



ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

RAINFOREST STUDY GROUP

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"The debate is not about whether we could cope with a much larger population, but about deciding for ourselves whether life would be better or worse with a much larger population."

(Doug Cocks - 'People Policy - Australia's Population Choices.' 1996.)

NEW MEMBERS

BRENDAN CRANNEY Camperdown NSW TONI MAY Grose Vale NSW

MEETINGS OF THE BRISBANE 'CHAPTER' ARRANGED FOR 1997

Peter Jurd advises the following activities have been arranged; all commence at 9.30am.

- * 10th May - Sue Gallaghers 36 Junction Rd Burpengary. Garden visit & remnant RF Burpengary Ck.
- * 12th July - Mt Cootha Botanic Garden (RF plot). Meet near Lily pond adjacent to auditorium door.
- * 13th Sept - Annual Spring Flower Show.
- * 8th Nov - Mount Tamborine. Meet at Cedar Creek Falls N.P. in the car park.

Members and visitors should contact Peter at (07) 3345 1445 if they require further details.

SPECIES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE FROM OUR SEED BANK

Alphitonia petrei Araucaria cunninghamii Barklya syringifolia Brachychiton acerifolius Callicarpa pedunculata Cassine australe Cissus hypoglauca Elaeocarpus obovatus Elattostachus nervosa Erythrina vespertilio Euodia micrococca Eustrephus latifolius Ficus coronata Ficus obliqua Lysiphyllum hookeri Pandorea jasminoides (2 var. - white, normal) Parsonsia straminea Pavetta australis Petalostigma triloculare Pittosporum revolutum P. undulatum Planchonella australis Podocarpus elatus Sarcomelicope simplicifolia Stenocarpus sinuatus Tecomanthe sp Roaring Meg Ck. All requests to P. Bennett 20 Belmore Court Pine Mountain Q. 4306 with a stamped self-addressed envelope please.

Also Gmelina leichhardtii (White Beech) is available from the leader. Plenty of fruits here, nominate the number you require.

Wanted: Helen Joyce wishes to try Oreocallis pinnata which is known to be difficult to propagate. Patrick asks if anyone has a seed source, or knows where some may be obtained. (He says that locally, plants are available only as expensive, grafted O. pinnata onto O. wickhamii)

IF YOU ARE TOURING W.A. THIS SPRING YOU MIGHT VISIT THE "SPRING FLING"

The Wildflower Society of WA has asked that we publicise in the RFSG N/L, that their **annual wildflower show will be held on Sunday 14th Sept at Perry House, Bold Park in Floreat**. The 'fling' will be held in conjunction with the RAOU (Birdo's) and the local Council. Should be a good day - Wildflower Walks, Bird Walks, Displays, Demonstrations, etc.

ASGAP 19TH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE WILL BE AT ADELAIDE IN SEPT - OCT

They want Study groups to set up displays to publicise their activities, and have asked if the RFSG will participate. Will our members who intend to attend the conference be prepared to put up some sort of display and attend to it from time to time. Trouble is SA region wish to know by the end of April. If you are able to do this for your group, could you let me know straight away so I can tell the organisers?

LONG STANDING AND HIGHLY VALUED MEMBER ESTHER TAYLOR HAS DECIDED TO HANG UP HER TROWEL

Esther joined the group in 1990, soon after I became leader; we met just once, briefly, at the inaugural Brisbane meeting in Feb 91. One of my first thoughts of getting members involved in relevant activities was to set up some form of 'who grows what and where - as a reference to local suitability' and wondered if a member would take up such recording. Esther offered to do that in 1992, and soon after also volunteered to maintain a much needed seed bank facility. She did this for a couple of years and then handed it over to Patrick Bennett.

We corresponded regularly. When Esther lived at Ipswich she usually attended the Brisbane branch's excursions and sent me a report of the days highlights that were duly passed on via the N/L. Though her move to Proston to be near family precluded such close involvement with our regular activities, Esther still kept in touch with local events.

However, due to various circumstances and commitments, she has decided to retire from the group in June, when her subs. expires. I would like to place on record my appreciation of ESTHER TAYLOR'S contribution to this group and I have no doubt that others would also like to extend their best wishes to her.

In her letter, Esther mentioned that locally, there are plantations of Duboisia myoporoides which are cropped for extracting chemicals contained in the foliage. It would be interesting to ascertain whether such exploitation is profitable.

THERE ARE OPPOSING VIEWS ON OUR GROUPS FUTURE STRUCTURE

That recent Sydney get together at Geoffrey & Ann's was particularly well attended and members accepted the opportunity to discuss matters raised in the last N/L. Their resolutions 1: Total opposition to the Group being split. 2: It was suggested that a Membership Officer be appointed to take over general administration. 3: Members would accept a smaller N/L to further lighten the leader's workload. 4: Regional groups could arrange excursions and report back regularly to the N/L with news of excursions and local items of interest. 5: One member stated that if he were putting out the N/L, he would include those matters that he thought important and that "David should do the same". Thank you Tom, I shall do just that.

From Sue Walston - "While ideally the Group cover all of the topics of interest to its members, if, for whatever reason the leader can't manage it, the Group should find a new leader (tried that), die or be temporarily suspended (as per some other SGAP Groups) or evolves into something that someone wants to lead (as per your earlier and current suggestions). So while my personal interests revolve around ecology and RF regeneration and many aspects of your 'bigger picture', pragmatically speaking, I just hope you continue to put out a N/L that contributes in some way to the preservation of our natural environment including the political processes that impact on it. Please keep up your lovely passionate RF writings!"

Patrick Bennett would go further with a Group restructure, saying "You are right, it is time to restructure the RFSG into core specialist groups. The large membership, diverse interests within the Group and even the diverse RF types eg Dry, Tropical etc must now dictate this. Why not go further and have sub-groups with sub-leaders to cover each RF type? One advantage would be a much more shared workload; also one would hope that more specialised research/study would be achieved.

Leaders and sub-leaders would need to confer at agreed intervals so as to maintain the BIG big picture. I believe a seed bank is integral to all groups/sub groups and should be centrally operated. I am prepared to continue this service.

FROM THE SEED BANK -- SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO N/L No 33 JULY 1996

Patrick thanks those few who took the time to respond to him directly, or via the N/L. Some very valid reasons for not requesting seed are summarised here -

- * Reliance on locally collected seed
- * A perceived difficulty of growing from seed
- * A preference to use cuttings
- * Available space precludes further propagation/planting out.

