

Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants Inc.

RHAMNACEAE STUDY GROUP

Newsletter Number 10

May 2002

Hello members. Sorry for the longish silence – there have been several good reasons for this, but I won't bore you with them.

Since the last Newsletter came out, we have had the ASGAP Biennial Conference in Canberra last September. It wasn't the best of times to show off *Pomaderris* flowers, and the beautiful *Cryptandra* plant I was coaxing to flower for the Conference bloomed too early. However, I did a display of four boards with photographs of *Cryptandra*, *Spyridium*, *Discaria* and some of the more floriferous species of *Pomaderris*. Since then, I've taken the display to a meeting of the Growing Friends (Friends of the ANBG who grow and sell Australian plants) and given a short talk on the Rhamnaceae, after which we put in seed of several species of *Pomaderris* (supplied by the Study Group) to be grown on for the Friends' next sale.

The Rhamnaceae Study Group has resumed monthly meetings at my place on the first Friday of the month. Last month, Natalie Peate visited and was here for the meeting and a field trip. Natalie came up from Victoria by the coastal route – collecting specimens of *Pomaderris* along the way, of course! One of these was *P. bodalla*, a species I hadn't seen before.

Natalie and Ros Cornish are developing a data base for identifying *Pomaderris* species based on descriptions of leaves, buds, stems and new growth, as very often we come across plants during winter months when flowers and fruit are absent. I intend concentrating, for a while, on collecting and growing the species of *Pomaderris* I don't yet have and on a photographic record of the genus.

And don't forget that I'd like to get an update of what you're all growing and how they are faring, when you have time.

***Pomaderris delicata* and other *Pomaderris* species between Bungonia and Tarago**

Late last year, Naomi Bell and I went out to Wingello, north-east of Goulburn to check on some *Pomaderris* populations we'd seen several years previously. We found some *P. elliptica* and several stands of *P. lanigera* by the roadside but nothing new. Returning along the Bungonia Road, we missed the turnoff to Tarago (because we were talking about *Pomaderris*, no doubt!) but continued on and took the Sandy Point and Cullulla route. And there we made a serendipitous discovery – along the roadside was a patch of a small-leaved *Pomaderris* we'd never seen before. We sent some off to Neville Walsh for identification, and it turned out to be *Pomaderris*

delicata, a species newly described in Neville's recent revision of the *Pomaderris* and previously known only from a small population between Goulburn and Bungonia. Unfortunately, 'our' population was on a narrow roadside verge between private property and a dirt road – just the sort of situation where it could be wiped out by the next bulldozer. So, Neville arranged for us to show it to Keith McCullough of the NSW NPWS Endangered Species Unit and it has now been duly recorded. While we were in the area, we had a quick look around for any other Rhamnaceae. Less than half a kilometre from the *P. delicata* on the Cullulla Road there is a large quarry, and, right on the edge, we found a very large and robust *P. ferruginea*. Searching around, we found about ten more smaller plants on both side of the road. Previously, I've only seen this species growing on the coast or on the coastal side of the ranges, but it may be more widespread. Above the quarry and along the edge of the roadside, we found some scrubby little *Pomaderris* plants with hardly any leaves or new growth. This seems to be a form of *P. andromedifolia*, but differs from other forms of this species that we've seen in that it has a narrow fringe of brown hairs along the edges of its leaves.

During Natalie's visit last month, we made another visit to the area – mainly to look at the original population of *P. delicata* on the Goulburn-Bungonia road. This we found growing amongst a narrow-leaved form of *P. andromedifolia*. Close by, and in patches along the roadside, was a taller, larger-leaved form of *P. andromedifolia* and *Pomaderris* sp. 'Bungonia'. *P. sp. 'Bungonia'* is similar in some respects to *P. intermedia*, the most obvious difference being a thick covering of very short simple hairs on the upper leaf surface. It seemed to have a distribution restricted to the Bungonia area, but we recently found a small population of about a dozen healthy plants on private property at Butmaroo, about 20 km north of Bungendore. When we reached the Sandy Point Road, we didn't expect to find anything else as, by then, we'd travelled through there two or three times. But, this time, I was a passenger and could keep a close eye on the roadsides, and it wasn't long before we found a patch of *P. elliptica* growing on both sides of the road. A further kilometre down the road, we drew up *again* – this time for a quite large population of *Pomaderris* on the roadside and inside a fenceline where the ground had been cleared some time ago under powerlines. This was a sizeable patch of low-growing plants, most not much over knee-high. These also seem to key out to *P. andromedifolia* (but without the benefit of flowers).

