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Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants Inc.

RHAMNACEAE STUDY GROUP

Newsletter Number 12

April 2004-

Hello members. Well, we seem to be drifting back into drought again here. We had good spring rains in October after which the dams were full and everything green again. But, since then, very little rain has fallen, and the landscape here is dust-dry again. So far, all of the *Pomaderris*, *Cryptandra* and *Spyridium* plants I have in the ground have survived, although some of those that are too far away to get water to are drooping their leaves and looking very sad. Those nearer the house get some water – and must have extensive surface root systems, as a small amount of hand-watering seems to liven them up.

I haven't done as much Rhamnaceae hunting as I'd intended over the last year, but did go on a short trip with Natalie and Roger Peate last August. This was to the Tathra area of the South Coast (of NSW), then south to Eden and along the Imlay Road to the Cann River Highway. On the Tathra-Tanja Road, we found *Pomaderris brogoensis* and *P. cinerea*. Both of these species have attractive greyish leaves, but those of *P. brogoensis* are circular to obovate and only 0.6 to 2 cm long while those of *P. cinerea* are obovate to elliptic and up to 5 cm long. However, we did find several plants in this area that seemed to fall between the two species in regard to leaf size and other characteristics, so it seems possible that these two species hybridize. We had arranged to meet Joy and Neal Greig at Newton's Crossing off the Imlay Road, so we had to pass a lot of interesting *Pomaderris*-adorned spots on the highway. I will try to get back there in spring to check that area for *Pomaderris* species we haven't yet seen.

At Newton's Crossing on the Wallagaraugh Road, we found *Pomaderris andromedifolia* and a small-leafed *Pomaderris* we haven't yet identified. Then we continued along the Imlay Road – closely followed by two large, fast-moving timber trucks which made *Pomaderris*-spotting too risky.

On the Cann River Highway, we were looking for a site close to the river where we'd found *P. pauciflora* a few years ago. I had a very clear picture of the area, but, since then, the road had had a major upgrade completely altering the area. We finally found part of the old road, and, luckily, this turned out to be our site. We found a small population of *P. pauciflora* still intact and also a few *P. aspera* and *P. eriocephala*.

If any of you have been travelling recently and seen any of the Rhamnaceae, let us hear about it for the Newsletter. Information on what Rhamnaceae you are growing and how they are going under garden conditions would also be very welcome.

Feature Plant: *Pomaderris virgata*

In March this year, some of the Canberra ANPS members did a trip to Tuross Falls in Wadbilliga National Park (about 40 km from Cooma, NSW). Along the walking track to the Falls, we came across several large *Pomaderris* shrubs and then a whole population of the same species growing on the rocky outcrops below and around the Lookout. Later, we keyed it out to *Pomaderris virgata*, a species we hadn't yet seen in the wild – which made it a very satisfying trip for the Study Group members in the party!

P. virgata is one of the larger *Pomaderris* species, growing up to 8 metres (although the ones we saw were about 4 metres or less). The shrubs around the lookout were much bushier, and shorter, than those we saw along the track where they were growing amongst trees. The taller specimens were multi-stemmed and the bark was distinctly tessellated close to the base of the stems. The leaves are broadly lanceolate to oblong (some acute and some rounded at the tips), 2-10 cm long and 0.7-3 cm wide (most were 4-5 cm long and about 1.5 cm wide). The upper surface of the dark green leaves is glabrous, the lower surface whitish to cream with slightly darker veins. New growth is covered with coppery simple hairs. Those we saw were only in bud, but flowers are described as yellow to golden in dense terminal panicles, often profuse. Petals are absent. This species is found in shrubland and open forest in rocky sites in south-eastern NSW and far-eastern Victoria.

***Trymalium ledifolium* Jeanette Closs**

The genus was named by Fenzl in 1837 – trymalia (Greek), the eye of a needle or an aperture, alluding to the three slits at the top of the fruit when it opens. The meaning of the species name, *ledifolium*, is unclear, but seems to relate to the woolly underside of the leaf. There are 12 endemic species, mostly in south-western WA and a few in South Australia and south-western Victoria.

It is hard to find information about this plant. The Encyclopaedia hasn't got to "T" as yet. There is only one species mentioned in John Wrigley's 'Australian Native Plants', and that is *T. spathulatum*. My reference card tells me that I found a reference to the species in the 'Australian Plants' journal in Volume 2, page 62. On checking, I found that it is no longer on page 62 and the new 'Australian Plants' index doesn't even mention *T. spathulatum*. I have never claimed that my card index system is perfect!