Thanks Richard Logan for your very relevant comments in N/L 35 - I only wish I were spending more time sending and receiving seed.

Returns of records of propagation. There were 23 early returns of seed results - 19 came from 3 people (Patrick's own, Paul Rezl and myself) and another 4 from 3 members. There have been no responses for some months now. (Ed. Patrick would like to gather many reports over a wide range of species and publish results later on. I have included another record sheet with this N/L and ask that you photocopy it, try a number of species and in due course send Pat the results. If you do need more sheets, request them from either of us.)

LAST N/L'S OFFER OF 7 SEEDLING SPECIES WAS SOMEWHAT UNDERWHELMING

Only one member who happens to live overseas availed himself of that offer. Seems you can't even give things away around here.

SHOULD WE IN THE FUTURE DESCRIBE OURSELVES AS "AN INTEREST GROUP" RATHER THAN A STUDY GROUP?

I ask this after reading an item in SGAP Vics Mch 97 N/L by Bruce Clark, the retiring Acacia Study Group leader. He expressed a certain amount of disappointment brought about by going through all 100 N/L issues for the compilation of a booklet of extracts from them. One of the things that stood out was the "constant unsuccessful striving of leaders to motivate members to take part in some form of organised research or study." After further comments, he added "It is not a study group, it is an interest group."

In our case, I believe that most members are fundamentally interested in growing RF species; many are concerned at the status of natural RF and other habitats (environmentally aware); but perhaps only a few are actively studying some aspect in the field or else regularly and carefully recording their horticultural ventures. Then there are some who only subscribe in order to see 'what is he saying now - that has nothing to do with growing plants!'

Bruce concluded with "Perhaps we should convert some of them to "INTEREST GROUPS" a more accurate description, and not expect so much from leaders who have not the experience, time, knowledge or the support of their members to live up to the high standards some idealistic SGAP members outside the groups set."

I pretty well agree with his sentiments other than on members support, for I know that many of you are highly supportive of my efforts. Though I do wonder why some, who are either unhelpful or highly critical of certain features continue membership. I am, however, enquiring if I have the right of refusal to individuals who contribute nothing, yet appear to stir up dissent.

Are we an interest group, then?

ANYWAY... THIS IS THE WAY IT IS GOING TO BE

Emphasis on conservation and environmental matters will be maintained.

Criticism will continue to be accepted - as long as it is constructive. And - just make sure it is factual.

Political stupidity, duplicity, incompetence and corruption will be given a greater emphasis. If they are your relatives - tough. (I wouldn't admit it either). I don't particularly care about their run of the mill lies and deception on unimportant matters, though I often wonder about their ethics and honesty. But I'm afraid that the environment, genetic diversity and quality of life generally are both basic and crucial to our own survival as well as our descendants, and I will not be silenced in drawing attention to corrupt and stupid decisions that debase the essentials of that survival. (In the past I have decided to exclude particular items because I considered some would object. Probably had the unintended effect of stifling discussion though, so please do make comment on things that concern you.)

A limit on numbers will soon have to be determined - those obtaining little benefit from their \$5 subs should consider resigning to make room for others who may gain some advantage.

PLANT OF THE MONTH - GREVILLEA BAILEYANA (SYN. G. PINNATIFIDA) WITH SPECTACULAR FOLIAGE

The RF flora of ntnh Aust has become more readily known and available to the horticultural industry in recent years. Though this flora offers a diversity of both flowers and foliage, it, as yet, has been used only sparingly by the trade. The Proteaceae family contains many species which are well suited for commercial development. One of the most stunning members of this family is "Findley's Silky

Oak" or G. baileyana.

This tree, to 25m in height, occurs in tropical RF from Tully Q. spreading north into New Guinea. In cultivation it rarely exceeds 6 - 10m and grows rapidly in plantation and is generally successful along the east coast as far south as Melbourne.

The tree has 2 stunning features: the foliage and the spectacular summer flowering spikes.

Like many of the RF Proteaceae, the foliage has 2 distinct forms. Juvenile leaves are large and lobed, up to 50cm in length; the young foliage is deeply lobed with from 3 to 9 rectangular or tapering lobes up to 15cm, forming the entire leaf. The mature leaves are usually entire or oval shaped, to 20cm in length. The most outstanding feature of the plant is the foliage - the upper surface is a deep, glossy green; underneath displays a lustrous, rich golden-bronze. The foliage creates a colourful display and the cut foliage is attractive in a vase, or as a backing for floral arrangements. The leaves dry without losing colour and have a long vase life. The Iron Range form is more spectacular with a larger and more deeply lobed foliage.

From late spring to early summer, long, lacy, cream coloured flower spikes cover the tree; borne on terminal branching panicles. Each raceme is up to 15cm long, with as many as 10 - 12 spikes occurring together.

It is long lived and establishes readily in a variety of coastal and near-coastal climates. In cultivation it tends to branch from the base forming a tall shrubby habit. It requires little maintenance except for summer watering during dry periods, although exposure to excessive winds may cause foliage damage. The juvenile foliage can be prolonged by pruning branches. It is tolerant of mild frost.

This is one of the best RF trees, growing well in both tropical and temperate regions of Australia - and is the perfect green and gold symbol of our nation!

(Submitted by Rhys McGregor, Terrigal - one of our recently recruited member/enthusiasts)

SOME QUICK COMMENTS QUESTIONS AND REPLIES/REMARKS ON VARIOUS GARDENING ASPECTS

What is the expected growth rate of Austromyrtus bidwillii - the Python tree? A friend who visited 'Booyong' was so impressed with our numerous, attractive-trunked trees that she bought a plant at New England NP, said to be 3 years old and just 5" tall. She wonders if that is an average growth and should she expect a mere around 2" increase p.a.?

The Peanut tree - Sterculia quadrifida can really rocket along. Richard Logan says that his specimen is 'almost to the 6ft mark and covered in flowers. Pretty good, seeing its only been in the ground for about 18 months to 2 years. It is protected in the south by a cardamon plant + Macadmia and garage to the east, but is open to the westerlies and the north".

That rare and endangered Diploglottis campbellii has at least 2 forms of fruits. Oliver Carter mentioned in a note that a locally cultivated plant has seeds with a yellow, edible aril. The species normally has a red aril, which I am not aware is edible as it has no reference in the bush tucker literature in my collection. Oliver also added that the species is quite hardy, but does like a canopy over it so prefers some shade.

