of circumvention always win.

On Tristania nerifolia - I have a potted specimen purchased, in flower, in Nov 94. It was badly burnt a month later by the few days of 40 + degrees and put in the shade house to recover. It did, but has not flowered this summer, though another SGAPer bought one at the same time; this one flowered well again this season. It is very much like a miniature version of the Water Gum, Tristaniopsis laurina only more densely covered when it flowers.

Re the Patula land snails - Stephen Jay Gould documents the whole sad saga in his essay Unenchanted Evening in his Eight Little Piggies (Penguin 1994). He is Prof of Geology and Zoology at Harvard and writes with clarity and knowledge of many environmental issues as part of his studies of plants and animals and their evolution. Two other volumes of his essays are "The Panda's Thumb" and "Hens Teeth and Horses Toes" (also Penguin). Good reading for those with an interest in genetics as well as the broader issues. --- Look forward to meeting some of you ASAP "

JAN WILTON COMMENTS ON HIS WOLLONGONG SITUATION Two recent propagation successes were Akania lucens with 75% up in about 3 weeks, and 50% of Endiandra introrsa within 4 months. I have 2 Pullea stutzeri in the garden and they seem to hate the slightest drying out, so they have appreciated the quite wet summer even though there have been a lot of dry but cool and cloudy days. The garden has much improved since the long drought that we went through. Bought a few plants from John Ross' Lacebark nursery at Corambe last June and planted them straight away; they are now looking really good, especially Sarcotoechia heterophylla, S. serrata, Austromyrtus fragrantissima and A. acmenoides. Keep up the wonderful work with the N/L and the group - always look forward to the next one!

LYNETTE TIMMIS SAYS THEY STARTED A RF GARDEN AT THEIR KANGAROO VALLEY (NSW) HOME Brian has completed (?) building so the next project was a RF. It has been planted under the only decent sized trees on the place (black wattles) at the front of the block, but others next door are helping to shelter the young plants. All are going well so far.

You spoke of clearing regulations in a recent N/L. Talk about people going berserk about this policy! Staying with friends in central NSW last July, I was able to see at first hand an unbelievable amount of clearing on every property in the locality (word on the policy "got out" prior to its declaration); using 2 'dozers and a chain was the accepted method, all done by contractors. (Ed. I know the area Lynette described - it is marginal pasture land with an extremely low rainfall, the mere dusting of topsoil prone to wind erosion, and probably will become yet another victim of salinity fairly soon.)

GRAHAM NOSWORTHY HOSTED THE QLD 'BRANCH' OUTING AT HIS PULLENVALE PROPERTY IN MARCH "15 people attended the meeting and after morning tea and the normal formalities we walked into the nearby Moggill S.F. where remnant patches of RF are retained. It was an interesting visit, with a guest botanist who helped with identification.

Brisbane finally had a good summer season with adequate rain, though it did taper off a bit early so the ground moisture is not as good as I would like. Some of my plants that flowered in March were - Pavetta australiensis (local species), Buckinghamia ferruginiflora, Phaleria clerodendron, Xanthostemon oppositifolius, Archidendron grandiflorum, Nymphaea gigantea the northern Giant Water Lily (acquired from Dave Gordon, Myall Park) in my dam has been absolutely superb. Some plants that I had trouble getting to grow are finally doing something for me this year are Prumnopitys laevis, Alloxylon pinnata (grafted), and Akania lucens.

Further comments on Archidendron grandiflorum. My plant is 4m x 4m, it doesn't flower regularly but has flowered more than once a year. Depending on ground moisture, I suppose?"

HARRY FRANZ UPDATES HIS RESEARCH ON HOOP PINE SEED STORAGE

Last November I planted approx 40 Araucaria cunninghamii seeds from the batch stored in the 'fridge for almost 4 years now. 18 healthy seedlings developed - I would suggest that is pretty good germination. It is important that this seed is sown quite shallowly. I put only a light covering of sand over this trial, unlike last year, when, with about 25mm of sand cover, only 2 plants germinated.