Within this relatively small area there are five species of *Pomaderris* growing – and four forms of *P. andromedifolia*! We'll probably do a bit more investigating along some of the side roads – it would be nice to find a few more *P. delicata*.

Members' Reports

Ros Cornish: My husband and I live on a 16 hectare bush block about 30km south east of Canberra. We are leaving most of the property untouched, but, in the disturbed area around the house, vegetable garden, orchard and small vineyard, we are planting selected Australian plants not necessarily native to the area. It has been necessary to fence off this area with a 2m high fence because of swamp wallabies – they eat anything but grass! There are also plenty of kangaroos which tend not to eat our plantings but don't bother about where they are putting their feet. The odd rabbit

also causes some damage, so in the end we decided on the fence. Now we have the problem of a wombat digging under the fence leaving gaps big enough for rabbits to invade!

Native to our block we have a few *Cryptandra amara* var. *longiflora* on a bare, north-west facing, rocky hillside above our section of Whiskers Creek. They always seem to struggle and are probably grazed by wallabies and rabbits but usually manage to flower in mid-winter here. I have planted *C. propinqua* inside the fence and usually forget where it is until it flowers beautifully in late winter – it's not a very noticeable plant for the rest of the year.

I have built up a small collection of *Pomaderris* species, most of which have been planted inside the fence. I am very impressed with their hardiness. I have lost hardly any in three years despite two very hot, dry summers and our usual cold, frosty winters. I am also impressed with their features – there always seems to be something to see as the buds appear early and are quite attractive, some have flowered in their first year, and the developing fruit are also interesting.

P. angustifolia is about 0.5m tall after 3 years and is in bud for the second year. It is not surprising that it is doing well as it is native to the area – the closest patch is about 3 km from us.

P. aurea is still small after 2 years but has flower buds for the first time.

P. discolor came from the Australian National Botanic Gardens in 1998. I am in a propagation group called the Growing Friends which is a sub-group of the Friends of ANBG. We are allowed to access plants in the Gardens for cutting material. The plant is doing well, with buds for the first time, but is still small – about 0.3m.

P. elliptica is about 0.4m tall but has yet to produce buds.

P. eriocephala, another species native to this area, flowered in its first year and I have since collected seed, grown and planted out several more plants.

One plant which did not survive was *P. obcordata*. It was struggling after two years, flowered, then promptly died – I suspect through lack of water.

P. pallida has also had mixed results – one died and another is still alive, but without buds, two years on. It is a rare plant, but is relatively local to this area, as we have found it on several walks in the Canberra region.

Two plants of *P. prunifolia* are about 0.5m tall and one is in bud, but they tend to succumb to our frosts and have some 'burnt' leaves. They seem to bounce back though once the warmer weather starts.

P. subcapitata is another local plant here, and I have two which are in bud in their second year.

I was lucky enough to be given a plant of *P. subplicata* from one of our Victorian members – Natalie Peate – in 1998. It is a fairly recently discovered species, described in 1992, and is regarded as vulnerable in its natural woodland habitat of north-eastern Victoria. I was terrified that it would die, so I kept it in a pot for the first year. I needn't have worried as it flowered in the pot, I collected seed from it, and was then able to grow quite a few plants. I planted out the original plant in 2000 and it is now about 1m tall and has many buds again.

Finally, I have two very healthy plants of what we have called *Pomaderris* sp. 'Bungonia' – because of where Jo Walker found it several years ago on a trip to Bungonia Gorge, between Goulburn and Tarago. Interestingly, we found some more plants recently on private property in the Dividing Range south-east of Bungendore.