Patrick Bennett adds further endorsement to Alphitonia excelsa saying * What a great pioneer! * What a survivor! * Great trunks - lichen etc etc. * No Oz plant should ever be termed: WEED. * Mine get eaten to the EXTREME (must remember to get caterpillar - little green people who hang from silken threads - identified. * If you get too may, let 'em grow to saplings then chip/mulch for the goodness of the Earth. A most useful plant is A. excelsa - have also observed Sulphur crested Cockatoos Cacatua galerita & Pale headed Rosellas Platycercus eximius feeding in it.

Araucaria cunninghamii can sometimes be difficult to propagate. Thats my theory anyway; after sowing seed (in brick-peat) some weeks ago, with as yet no results. I note in the Qld "Bulletin" Mch '97 mention is made that in this genus each tree is bisexual, with both male and female cones on the same tree - the males occurring on the lower, older branches. Our lone tree fruited a while ago for the first time. We observed obviously female cones high up, but saw nothing on lower branches. Perhaps the tree has not yet 'got into the groove' and it may need some time to synchronise with itself, or perhaps does need neighbouring relatives for cross fertilisation?

Syzigium oleosum was chosen by a German student of horticulture for his diploma. His letter indicated that he is working on its propagation from cuttings for room, or pot plants and sought information about its natural habitat, whether it is in cultivation here and if it is readily available in nurseries. I was pleased to send various info and to tell him that I have seen it growing naturally (in littoral situations) and have a number in my RFSG living collection. It would be good to receive results of his work in due course.

The question of erratic flowering and fruiting of many RF species was raised by Jan Parkin & Ross Macleay. They commented that a Fairy's Paintbrush (Archidendron grandiflorum) flowered this year and that a different plant did so last year, but it is a rare occurrence with that species. Jan wonders if any of our Group knows of any research, or speculation as to the reason for such irregular & unpredictable events. In the meantime they are continuing bush regeneration on their block near Bellingen.

Euroschinus falcata appears difficult to set fruits. Rhoda has just one growing naturally on the property. A beautiful tree but never been able to catch it in flower. Often has tiny buds, but they dont seem to develop flowers or fruit. Does it require a partner? It is in full sun and must often be very dry, though she has often noticed small stunted ones growing in more harsh situations. (Ed. They seem to be somewhat uncommon, which indicates they might not be a very fertile species. Any thoughts on this?)

There is a product called 'Growool' which, although it has been around for ages, has just been brought to my attention. It comes in (propagating) blocks as a water-absorbent rockwool for use as a soilless growing medium. The PR includes such virtues as :- sterile; inorganic & inert; made from a natural source (spun from molten rock); very high water & air holding capacity. It can be used for seed or cuttings, in both normal & hydroponic methods.

Butterflies have been used to locate particular plant species in the RF. Rhoda mentioned that a good friend who was involved in chemical/medicinal properties of RF vegetation became especially interested in butterflies. He found that observers watching them and understanding their habits could accurately locate specific plants associated with the insects, in local areas.

How long should Rhodosphaera rodanthema fruits remain on the tree before they are mature? Rhoda has a large tree with bunches of those brown 'grapes' and wonders when they should be collected. If the Satin Bowler birds don't get them first! (Ed. My query is - how do you get seed to germinate?)

How's this for a dwarf form of White Cedar - Melia azedarach? Rhoda has a specimen thought to have arisen in the NSW Riverina. Apart from its size (1 1/2m in 15 years), looks the same but flowers for most of the year. Be good to distribute seeds from this to see if it passes on those unusual attributes to offspring in other places.

On pests and weeds, and chemicals and things. Rhoda mentioned that current research on **Brown Scale** suggests that control may require using only an oil spray (not white oil) which often burns the foliage), but a summer spray-oil such as D.C.Trone. Timing is critical with all scales - mature ones usually have a 'shell' protecting the soft body from most controls, so watch for 'crawlers, as they move away from the parent, settling first on leaves, then migrating to twigs and stems. They are then most vulnerable to a mix of 10ml oil + 1/2ml Malathion per litre of water. Need a good covering to drown the pests, but be cautious as some plants are sensitive to the treatment. **Roundup** - we couldn't live without it! Doesn't kill the good guys in the soil (Ed. So the makers claim). It seems that the

alternatives such as mechanical disturbance does much more damage than the sensible use of RU (Ed. Good point there). ...
Nematodes - Cheer up Gwen (Ed. And me too!) you will get rid of 'todes as the level of organic matter rises. My vegie patch started off as virtually a bed of virgin bush soil, and was so infested I could not grow tomatoes, carrots or any other things they love. To conserve moisture I mulch with anything going - grass clippings, leaves, compost. Now no 'todes, but heaps of worms. I use commercial fertiliser, usually 'Grower 16' which has super in it, when needed. Our RF trees and shrubs get both heavy mulch and fertiliser and mostly thrive on this diet.

(Ed. Rhoda & Harry were for many years, citrus fruit orchardists back in the days when it was thought intelligent that Oz should be self sufficient in food, and an attitude that the nation should not be saddled with a huge and constantly increasing foreign debt.)

Betty Rymer remarked that many Rf plants seemed to flower this summer. Most spectacular was Barklya syringifolia (its first flowering - planted 11 years ago). Also the Native Tamarind Diploglottis australis planted in '84 flowered for the first time, fruited and produced seedlings. Cassia brewsteri also flowered at age 8, but C. marksiana at 13, though a large tree has never produced, nor has Grevillea baileyana. Euodia elleryana & Brachychiton discolor are large and flower regularly. The lilypillies all bloom well, but my favourite is Syzygium oleosum with its lovely, fragrant, honey-scent followed with those blue berries. Others blossoming have been Davidsons Plum, Pararchidendron pruinatum, Backhousia citriodora, Austromyrtus spp. It is most rewarding to see these RF trees grow and bloom; maybe one day I shall see the others flower too.