The seed was collected Jan. 92 and has been kept in the bottom of a fridge, not frozen, and I have sufficient left to try in future years. Hoop pine germinates after about 3 weeks.

SEED SET ON ALAN BATLEY'S DARLINGIA DARLINGIANA GARDEN SPECIMEN Alan last year mentioned that this plant, though growing well and had flowered, had set no seeds. He speculated as to whether a companion tree may be required for fertilisation to occur.

"Well, nature at Kurrajong Heights (near Sydney - westwards) has done her job. A number of pods formed this year, and over Easter, having noticed some parrots showing interest in the tree, I had a closer look. The pods were opening and some seed had already fluttered down. I have planted what there was, except this small sample which I thought you may like. The tree is about 4 metres now, and a superb specimen."

AUGUST FRICKE WRITES ABOUT CONDITIONS AROUND GYMPIE "Been flat out before Easter so can't tell you much about my little Rfs. Down Nambour way, less than an hour from here there have been buckets of rain, but locally it's very, very dry, particularly for this time of the year. Confusing and disturbing - basically nothing since the good rains early January.

Stuff generally growing alright. Will see how Syzygium erythrocalyx will survive the winter here (I can grow it in Nambour). Two grafted Oreocallis (old name) pinnata on O. wickhamii, though only small at this stage doing alright. I find the two species of Uromyrtus (from Fairhill) interesting, and like Gastonia spp. and some of the locals like Eumundi Quandong. Am watching carefully Diploglottis bracteata and D. berniana. Why are they called Tamarind?

We are presently living close to the Bruce Hwy, so sojourners are always welcome to stop on their way past."

MORE ON SYZIGIUM AQUEUM FROM MIMI GODFREY Re N/L 32 "RF Fruit of the Month". Bernie Hyland's 'Revision of Syzygium and Allied Genera (Myrtaceae) in Australia' 1983 gives a very detailed botanical description of this plant and members may find of interest - "In Australia this species is only known from RF on the Claudio River at low elevations i.e. sea level to 100m". He adds "The fruit is edible but very acidic and oily, quite unlike the bland taste of the Water Apple or cultivated variety of S. aqueum of S.E. Asia". "Fruit was collected in October, but the only flowers seen were a few unseasonal ones associated with fruiting specimens. S. aqueum is cultivated in S.E. Asia and also occurs in the wild state in New Guinea so its discovery in Oz is not entirely unexpected". Mimi wonders whether other populations, or varieties, have been found here in the 13 year period since the book was published?

She also mentioned that 'Outback Track Tours' are running a RF tour in Sept. and led by Don Blaxell, well known to Sydney native plant enthusiasts. Though Mimi has been to all the places previously, she is joining the group as there are a lot of plants that she has not yet found growing naturally and may write something on the trip for our N/L. (Ed. Please do that - I'm sure we would all be interested.)

Finally "By all this you will gather my interest is rather botanical - although I am not a botanist - but I do grow a lot of natives mixed up with exotics. When I planted up this place in the early '50s, natives were almost impossible to procure. All the best, I do enjoy the N/L."

PLANTS THROUGH THE POST -- OLIVER CARTER RELATES A RECENT EXPERIENCE "Around 40 Austromyrtus bidwillii (Python Tree) and 6 Guioa semiglaucia (Guioa) were posted on a Thursday and I received them the following Monday. Both packets looked to be well squashed, though when I potted up the Guioa I found them surprisingly good. After the first

week, 1 or 2 looked to be on the way out. The Python Trees roots were pretty tangled up but otherwise seemed OK and all except one looked healthy the next day. A week later, about 6 looked crook. Will let you know how they fared later on".

It seems that the packet did not have sufficient packing to protect the plants both in transit, and during handling, but it was good to see that a 4 day journey in late March left the seedlings in an otherwise good condition. It seems important to have adequate protective material in the envelope to prevent seedlings being squashed, or else use a sturdy package.