Waiting to be planted I have *P. ferruginea*, *P. intermedia*, *P. betulina* ssp. *actensis*, *P. paniculosa* ssp. *paralia* and *P. myrtilloides* and hope to be able to report on them in the future.

Jo Walker: This is an update of the *Pomaderris* I have growing at the moment. If any of you would like seed or cutting material of any of these species, just let me know.

***Pomaderris angustifolia*:** A small population of this species grows naturally on my land on a slope above the creek. This area is often moist, but another patch of this species planted out on a much drier site is also doing well. *P. angustifolia* grows to about 2 metres in height and is often equally wide. The small cream flowers are sometimes profuse and are delicately scented. Would be useful as a windbreak or hedge. Last year, I noticed crimson rosellas feeding on the opening seed capsules. Widespread in this area, mostly along watercourses.

***Pomaderris aspera*:** Usually grows to a tall shrub or small tree in wet sclerophyll forest where it is often common. I have two specimens planted in a sheltered area on the edge of the creek where the soil is fairly deep and moist. Both are bushy, healthy plants about 3 metres tall, but had a close call this summer when we had nearly four months without rain – they were beginning to wilt but were saved by heavy rains in February. One of my plants came from the local area and has the typical slightly weeping, brownish bud clusters, but the other one, from the Goobragandra River near Tumut has larger, silvery grey buds (it was checked by Neville Walsh and confirmed as *P. aspera*).

***Pomaderris aurea* (formerly *P. humilis*):** A Victorian species – both of my plants came, via nurseries, from the Holey Plains area. They have grown out rather than up and are now about a metre wide and half a metre high. They have light green leaves, tan buds and dense, rather pyramidal panicles of golden yellow flowers. They can be kept to a neat form by pruning, a procedure ably demonstrated by some sulphur-crested cockatoos while I was out one afternoon! A very floriferous, attractive species.

***Pomaderris brogoensis*:** Grown from a cutting from a plant in the ANBG (legitimately! – bought at the ANBG Growing Friends sale). It was planted two years ago and is growing slowly (to about 60 cm now). Has small, roundish, very pubescent leaves which give the plant a greyish appearance. Flowers are lemon yellow in small but often profuse panicles. Can grow to a large shrub of several metres. Grows by waterways in coastal forests and tablelands foothills.

***Pomaderris betulina* ssp. *actensis*:** This one, as its subspecies name indicates, grows mainly in the ACT – although mine came from a plant by the roadside near Binalong, NSW. Planted 2-3 years ago, (in rather poor, shallow soil over shale) it is now about

a metre tall and healthy, and has flowered over the last two years. Leaves are mid-green and glabrous and the pale cream flowers are borne in small panicles. The flowers are not spectacular, but it would make a nice background shrub. There are extensive areas covered by this species on the lower slopes of Mt. Tennent (Namadgi NP, ACT). *P. betulina* ssp. *betulina* is common in this area along watercourses and, occasionally along roadsides. I've had no success with this one so far, having lost the two plants I put in the ground – I think they need more regular watering than I provided. I have two in pots, grown from plants near the Murrumbidgee River, and will give these a spot near the creek.

***Pomaderris elliptica*:** This one came from John Knight, one of the many seedlings that germinated after the bushfires devastated the Eurobodalla Botanic Gardens several years ago. It sat in a pot in a neglected area for a year or two, and, when I finally took pity on it and put it in the ground, was rather yellow and poorly-looking. But, it put out new growth almost immediately and flowered during the next spring. Now, three years later, it is a healthy, bushy shrub of about 1.5 metres. The leaves are dark green and the flowers are magnificent – large terminal panicles of bright yellow flowers. This species is definitely a desirable garden plant. It is a widespread species, found from northern NSW to Victoria and Tasmania.