Many members are obviously interested in that Smoke Germination technique developed in Africa, and at Perth. Several people have sent me items from the media on this development during the past year. For ages, it was thought that fire was a necessary agent in the propagation of plants, but it was found that the chemicals in smoke were the triggers and not heat. Though it seems that nutrients such as potash & phosphates are washed from ash into soil, together with germination-inducing chemicals concentrated from the smoke result from such fire. Ongoing research proves that particular variants of smoke treatment were successful with certain species, and these included - * direct application of smoke to seeds. * application of smoke direct to seed trays' potting mix prior to or after sowing. * Using 'smoke water' (where smoke had been somehow passed through, and particular chemicals had been imparted to water). ... I wonder whether some of those 'impossible' Rf species may be amenable to this method, so I should try it out. Perhaps others will experiment too?

This season has been a boomer for Cissus hypoglauca, at least around Booyong. The Five Leaf Water-vine has been absolutely loaded down with fruit - big clusters of good sized berries almost dragging some stems to the ground. They were pleasant tasting and very fleshy. I retrieved seeds from the crushed fruit for the wine, and you can obtain some of these from Patrick if you wish to grow it for its foliage or as a food plant. Seed is from 4 equally bountiful vines - all appeared like the introduced Grape with the quantity of fruit borne on them. Left them as long as I dared, to ripen fully but then had to collect them quickly due to big numbers of Satin bower-birds homing in. How do they know?

Red cedar Toona australis and the Tip Moth. David Noel, in an item from WANATCA's "Quandong" Vol 21 No4 1995 (Yes, I've got a big backlog) mentioned that Brian Munro of Tropical Fruit World near Coolangatta found that trays of Cedar seedlings laid out near Neem trees (Azadirachta indica) were untouched by moths, which instead attacked the Neems. Also, the moth larvae appeared to die out after a short time in the Neem tips. Neem is well known for its insect protection properties, but this attractant/natural chemical control is a new approach. Joe Friend may do well in supplying his Neem products to growers of Toona.

Update on making wine from the fruits of the forest. Some of that Planchonella wine mentioned in the last N/L was opened last week when the local Sgappers were here on a plant identification day using vegetative keys. All considered it to be a good drop. A batch of Ficus coronata has been fermented and bottled off for maturing - it too looks as good a deep colour as was the Black Apple. Presently, 5 kilos of Cissus fruit is in the fermenter; this time I added a higher amount of sugar and after the first few days it tastes very much like blackberry juice. I think this one may have real potential.

BEETLE OF THE YEAR - AGRANOME SPINICOLLIS

A magnificent specimen flew into the house on a January evening, only the second one we have seen here. (Previous was 4 years ago). After a sharp nip on a finger when catching it, I dragged out the book "Beetles of Australia" by Trevor Hawkeswood for identification and found it to be one of the 'witchetty grubs' with a wide range of habitats - RFs, dry & wet sclerophyll forests in Qld & NSW + Lord howe Isl. Life cycle is between 2 - 4 years; the larvae attack live trees, usually through injuries at bases of trunks.

Adults are nocturnal and emerge from Dec to Feb.; our bloke/sheila was at the maximum size, 55mm (range is 35 - 55). The head, thorax and legs were dark red-brown, elytra was buff-brown, and with very long antennae. A beautiful creature which the book's photo does not do justice. Larva which are dark cream, 70 - 100mm long & 15 - 25mm wide were considered 'good tucker' by the previous custodians of our forests.

A question. How does one tell the difference between moths and beetles in the larval stage? Then, is it possible to keep these larva in some medium (other than the log they inhabit) until they pupate and emerge as adults?

MEMBERS PROPERTY OF THE MONTH - "BOLWARRA" NSW ILLAWARRA. SITE OF OUR RECENT EXCURSION

23 members and friends enjoyed a day in the forest in Feb. and inspected the one acre of STRF on the escarpment south of Kiama, Ann & Geoff Long's block, and were grateful for the assistance of Kevin Mills & Jacqueline Jakeman, authors of the book **Rainforests of the Illawarra.**

The block has a path winding through it constructed of stone and mulch. It takes the walker past most of the habitats and species there, including the regenerating old driveway, the steep eucalypt wooded slope, tree fern gully, rainforest, fern gully and creek with pools. We went in 3 groups, slowly, identifying plants as we went, pausing for reflection at the 2 "glow worm viewing platforms". Ann & Geoff supplied a plant list with approx 140 species. (Copy to RFSG for our records).

After lunch we visited a piece of WTRF by an impressive waterfall, and then CTRF just beneath the Barren Grounds escarpment. Fortunately the Eucryphia moorei was in full flower and the clouds cleared for a stunning view over the Jamberoo Valley to Kiama. (The unknown found at the waterfall was later confirmed as Ehretia acuminata.)

There was a lot of enthusiasm to form the Sydney & Surrounds Chapter of the RFSG. (Thank you Ann & Geoff for your organising, hospitality, and this report.)

(Ed. Sadly the Longs have to sell this property, see additional details in the ad. further on.)

TO ATTRACT BUTTERFLIES TO YOUR PROPERTY - YOU HAVE TO GROW THE RIGHT PLANTS

The comment "for butterflies to stay and breed in your garden you will need to provide the correct caterpillar or larval food plants" was included in an item 'Butterfly Gardening' in SGAP Vic's Dec 96 N/L by John Arnott, senior horticulturist at Melbourne zoo.

The whole article was most interesting, but unfortunately I don't have space to include more than a list of butterflies of the Melbourne area and their food plants. Obviously if these species are also in your district, the same plants could be grown as attractants.

Australian Admiral - Urtica spp. Aust. Painted Lady - Helichrysums Bright Copper - Bursaria spinosa
Bright-eyed Brown - Carex appressa Caper White - Capparis spp. Common Grass Blue - Trifolium spp.
Common Imperial Blue - Acacia spp. Common Dusky Blue - Cassityha spp. Common Brown - Themeda triandra, Poas
Dark Purple Azure - Muellerina spp. Dinky Swallowtail - Citrus spp. Eastern Ringed Xenica - Themeda triandra
Eliena Skipper - Lomandra spp. Fiery Jewel - Rubus spp. Acacia spp. Imperial White - Amyema spp. Muellerina
Klugs Xenica - Themeda, Poas Lesser Wanderer - Asclepias fruticosa Macleays Swallowtail - Tasmannia spp.
Meadow Argus - Goodenia, Scaevola. Orchard Butterfly - Citrus spp. Swordgrass Brown - Gahnia spp.
Symmymous Skipper - Lomandra spp. Tailed Emperor - Acacia spp. Wanderer - Asclepias fruticosa
White Grass Dart - Poa & Danthonia Wood White - Amyema and Muellerina

While in Qld Bulletin Dec 96, Jan Sked described Pseuderanthemum varabile and added that it is an important food plant for such species as Australian Leafwing, Common Eggfly and Blue Argus.

