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Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants Inc.

RHAMNACEAE STUDY GROUP

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Greetings to all of the Group's founding members, and thank you for joining. It's heartening to hear that many of you are already growing some of the Rhamnaceae and have also had a go at propagating them.

The main aims of our Study Group are:

- to collect, propagate and grow as many of the species as possible
- to establish a living collection
- to maintain a herbarium collection
- to disseminate information on the propagation and cultivation of Rhamnaceae

So far, my Study Group duties have been to track down the local species of Rhamnaceae. In the Canberra region, there are 13 plants listed for this family:

Pomaderris aspera
P. intermedia
P. andromedifolia
P. subcapitata
P. pallida
P. eriocephala
P. betulina
P. phylicifolia
P. angustifolia

Cryptandra amara var. longiflora
C. amara var. floribunda
C. propinqua

Discaria pubescens

Pomaderris eriocephala seems to be the most common species locally. It grows on just about all the slopes around here and there are several good stands on roadsides. Merren Sloane, another Canberra SGAP member, has two **P. eriocephala** growing naturally in her garden, but one looked vaguely unlike the other. On closer inspection, we found quite a few differences: the veins don't go quite to the edge of the leaf and there are no (or only very slight) hair tufts along the leaf edge; the margins of the leaves are slightly re-curved and there are no long tan hairs on the young stems or around the flower buds. Whitish, short hairs give the stems and flower bracts a paler appearance than those of the usual **P. eriocephala**. We searched

the nearby hillsides and found a small population of the paler plant. Although there were large stands of the normal **P. eriocephala** close by, we found no intermediate forms. When they are flowering, we'll investigate further.

P. phylicifolia is uncommon in the ACT, but we've found it in three areas. However, only one of these populations corresponds closely to descriptions in keys to the genus, and this species will need a bit more attention in the flowering season too. It looks as if **Pomaderris** is going to be an interesting genus!

And, during a walk along the Murrumbidgee, we discovered a sizeable patch of **P. pallida** beyond its previously known range in the ACT. John Briggs of the Endangered Plants Unit at CSIRO has been told about these.

Altogether, we have located all the species listed for the ACT except **P. subcapitata.**

Field trip: Last month, Canberra SGAP spent a weekend at Round Hill Nature Reserve near Lake Cargelligo. This is rather arid mallee country with a fairly dense cover of small and medium shrubs. It was a wonderful weekend anyway, but made all the more so because we found a **Cryptandra** and a **Spyridium.** In fact, we found lots of **Cryptandra leucophracta** growing on flat areas of red sandy soil - where conditions would be very dry in summer and very wet for a while after rain. This almost prostrate little mound plant looks as if it should be a **Spyridium** because it has small whitish floral leaves. The tiny cream, fairly unnoticeable flowers are borne in terminal clusters. Even though its flowers are not striking, this little plant would look good in a rockery. In NSW it is only found from Ardlethan west to Hillston, but also occurs in Vic., SA, and WA. The **Spyridium** we found is also not common in NSW, but is found in Vic., SA and Tasmania. **Spyridium eriocephalum** is a rather straggly little plant with pale brownish-cream terminal flowerheads. The rigid, sharply pointed leaves are a bit off-putting, but, with a bit of pruning, this one too could do well in a rockery.

On the way home we found two sizeable bushes of **Cryptandra amara** var. **floribunda** (about 45 x 45 cm). They were a neat round shape and absolutely covered with strongly scented white bells. Although this species grows in the Canberra area, I've never seen any as attractive and floriferous as these two on the Newell Highway.

Propagation: I've tried several times in the past to propagate **Pomaderris** species without much success. To date, the only ones I've got to grow are a single **P. phylicifolia** and two **P.** sp. nov. (Tumut). I've had slightly more success with **Cryptandra.** Cuttings

of **Cryptandra amara** var. **longiflora**, **C. leucophracta** (from Moomboomdool, NSW), **C.** (**Synanthemum**) **scortechinii** and an unidentified species from northern NSW have all been moderately successful. Have any of you tried growing any of the Rhamnaceae from seed? **C. arbutiflora**, a Western Australian species, comes up well from seed. Encouraged by this, I collected a lot of **C. propinqua** seed last summer and sowed it in autumn. So far, there is no sign of germination, but when I scraped the surface material off the pot a few days ago, I found that the seed had swollen up and looked perfectly healthy. I intend to try some of the **Pomaderris** species from seed this year, if I can catch them before they've hurled it all on the ground.

Something for members to do: Could you send me details, please, of any of the species of Rhamnaceae you are growing. That is: source (if known); conditions such as aspect, rainfall, degree of frost hardiness; type of soil and drainage; whether or not they are flourishing; and any other information that might be useful. And, if anyone has had a wonderful success rate with propagation of any of the species, we'd like to hear about that too.

Membership List:

Best wishes and good luck with the growing and propagating until next time.

Jo Walker
Leader (Rhamnaceae S/G)
21 Poppet Road
WAMBOIN NSW 2620

ph: (06) 2 383 41[illegible]5