***Pomaderris eriocephala*:** A fast growing, usually shrubby species that can grow to the proportions of a slender small tree under some conditions. One of mine grew to nearly two metres in two years – another group planted in shallow, rocky soil are growing more slowly but are making up to bushy little shrubs. This species has attractive rusty new growth and soft green, hairy leaves fringed with tufts of brown hairs. It has tan buds and bears small clusters of cream flowers. It makes a good backdrop or filler plant and would be useful in shelter belt plantings. Grows in forest and woodland areas, often near watercourses, from northern NSW to Victoria.

***Pomaderris halmaturina*:** three specimens grown from cuttings from a plant in Bev Overton's garden (on Kangaroo Island) now grace my 'South Australian garden'. They are growing slowly but steadily, the largest now 1.5 metres tall. They are hardy to frosts of at least -6 C, but need regular watering during dry weather. Flowers are greenish with red tinges in small drooping panicles – not spectacular, but the plant has a pleasant look to it, with mid-green, deeply-veined and slightly toothed leaves and a bushy habit (which they probably retain, as mine all have leafy new shoots from ground level or just below). This species occurs only on Kangaroo Island in low-lying coastal areas and in south-east South Australia. The species name refers to Kangaroo Island – *Halmatura* was once the genus name for kangaroos.

***Pomaderris helianthemifolia* ssp. *hispida*:** I've planted a group of these on a south-facing slope amongst *Acacia dealbata* where they are doing well. These were from cuttings from Molonglo Gorge (just down the road from here) where they grow near the very similar *P. angustifolia*. Flowers are borne in small terminal and axillary clusters and are cream in colour. Usually grows in rocky sites on the Tablelands and south to Victoria.

***Pomaderris intermedia*:** Two plants given to me as seedlings (from the Black Mountain area in Canberra) have grown strongly and flowered in their second year. They are growing in a rocky, rather dry area under eucalypts. This is an outstanding

species with dark green, glossy leaves and profuse terminal heads of bright yellow flowers in spring. It grows into a rather narrow, upright shrub to about 3m. The two local populations we know of are on rather dry, rocky sites, growing amongst eucalypts and not close to a watercourse. Distribution is from the North Coast and Tablelands to Victoria. This is an outstanding one for the garden.

Pomaderris lanigera: Grown from seed from the Wingello area (near Goulburn, NSW). This is a fast-growing species with soft, bright green leaves. Prominent brown buds open to rounded terminal panicles of bright yellow flowers. Mine are growing on a north-facing bank amongst eucalypts and wattles and are upright, rather open shrubs. This is another species that seems to grow well on dry sites (although small plants need regular watering for a while if planted out in dry weather). Locally, we've seen this one growing in the Bungonia SRA at Jerrara Lookout and along the roadside near Wingello. It is a very widespread species, growing from Queensland, through NSW, to Victoria.

Pomaderris obcordata: This is a very attractive, low-growing species from South Australia with small, shiny, wedge-shaped leaves and terminal clusters of white flowers. Buds are pinkish, sometimes a striking deep pink. Seed capsules are often of a contrasting colour to the leaves – a roadside population I saw on Kangaroo Island had dark red capsules. My first *P. obcordata* came as a cutting from Jeanette Closs. Planted in heavy clay loam, it has grown slowly, but steadily for several years and is now about 25 cm tall and 50 cm across. Two others, from Kangaroo Island cuttings, have been planted out into sandier loam and are growing more quickly and have a less compact shape. In the wild, this species grows in open shrubland and along roadsides (e.g. a lovely patch near Cummin on the Eyre Peninsula, SA).

Pomaderris pallida: Usually a fairly small and dense shrub, although it can get to over 1.5m. It has an overall pale appearance (hence its name), with pubescent grey leaves and small terminal or axillary clusters of cream flowers. I have ten growing slowly in fairly awful soil – a rocky area covered by small amounts of clay loam. But they are growing steadily into robust little shrubs full of buds at present. Several are sprouting new shoots from the base of the main stem. This species was listed as rare, with scattered populations around the Canberra area and towards Cooma, but several more populations have since been found – some by our Study Group. Several years ago, at Ginninderra Falls (a privately owned nature reserve above the Murrumbidgee River), Merren Sloane noticed a hillside of grey plants, which turned out to be a low-growing form of *P. pallida*. Later, we found another large patch, growing amongst casuarinas, on Tuggeranong Hill (part of the Canberra Nature Park). We also found four growing on the Queanbeyan escarpment with seedlings or suckers coming up around them. Although not an eye-catching plant, it would make a good filler with its attractive grey foliage.