At 'Booyong', all those plants except for Tasmannia and Scaevola can be seen, though perhaps I should desist from weeding out Asclepias & Urtica? I look forward to eventually sighting all these butterflies native to our area.

THERE HAVE BEEN BRIEF COMMENTS ON INLAND RF SPECIES IN PREVIOUS ISSUES

With unfortunately no follow up reports or discussion. I therefore particularly enjoyed the 'Bill Tulloch 1996 Memorial Lecture' by Eric Anderson as printed in Qld's bulletin of Dec 96. It covered - Diversity, Despair, Development, D'landcare in a 6 page coverage. To me, the 'development' of the once vast Brigalow belt and associated Softwood scrubs through almost total destruction was an act of vandalism, bordering on criminality. What do we have to show for it today? It seems only, an increase in beef production in the 'good' years of better than average rainfall; a product that few seem to want, subject to returns that rarely meet its cost of production and slowly sending broke a diminishing number of farmers who are generally deeply in debt.

However as has happened on so many occasions during our history, we have realised the error of our ways and have begun to take some action to reverse this mistake. Land occupiers are now being encouraged to maintain and to try and expand the pitifully small remnants that escaped the bulldozer and the match. Subsidies and grants similar to those made for the original clearing are being offered for this revegetation - all in all part of a post-war ongoing job creation scheme over a huge area, it seems.

ALL YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT BIODIVERSITY

The NSW NP&WS publish a bi-annual N/L. Their summer 96/autumn97 issue has a special feature on biodiversity that covers many of its aspects, and specific situations. I liked one summary -

"Biodiversity has 3 components . * **Genetic Diversity** - the total genetic information contained in the genes of each species. * **Species Diversity** - the variety of living organisms on the earth, or in a particular location. And * **Ecosystem Diversity** - the variety of habitats, biological communities and ecological processes in the biosphere, or in a particular region.

Loss of diversity is occurring in all three components. Loss of genetic diversity increases the risk of extinction by reducing the ability of a species to respond to environmental change. The loss of a species reduces species diversity and threatens the function of ecological communities. Ecosystem or ecological diversity is reduced as each area of habitat is degraded or destroyed."

Those of you specially interested in this topic should obtain a copy of that N/L for further reading.

WE REALLY MUST ENSURE THAT SOMEONE IN CANBERRA BE FOUND TO REPRESENT AND SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Though nominated to administer environmental matters, Senator Hill is far too busy staunchly & passionately defending his disreputable friend, a bloke accused of perhaps inappropriate behaviour from one whose decisions affect us all but who is obviously a typical politician and no doubt must be supported at all costs (there for the grace of God, etc). But Hill was put there to administer the Environment portfolio and not to defend greedy and corrupted politicians, or other individuals happy to sell out any dormant principles that they once may have held. Many of us have been extremely disappointed at the number of times the environment has not been even considered, concerns overruled, and promises broken.

We were told by the then opposition prior to the elections that "this represents the most comprehensive commitment of the Coalition to ongoing environmental policies ever made," at the policy 'launch', Jan 1996.

Since then we have seen the minister push to allow dumping (from warships) onto the Great Barrier Reef; allowing commercial fishing in declared World Heritage Areas, and an intention to remove protection from an internationally protected wetland (at Point Lillias) to construct a chemical storage complex citing 'urgent national interest'. (For heavens sake, we've got 3 million square miles in Oz - we don't need to threaten remnant habitat for the endangered species the Orange-bellied parrot. Well we wouldn't if we were an intelligent and wise species.

Then there is the World Heritage listed Shark Bay in WA where a devious and unethical politician approved an oil exploration permit last November. This was never announced and only accidentally found out last month. Hill has been conspicuously silent on this clear breach of WHA requirements.

Just 5 months after taking office, the Budget wiped an estimated \$277 million over 4 years from environmental programmes; the largest reductions were cessation of initiatives to establish a world class system of parks & reserves (78 mill); nature conservation, ecology, natural resource (94 mill); Murray-Darling projects (64 mill); Barrier Reef (15 mill) and even a mean 5.3 mill by ceasing tree planting in the Wet Tropics.

Additional uranium mining in Kakadu is intended. Woodchip exports were lifted by over 20% last year, and for the first time chips will be able to be sourced from "degraded private native forests". **

I could go on and on, but this just goes to prove that promises, even from honest johns lips are just a lot of hot air padded out with lies.

** HOW DO YOU GO ABOUT DEGRADING A PRIVATE NATIVE FOREST ANYWAY

Easy. Box of matches on a hot summers day with a strong wind blowing, during a dry spell would put paid to much of 'Booyongs' vegetation, and we are in a comparatively sheltered situation. If you wished to degrade a forest in hilly country, it could be done in no time. Happens regularly enough, and now there is a good reason for some people to earn a little income at the same time as they take sadistic pleasure in the destruction of vegetation and its reliant fauna.

TOOWOOMBA SGAP MEMBERS SPENT A DAY AT BURRENBAR RF NURSERY NORM McCARTHY mentioned that 12 of them travelled the 3 1/2 hours each way to the nursery located near Mooball and 19km from Murwillumbah. "It was a great day, a tour through their arboretum and then a bonanza of RF plants to buy. A tremendous range available and all amazingly reasonable." Norm reminds us that they run a newsletter (\$10 pa) including interesting plants currently available. (Ed. Burringbar are long standing members of RFSG and I'd urge you to call in should you be in that area, and patronise such a worthy enterprise.)

* * *

PAUL REZL sent an updated catalogue of seed he currently stocks in his world-wide distribution hobby/business. He is importing many perishable seeds presently and he mentions a Paul Recher who runs 'Fruit Spirit Botanical Gardens in Dorrourby NSW and who has an incredible choice of fruit species from all over the world. (Ed. I hear that he also is extremely knowledgeable on the subject). Paul mentioned that his area in Czech Republic suffered from terrible frosts last year - down to minus 20^oC. He thought that seed of Diploglottis australis I'd sent him at that time surely got frozen in their damp pots.