Oliver took up my comment on his Syzygium aqueum, replying "Yes. I have many such surprises at the nursery. Better come and see!". One day, Oliver, I promise. But, dear readers, bear in mind that Oliver does have a wide variety of interesting and edible native plants, gives supa doopa service to RFSG people, and has a catalogue of stock available on request.

RHODA JEAVONS CLOSELY ANALYSED A RECENT N/L AND MAKES THESE COMMENTS "I trust the efforts you are making to keep the Rfs thriving are not getting you down. I suspect you have been fed a few non-facts by our ever hungry media who thrive on half truths as you would well know. You have got the Calici virus wrong. Its a specific European rabbit virus that never has been known to affect anything else. The American was misinformed, his comments relate to another form. The rabbit plague has cost Oz dearly in terms of land degradation, loss of habitat, extinction of plant species, etc etc. That's one good thing about living in a RF - rabbits don't like the climate much."

Likewise the fruit fly. We don't need any more introduced pests - perhaps we don't need the tourist cruises which almost certainly brought in and discarded infected fruit. There are very strict checks on chemical residues on fruit and veg so I don't think you are about to be poisoned yet. As for suggesting that 'much' of the ag chemicals sold gets washed into rivers etc. (Ed. Where do they end up, Rhoda?). It isn't farm applied super that causes algal blooms - it is sewerage effluent. Farmers have to earn the money spent on chemicals and I can assure you we don't throw them around. If the consumer stopped demanding perfect looking fruit, we would almost cease spraying citrus and most other fruits. Integrated pest management has been used in our (citrus) industry for years now - natural predators being the main control method. I could go on. If you don't like the agchemicals have a look at what the supermarkets offer the house person in terms of controlling everything that causes smells or gets greasy.

Well, I feel better after that; hope we are still friends. And now - another N/L. You may already be too late to see the Daintree! Around here there has been a running debate on whether a large old but presently unused farm should be turned into a golf course or 'locked away' for some mythical agricultural use. One argument got to me. 'You can build a golf course on any old bit of bush'!

Wetlands are being restored. Koorangang Island, an industrial wasteland right in the middle of Newcastle has been cleaned up and the wetlands restored and migrant birds are back. Don't fancy mining near lakes though.

Acid sulphate soils are common around coastal lakes and do cause fish kills but they are a product of prehistoric erosion producing sands which are leached by wave action when coastal dunes are built. If they are disturbed by development or whatever, the humic acids of the later topsoils dissolves the deposited chemicals and we get sulphuric acid that kills fish quite fast.

Have sent Norm McCarthy a specimen of Tristania nerifolia which I have had for many years. They are not common but do grow in creeks in the Brisbane Waters NP in the sandstone country west of Gosford, though mine came from our own creek. Was interested in the item on Hakea trineura - we have a young cutting-grown plant (red flowered form), the parent does not produce viable seed. Does it need a cross pollinator? (Ed. Over to you Norm).

Two years ago we planted a block of Cedrella odorata; in hindsight, too late in the season (April) as we lost a number in their first winter, from severe chill. A cool late spring followed with very dry weather, so they really didn't move until late into the summer. Your well documented frost the following winter burnt the growing tips of the smaller trees. But all that appears well behind them and all have shot vigorously - the best are now 4m tall and are not showing any sign of stopping.

This was the worst year I can recall for Cedar Tip Moth, they became very active early in spring when we still had really cold nights but don't normally appear until October. Most of the Cedars showed the usual signs of a gummy exudate and some frass though one young tree had a hole bored right through the stem about 5cm from the top. We marked the tree and kept a close watch on it. The hole has grown over and the tree shows no effect whatsoever. As well, severe thunderstorms damaged the tops of some trees but all have shot from the nearest leaf axil (and many others), and most adopted a vertical growth habit very quickly.

Just been given a few Bunya cones - some are germinating in the pile of broken cones, and of 27 potted so far, quite a few have rooted. Par for the course?

As to the direction our 'studies' should take, I would like to see a bit each N/L on the actual cultivation side - but I guess that's my particular interest.