Pomaderris paniculosa* ssp. *paniculosa: This is a widespread species growing from NSW through Victoria and SA to WA. Mine are from South Australia – I put one in the ground last year, and it survived a hot, dry summer with some watering. It is growing slowly but well, but, so far, it hasn't produced any flower buds. This species is from arid regions and seems to prefer heath areas and open woodland. It can grow to 2 m, and some plants have a graceful arching form. Flower buds are rusty and the cream flowers are borne in axillary clusters.

Pomaderris paniculosa* ssp. *paralia (previously *P. oraria*): This is a larger shrub than the preceding subspecies. It can grow to over 2m by 2m. Mine has been growing in heavy clay loam for about 6 years now and has only reached about 1.5m, possibly because it grows in sandier, warmer soils in the wild. Although it has grown slowly, it is a healthy plant and flowers each year. The leaves of this species are glossy, deep green and the flowers, borne in terminal and axillary narrow clusters, are greenish. The sepals sometimes turn red with age and are persistent for some time after flowering. Although this is a coastal species from Victoria and South Australia, it has proved to be frost hardy here.

Pomaderris prunifolia: My original plant came from Kuranga Nursery and was sourced from Warrandyte, Vic. It was planted on a usually moist slope near the creek and is now about 3m tall. It has rusty new growth and terminal and axillary clusters of cream flowers which have a delicate and pleasant scent. Four others, seedlings from the original plant, have been planted nearby. One of these has much larger and more pointed leaves than the others and bulkier buds – some of the leaves are over 6cm long. Perhaps this plant has its roots onto something very nutritious, but there are two *P. aspera* plants just across the creek, and I suspect this rather different plant may be a hybrid. *P. prunifolia* is another widespread species, occurring from Queensland, through eastern NSW to Victoria, mostly on rocky soils in open forest and shrubland

Pomaderris racemosa: Two of these have been planted near the creek in a moist area of dappled shade. Both came from nurseries, one sourced from Warrandyte and the other from the Grampians. Both are doing well, and the larger one is now a bushy shrub of over 3m. This species has small, thin, bright green leaves and masses of pale cream flowers in terminal and axillary panicles – when it is flowering, the whole plant looks like a cream cloud. In the wild, it grows in moist forests, often near rivers and streams, in southern Victoria, Tasmania and SA.

Pomaderris subcapitata: I have one plant of this species – from a cutting from near the Goobragandra River (close to Tumut, NSW). Planted on a moist slope near the creek, it is now 2-3m tall. It has a greyish appearance due to the pubescent leaves, pale coppery buds, and small compact heads of cream flowers. It is a widely distributed species (from northern NSW to eastern Victoria), but, because it occurs in widely scattered populations, is not common. Apart from the small population near Tumut, we've only seen it along the Murrumbidgee River. We did have what looked to us like a different species identified (at the ANBG Herbarium) as *P. subcapitata*. This one we've found only locally, so far, in several large populations on the Queanbeyan escarpment and on the nearby Captains Flat Road.

***Pomaderris* sp. 'Bungonia'**: Four of these have been planted on a moist bank near the creek – they have grown strongly, but for the first two years were nibbled by swamp wallabies. They are now over a metre tall, bushy (well-pruned by the wallabies!) and covered in buds. Four others in a drier, shadier situation have grown more slowly, but are healthy and will flower this year. This species grows to over 2m tall and has dark green leaves. Flowers are borne in fairly large terminal panicles and are pale yellow. So far, it has only been found along the Bungonia Road and at Butmaroo.

Finances

Balance 15 October 2000		480.25
Subscriptions (01-02)	189.00	
Plant sale (SGAP Canberra)	183.60	
FID		0.03
Printing/postage		34.20
Balance May 2002		818.62

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