* * *

THOMAS CARLSSON says that those Austromyrtus bidwillii sprouted seeds I sent him last year are now between 3 to 7cms tall which indicates that they grow at least as well in chilly Sweden as they do on Booyong. Thomas requested seedlings of 4 species that I offered in the last N/L and he will no doubt record their growth rates on a regular basis.

* * *

THE LONGS ARE BUILDING A NEW HOME & HAVE TO SELL UP THEIR RAINFOREST PROPERTY SOUTH OF SYDNEY

Geoff mentioned that they have bought a larger block further along the valley and will need to sell their Sydney house and 'Bolwarra' itself to finance the deal. They describe Bolwarra in this advertisement as - "The ultimate hide in the sub-tropical Foxground RF between Gerringong & Berry, and yet 10k from golf/beach. Resident lyre-bird, Australian thrush, whipbird, catbird etc. Lantana eradicated. Rehabilitation over 3 years has produced an outstanding example of the Natural Habitat Garden indistinguishable floristically from the natural RF. Paths, rest areas and a creek pool have been constructed using the natural stone of the area. A flora list containing 137 species is available. The house is full of light despite being deep in the forest. Upstairs it has a family bedroom (4 beds). Downstairs is a huge lounge/ dining/ kitchen, master bedroom with ensuite, bathroom and large deck. Kitchen has stainless steel bench, rococo panelling. Wood panelled ceilings. Land area of 4000 sq.m. (1 acre). Gas provides energy for hot water, cooking, refrigeration & the gentle mellowness of gas lighting. Warmth comes from a sandstone fireplace fitted with a Chiminee Phillippe firebox. All weather road access. One hour south of Waterfall (Royal Nat. Park) by road.

A wonderful weekend for the overloaded person with an affinity for nature. Special price consideration will be given to those who wish to preserve & further develop the concept of this garden. Private sale but agent enquiries welcome. Price on application. If not previously sold, will be auctioned in Oct.

Their Sydney home is at Fowler St Camperdown. Arguably the best house in Camperdown - on street closure joined to park. + Quiet cul-de-sac, corner block. + Easy walk to Sydney Uni/ Royal Prince Alfred Hospital etc. + Built in 1888 - 2 owners. + 3 kms from GPO. + Prize winning low maintenance garden - landscape architectural design. + 4 bedrooms; 4 large entertaining rooms - lounge, dining, drawing & family/TV all connected via french doors to huge expanse of private outdoor entertaining space. Original fireplaces. + Large kitchen: laundry: bathroom x 2: Garage & workshop space: rear lane access.

For further details contact Geoff or Ann phone (02)9519 5522; Fx (02)9516 4214; e-mail galong@ozemail.com.au."

WE SHOULD TRY TO DRIVE ON THE ROAD THROUGH TASMANIAS TARKINE WILDERNESS SOON Phil Parsons mentioned that this famous (infamous?) new masterpiece is now open. He says "cost is \$34 million for a gravel road to nowhere. Now surprise, surprise - the miners have become as keen as the loggers." Yeh Phil, you'd have to be surprised if it was pushed through just for the benefit of an average 8 tourists vehicles doing the trip each week.

THOSE ENTRY PERMITS NECESSARY FOR QUEENSLAND STATE FORESTS

PETER JURD contacted me to explain that, specifically to Mt. Mee SF, concern at the theft of epiphytes such as Stags and other plants is well founded due to the forest being so close to Brisbane and therefore under extreme pressure from people wanting to steal such specimens. Forestry have issued collecting licenses to individuals allowing them to remove certain plants regularly, based on a royalty payment. To help protect this income source, it is mandatory that all visitors obtain a permit (these are free) but forestry want to know who are in the area and do make regular checks. (Ed. Thank you for these details Peter - we have similar problems in NSW where ferns and epiphytes are prime targets).

LORNA MURRAY ALSO COMMENTED ON PERMIT REQUIREMENTS AND RAISED OTHER MATTERS WRITING ...

"Although I am not a member of the RFSG I regularly see the copy of the N/L sent to Queensland Region. I must compliment you on the large amount of material in your N/Ls, and the interest shown by contributions from members.

I would like to comment briefly on a couple of items mentioned recently. Firstly your comment on permits for entry to some parts of State Forests in Qld. None are required for access to established picnic areas and other public areas. The Forestry Rangers are responsible for all operations in the forest and the safety of their workers and the public. Therefore they need to have control over access to areas where operations could be going on or where firing might be planned. It is also essential for people entering certain areas to get reliable up-to-date information from local officers, to find out which roads are trafficable, and which parts can be reasonably accessed. It would be very easy for someone without the correct information to get hopelessly lost in some of the forestry reserves with the network of roads involved. I have never heard of anyone being refused a reasonable request, and officers I have met have always been most helpful. There is no cost for a permit and this seems to me to be most satisfactory for all concerned. Would you allow the public free access to the private land under your control without your permission?

With regard to comments about the Starkey Wilderness, have you seen this area? I have driven through parts of it. Most is open eucalypt forest or grassland, with one section near the coast with very interesting wallum heathland. Some parts are certainly worthy of reservation, but there is only a very, very small amount of riverine rf in the area. Also the Shoalwater Bay area, which I have only driven past, is I believe virtually all eucalypt scrub. If you study the map in the introduction to "Ornamental RF Plants in Australia" by David Jones you will understand my comments. This shows tropical rf areas in Central and Northern Qld accurately. You will note there are no darkened spots in the Starkey or Shoalwater Bay areas.

Rainforest areas in Queensland are now well reserved in National Parks. Ecosystems most in need of conservation here now are brigalow lands and Mitchell & Flinders grasslands."

The reply from RFSG leader/ editor/ treasurer/ researcher/ secretary/ errand boy and stamp licker was "Dear Lorna - Thank you for your letter of 24th Feb, - it is always good to have responses to matters included in newsletters and I feel that not enough are made. I suppose people often intend to comment on, or further develop a particular topic but 'never get around to it' such are the pressures made on our spare time. I am flattered at your interest in our observations and pleased that a regional president actually contributes to the discussion.

I accept your points on the necessity to obtain a permit for Forestry entry (is it also required for National Parks?) and agree that it is simply common sense to ascertain current conditions in such places, to gain local knowledge, and to seek advice on places of interest. My only problem is (and we have been in this situation whilst travelling) if you hear of a great spot to visit and the relevant authority is unavailable you either don't get to see it, or else may end up with a big problem by disobeying regulations. I intimated that, in other States such disadvantage does not arise.