NORM MCCARTHY DOES APPRECIATE OUR NEWSLETTERS Norm is a regular contributor to these pages, "in an endeavour to help someone somewhere, in their RF - large or small. I realise it is a demanding chore to produce a N/L of high quality several times a year; your continuing ability to do so is quite remarkable. There will always be some people not happy, no matter what.

I feel, sometimes possibly, the text could be taken as apolitical. However, for heavens sake, many folk need to be alerted of certain situations affecting our land and its flora. I'm sure the items you mention need airing for the good of the uninformed for their ultimate well being. I accept and commend your stirring effort and may you continue with the good work. God Bless! Please use my oratory if it pleases you to do so,"

(Ed. Thank you Norm, such comments do encourage me to continue leading the Group, and I am particularly pleased that they have come right now.

NEIL MARRIOTT IS ALSO A GOOD BLOKE TO HAVE AROUND

"I wish to voice my support for your well placed political reporting in our RF N/L. When we sit down and look at all the environmental disasters going on around us - damming valleys, logging old growth forests, putting roads through world heritage areas, uranium mines in National parks, etc etc. It is politicians who ultimately decide Yea or Nay. It doesn't matter which Party; when they make these sorts of decisions for short-term economic gain without caring about the long term effects on our environment they deserve to be publicly criticised. In a broad based Study Group such as ours, we want to look at all aspects of the subject, including threatening pests and diseases. I place many of our politicians into these two categories.

We are heading off for 2 months botanising in the Carnarvon Gorge NP, particularly the Mt. Moffat section, then on to Blackdown Tableland and Eungella NP's. Leave on 1st June - I can't wait! I've written off for my collecting permits this time! (Ed. Just as well Neil - you'll only upset the locals in N.Q. again if you loot and pillage their diminishing vegetation, without the willing approval and encouragement of the environmentally-concerned State legislature).

FROM OUR FRIENDS AT MY LOCAL (PORT MACQUARIE) NATIONAL PARKS OFFICE They feel that the fire that Jeremy referred to in his trip through Werrikimbie occurred in Jan 1994 from "an unknown origin in the Kunderang Brook area. It is highly unlikely that State Forests would have started the fire at that time of the year, so we would regard any suggestion as inaccurate." Also enclosed was information on the Werrikimbie and Macleay Gorges Wilderness declarations that I will pass on in a later N/L.

BEEN HEAPS OF LETTERS LATELY - the brief ones include - from JO BENYON at Milton NSW "It is exceedingly dry down here at present, rainfall is very down on normal. We are heading off to Cape York at the end of April, so should see some RF up there! Always enjoy the N/L even though I don't contribute much. I like the political bits and generally agree heartily with what you say."

GIL DRURY sent \$20 as a subs "and to help with some of the extra costs that must be occurring with the provision of such a comprehensive N/L". (Ed. I thank Gil very much for his generosity, but did apply it all to a 4 year m'ship. Our present funds are adequate and I would hate to have too much uncommitted money in the bank in case I am soon to lose the leadership, one way or another.)

CALDER CHAFFEY has resigned from the Group, saying "I have become very involved with ferns & eucalypts and have spread too widely to take on RF as well!" (Ed. Our best wishes Calder on your work with those 2 comprehensive interests.)

How quickly do things change! JUDITH BRASS wrote late in April that it was still very dry (at Karalee, west of Brisbane) so there has been little growth and few flowers - the only fruit has been on the Sandpaper figs. That very day I received her note was when her area, Ipswich, and the Lockyer Valley were absolutely inundated and much local flooding was cause for concern.

New members LAURIE & DOROTHY MEADOWS mentioned that they attended a book launch at Myocum, northern NSW where Robert Kooyman, a past member guided visitors through his experimental RF plantings and passed on some enthusiastic advice prior to the launch of his "Growing Rainforest - RF Restoration & Regeneration." Price \$25.

NEWS FROM ROBERT PAYNE ON SPIDERS AND PLANTS AND THINGS "Thanks for your note! I'm doing fine and now back working 5 days a week though sometimes I walk like a tin soldier. I've completed mapping the vegetation of Port Stephens Shire (north of Newcastle NSW) and nearby Wyong Shire; am currently surveying all the wetland boundaries around Gosford using a very powerful G.P.S. (1/2 metre accuracy). So you see I am doing a lot of walking - planning to walk the S.W. Arthur's In Tasmania again next February.

Did you hear Annette McKinley and I found a tree of Cassia marksiana up in the Tweed last April? She was so excited. Have been doing a lot of surveys along the NSW north coast, will try and call in soon.

For information to members - the White Tailed Spider transmitted a bacteria and a virus. Whilst the skin deteriorated on my bitten hand it was nothing compared to the virus. The spider is now known to be a vector for the virus Guillain - Barre. That hospitalised me for over 3 months and paralysed me from the neck down. Whilst I am over it, my toes are still numb and may never repair. Still get very tired at night so it's up early, and bed early too." (Ed. I know that all of our members are pleased that you are so well after that dreadful situation. Yet some among us revel in petty complaints!)

SUE WALSTON & BRIAN WOULD LIKE TO KNOW THE SECRETS OF PROPAGATING NOTALAEA LONGIFOLIA A good lot of healthy looking seed was sown around 3 months ago, but so far not a peep out of them though good results were achieved from other species planted around the same time. What experiences have members had with this one? (Ed's comment - Notalaea could well be one of those hard-walled fruits that either require cracking, or else a long gestation in a medium that remains barely moist throughout their dormancy. ??? Might a 'chill factor' be helpful? After all, fruits mature late summer What else?

ON THE SAME NOTE, PATRICK BENNETT WONDERS ABOUT FIELDIA AUSTRALIS. "Got good germination of spore from Steve Sinclair, spread on coir soaked in dilute Nitrosol, but the little buggars are not growing - just sitting there in that coir bed, looking green and lazing away their days." Anyone help with some ideas to get them active?

A WORKSHOP ON 'NATIVE SEED BIOLOGY FOR MINESITE REVEGETATION' SET FOR OCTOBER

Its introduction - 'Australia's mining industry is the largest consumer of native plant seed in the country, the seed being primarily used to rehabilitate native ecosystems disturbed by mining. ...' This could be somewhat of an admission of the extent of environmental damage by their activities. One would have thought that forestry would have been the largest user of seed.

Which raises the question - The metals mining company North Ltd recently advertising for a Forester (20/4/96) proudly stated "is Australia's leading private forest operation, the world's largest exporter of hardwood fibre.... as well as an exporter of softwood chips and logs." Typical miner - export raw material, knows nothing of value-adding. Same company last September - "Miner apologises for bird deaths" 'A major mining company has apologised for poisoning thousands of ducks and gulls with cyanide at its goldmine in western NSW. The general manager said the poisoning of about 2,000 birds that drank water from a contaminated tailings dam was "totally unacceptable" An unusually high influx of birds to the area has exposed a weakness in our environmental management systems. The result was totally unacceptable to the company and the general community. The company no longer used cyanide to process ore.' The dead birds accept the apology, after all they have little choice. Thinking people don't - but we have little influence.

THE AUSTRALIAN BUSH HERITAGE FUND - BUYING BACK THE BUSH

Some of us first heard of this organisation when Mimi Godfrey mentioned she was a supporter, last year. I recently obtained their brochure which indicated that donations are tax deductible, has the national office in Hobart, and is managed by a board of directors (8 members) that includes Bob Brown, assisted by a 6 person advisory committee.

It now has some 3,000 financial supporters and has a charter to raise funds to buy and protect private lands of outstanding conservation value. Among their properties are 241ha of magnificent Tasmanian forest abutting Wilderness World Heritage Area, 8ha of spectacular Fan Palm forest and Cassowary habitat in the Daintree, and 120ha of Euc. grassy woodland and dry RF - prime and now rare habitat - in the Bega Valley of NSW. Seems worth supporting.

Remember that turtle...Just like it, we achieve little unless we sometimes stick our neck out.