Your question on access to my own property I find an irrelevant analogy in view of the original point simply being a comparison of public land and the rights of entry by citizens.

Re the Starkey Wilderness, and Shoalwater Bay. As I was unable to recollect any recent mention of either location in the N/L I looked back over the previous 2 years' records but couldn't find anything at all. Are you sure that they were not perhaps in another SGAP publication? Perhaps I overlooked some reference; if so would you let me know the details please?

You advise that RF in Queensland is now well reserved in National Parks; however my understanding is that although many RF types and species associations are adequately protected, others are not. Certainly the printed and oral information I gathered from National Parks, Forest Dept, CSIRO Atherton and other sources during a 3 month tour of the State in 1988, and subsequent added material indicates such a situation. Perhaps though, the latter days of the oft-maligned Goss government did succeed in much more environmental protection being proclaimed than it was given credit for. If you know of such information I would be extremely grateful if you could advise where I might obtain details for the record.

Some plant communities in question are Littoral RF; Lowland Sub Tropical & Tropical RF; 'Araucarian dominated forest' (Hoop & Bunya); and the inland Vine Thickets e.g. the initial (and only?) large reserve - Forty Mile Scrub - was a total disappointment when we looked at it, degraded by cattle allowed to forage there, the road right through it, and it apparently being the site for the local rubbish dump. There is little point in reserving such areas if adequate attention and protection is not assured.

Your views have influenced me to consider doing a major item on Qld RF - its past, present, and future - when I can put such info together. Thank you for that. I have been thinking of doing such a theme on NSW RF with a concentration on the efforts made to protect remnant areas during the past 10 - 20 years but there is a lot of work involved."

THE 'GREENCORPS' PROGRAM COMMENCED IN MARCH

The initial projects were 24 separate activities throughout Oz, each for a 6 month duration, and employing just 240 out-of-work young people for that time. NSW scored a mere 3 projects - Kinchega NP on rabbit control basically aimed at assisting the recovery plan for an endangered Acacia; at the Western Plains Zoo at Dubbo in general work associated with rare & endangered animals; and near Bega with the construction of a boardwalk through a remnant patch of mangroves. Obviously of more political than environmental benefit - no doubt using that same "great big whiteboard" as devised by Ms Ros Kelly.

I am unable to summarise projects in other States, as my federal members office is either unable or unwilling to send me the complete programme. (Actually I don't think the people to whom I have spoken understand what I want, but then politicians tend not to employ over-intelligent people, from my experience in dealing with them.)

FURTHER CONFIRMATION THAT NTH. QLD. TOURISM IS IN SERIOUS TROUBLE

A number of tourist destinations have been on the market for ages - Qantas is trying to unload its 5 island resorts; Jewel wants to sell Hook and South Molle; and now Ansett is offering Hayman Island to the best bidder. It is expected to sell for about \$100 million. A lot of money you say? That is less than a third of the \$350 million it is believed to have cost to develop in the 1980's. Lots of dough will be lost collectively on these island 'developments', but investors stand to lose far much more on unprofitable and unwanted mainland resorts.

So, hats off to the group currently going ahead with the widely opposed and environmentally destructive Hinchinbrook/Cardwell project. Those who fully agree with Williams' determination to degrade the area and prepared to defend his rights to do whatever he wishes with his property should support the imminent invitation "to invest in this unique and profitable undertaking". Perhaps they will do very well - against all the odds. Past outcomes of local and overseas groups and individuals investing in such enterprises has been very unhappy. Just ask those Islands' owners, or the Japanese, or Laguna Keys, or Hamilton, or Port Douglas. I could go on and on.

SUBSTANTIAL COASTAL RAINFOREST AREA JUST NORTH OF AIRLIE BEACH IS UP FOR GRABS

Advertised in April was a 1,227 ha (5 sq. miles!) 'Beachfront Integrated Development Site overlooking the magnificent Whitsunday passage to Hayman Island.' 'Development master plans are in place for a substantial residential community & integrated golf course resort with marina facilities. Adjoins National Parks *. Frontage to Pioneer, Woodwark and Double Bays.'

* The nearest parks on my maps are Conway and Gloucester Is. The picture accompanying the ad showed apparently natural forest and beaches and hilly country, just as I recollect Conway to be, from one of the nearby lookouts. Too good to destroy, but it seems growth and development overrule environmental considerations in most of North Qld.

FURTHER DOWN - SOUTH STRADBROKE ISLAND IS ABOUT TO LOSE ITS INNOCENCE

A March ad for the Couran Cove Resort stated that this will be "the only major development which will ever be permitted on the Island". (We were told that of Frazer Island too, but a second major resort is under way there, so you will pardon me for not believing any northern decision maker or politician won't you.) "Couran Cove is destined to be the most sought after eco-tourist resort in the South Pacific. It is set on 151 ha of pristine island environment with ocean surf beaches, rainforest & waterways at your door." Obviously the end of the Islands' pristinity. Shame - probably the last large, untouched area of its type in the state.

Does anyone have information on the RF and other vegetation found there ?

SPENDING PRIORITIES ALWAYS HAVE OUR FORESTS AND OTHER NATURAL PLACES WAY DOWN THE LIST

In recent times heaps of money has been committed/spent/wasted or whatever on questionable or fleeting projects. e.g. an Olympic's fireworks 'rehearsal' in Sydney (2 million); rejuvenate and beautify a short length of Sydneys Pitt St (40 mill !!); cover and grass part of a Sydney city tollway (40 mill); searches for missing yachtsmen (17 mill guesstimate); Sydney Olympics (2 billion - and the rest!);

\$80,000 to fly a racehorse from Ireland to Melbourne (and about 1,000 horses are flown around the world each year (thats \$80 million \$); etc.

And where is this money coming from, I hear you ask. Well - the feds propose to reduce funding to the Environmental Defenders Office; Cane Toad research; public education; health; social services; ABC and 731 other areas of public benefit. States are selling off cemeteries, banks, railways, trams, schools, hospitals and other sundry items unnecessary to our needs or quality of life.

AN ATTEMPT AT 'THE BIGGEST LAND GRAB SINCE 1770' IS GETTING UNDER WAY

The area in question is 48% of Australia's land mass. It has been designated for about a century, "Pastoral Lease". If the grab is successful, it will result in present occupiers gaining, collectively, a huge capital windfall. Those leasing valueless, sub-marginal and/or remote acreage would be unlikely to be involved, but the many holders of fertile, near urban, coastal or prime tourist locations would gain a veritable fortune. At my expense, and probably yours, seeing that all these places are Crown land, or land belonging to all citizens.

OK, we are unable to visit any of these leases without permission of the occupiers as they are virtually freehold, other than that the State has certain rights, and sets various conditions on the occupier (usually of environmental importance) which cannot be prescribed on freehold. But many detrimental changes are prevented, and environmental destruction is usually illegal, whereas with freehold, we have this god-given right to do whatever we please in most circumstances.

Anyway, the opening gambit for this grab is the drive, mainly from farming interest organisations who have used the Native Title debate as the entree, to convert Pastoral Leases to Perpetual Leasehold, and then after a respectable interval to Freehold. At that stage of course, existing statutory protection of such lands will be revoked, allowing any use whatsoever, total clearing of vegetation and draining of wetlands included. One of the strange reasons for wanting freehold is the admission that many graziers have breached various terms and conditions already, with governments being aware but turning a 'blind eye' to such breaches.

To rub salt into a wound, vast areas of Crown leasehold are held by such worthies as the sultan of Brunei, Packer, big banks and insurance groups, a host of overseas and local wealthy people who you probably wouldn't like. Why should they be given such huge areas of Oz - remember the exercise price of freeholding the bulk of the land was set, many years ago at "five bob an acre" or \$1.25 per ha. There's a lot of RF involved in that near half of our nation, and it has to be worth thousands of per cent more than that. We (collectively) own it already - let's keep it in public ownership.

One of the mysteries of this 'push' is the rarely mentioned but not insignificant number of so called "Fictional Leases" - areas handed to companies and individuals for grazing purposes but never taken up, occupied, or stocked. They are supposedly legal; what a strange situation. (I think that it is only the miners who are able to do as they please in those situations, but your friends in government are unwilling to disclose this influence.)

PRIVATELY OWNED FORESTS IN NSW SOON TO BE AT RISK FROM LAND CLEARING

That wonderful, or disparaged (depending on your point of view) State Env. Planning Policy 46 will be revoked and replaced with regional plans and self-regulation. This change was hailed as 'a major win for farmers' and while one of the first mass clearings will be in the grazing country, extremely marginal and verging on arid areas, around outback Walgett (for cropping), the more fertile coastal forests are expected to be 'developed' in a more piecemeal method.

During discussions about this change, I was dismayed to hear one of 'the worlds greatest conservationists' object to having to retain even single trees due to difficulties with big machinery on his vast acreage.

Coincidentally, around the same time as these changes were being announced, the first prosecution under SEPP46 found 2 men guilty of clearing 240ha of native vegetation near Deniliquin without consent, and could face a fine of \$100,000 and may be forced to restore the land. No wonder landholders object to such controls; they've been clearing rubbish vegetation since 1788 and why should anybody dare to stop them doing so in these difficult times? After all, there is not a lot left so it's a bit late to be concerned now, is a common attitude.

NEW GUINEAS FORESTS ALMOST THE VENUE FOR AN EXPERIMENT IN PRIVATISING A NATION'S MILITARY FORCES

One would have to wonder where such a third world nation as PNG could find \$40 million to hire a group of disgusting people, mercenaries, to indiscriminately destroy and kill anything and anyone as a form of employment. What sort of an individual would kill people who were of no threat to their country or themselves, people of a totally different race and culture who bore them no malice - just as a job. Teach those boongs a lesson for preventing the worlds largest mining company, RTZ, continuing to despoil their land? And RTZ has no involvement with those dreadful individuals. Pull the other leg! How else do you get big, rich and powerful?

BOOK REVIEW - "THE BUSH - A GUIDE TO THE VEGETATED LANDSCAPES OF AUSTRALIA" BY IAN G READ

Published by Reed Books Pty Ltd 1987 ISBN 0730101851

If you travel widely around this big country of ours, and like us, are interested in the flora and fauna, it is always useful to be able to make reference to the many and varied vegetation communities still remaining. "The Bush" has a lot of answers - it covers 11 basic systems from closed forests to grasslands. Each of these structural formations is broken down into identifiable habitats such as the division of "Closed Forests" into 'Tall Closed Forests', 'Closed Forests', 'Low Closed Forests', 'Scrub', 'Tree Thickets'.

Again, these divisions are further separated into sub groups, each of which is briefly described with location, habitat, upper and lower strata, and 'transformations' (changes since white occupation). Photographs of many landscapes complement those descriptions, as do sections on classification and methodology, plants & their habitats, associated notes, and appendices.

I found it a great help in slotting past experiences and travels into place; also in understanding why so much of the countryside has particular characteristics and how it evolved over time. The book also starkly shows how our "civilisation" has altered to a greater or lesser degree, about 3/4 of the continent in those comparatively few years of European exploitation.

A pretty good source of information for general knowledge, but it would be invaluable addition to any natural history library as a reference source.

READ'S BOOK IS INVALUABLE IN UNDERSTANDING OUR FLORA'S DISTRIBUTION

Some of the figures on plant cover.... About 1/2 of the continent is dominated by Acacia, around 35% by Eucalypts; other main dominants are Saltbush, Grasses, and Casuarina; smaller areas by Cypress and Melaleuca; and as we know, Rainforest habitat covers only a minimal amount of our land mass. In effect, a mere 5.5% of Oz has forest cover - 5.2 % is open forest (some of this has either a RF understorey, or else a varying ratio of RF species within the forest) but only about .3% is defined as 'closed' forest. Not much, so it should all be conserved.



R AINFOREST S TUDY G R O U P



Record of Propagation of Seed Bank Stock

MEMBER DETAILS

Name: _____
Address: _____

SEED DETAILS

Species: _____
Collection Date: _____
Collection Location: _____

PROPAGATION DETAILS

Please complete this section and return form to the Seed Curator:

Patrick Bennett
20 Belmore Court
Pine Mountain 4306

Date - Sown: _____
Date - First Seedling: _____
Date - Final Seedling: _____
% Germination: _____
Propagating Mixture: _____

Propagating Environment: _____
(eg. shadehouse 70%
shade outside full sun etc)
Special Treatment: _____
(eg soaking, scoring etc)
Comments: _____