I bought my original plant from Neil Marriot's nursery in November 1987 as *T. spathulatum*, but, on checking it out at the State Herbarium some years ago, it appeared to be *T. ledifolium*. One of my books on Western Australian flora mentions *T. spathulatum* as one of the large-leaved plants from the karri forest. This plant is called Karri Hazel and may form impenetrable thickets up to 10 metres high, though usually only a few metres high. My plant never gets more than one metre and doesn't have large leaves.

However, whatever its name is, it is a small shrub with showy spikes of very dainty, small, creamy-white flowers right through winter. The leaves are about 2 cm long, oval and dark green above and woolly and light green beneath. The plant has a twiggy growth habit and does well in shady spots in my heavy clay soil.

I find that my success rate with cuttings is extremely low, but I must have struck two, as I have two plants in the garden and had the original one in the garden at Austins Ferry. My records show that I had a strike in February 1998.

Trip to Coffs Harbour, May 2003 **Natalie Peate**

What a fortuitous location Coffs Harbour was for the annual IPPS conference at the end of May last year. We decided to drive up, particularly as I wanted to hunt for *Pomaderris* and Roger wanted to see the Hunter Valley and visit various establishments therein. Although the prospect of plant hunting didn't really enthuse Roger, we do have both a GPS and a linked laptop with lots of maps on it and he could play with those on the way. Armed with all this technology and locations kindly given to me by Neville Walsh we set off with high hopes. I must confess that I am partial to the odd drop so could put up with Roger's diversions.

Reaching Canberra after dark on the first day, we decided to drop off plants to Jo in the morning and then continue on our way. At Jo's, I parted with some Tasmanian Poms and *Spyrids*, and, of course, picked up a few other plants to take with us. Seed was exchanged as well. We reached our friends in Dural that afternoon and looked at their new mist controlling system that I was considering for my heated propagation bed. The cloth allows a good airflow but helps to retain both heat and humidity and seems to have helped with propagation since trying it on our return.

Next day was our first official day of plant hunting, the first stop being just beyond Rylstone on the Bylong road. The locations were very old, and *Pomaderris precaria* has long since disappeared from the roadside verges alongside farmland. It possibly still survives in the few bits of bush in the area, perhaps even near the Kandos Dam, but we didn't have time to look. I did collect a few cuttings of what I think is a large (3m by 5m) *Phebalium squamulosum*. We drove on past the late Sid Cadwell's property, now neglected and reverted to natural bush, and on to Muswellbrook where we spent the night.

Next day, we took the turn-off to Rosemount Winery, 7 km west of Denman, and discovered Myambat Logistics Camp, home of *Pomaderris reperta*, right next door to the winery. The location given was east of Denman, but we were definitely about 2 km west of the town at this point. No attempt was made to look for *P. reperta*, but I would like to go back after seeking permission from the Department of Defence. What an endangered life, living right between an explosives storage and a winery! Okay, so that was Failure Number 2.

After a couple of days visiting wineries and a huge new exotic garden, I started suffering withdrawal symptoms and wanted to do some more plant hunting. *P. vellea* was next on the list at a place called Cranky's Corner near Singleton. From our computer map, it appeared that we could approach Cranky's Corner from the north

and then drive south to Branxton and on to Maitland and Newcastle. On reaching the Cranky's Corner Road, we met a dear old lady driving a 4WD farm motorbike who told us that there was a mountain blocking the road and no way through to our destination! The other end of the Cranky's Corner Road to the south was the only way in. So we drove south and found the other end. Arriving at our GPS location, we discovered a bit of a cliff to climb down that would need a rope. So we drove back about half a km to a more gentle slope, and, while Roger sat in the car reading the newspaper, I set off. There seemed to be a lot of fresh cow pats – or were they bull pats?! However, I pressed on very warily, but was ultimately stopped by an impenetrable wall of wretched lantana. Failure Number 3. Back at the car, Roger was feeling a bit sorry for me, and, even though not enjoying plant hunting very much, decided that I could have a couple more goes. We went to another winery on the way – his searching seemed much more successful than mine.

It rained the heaviest rain I've ever experienced all the way to Newcastle, where we found a multi-storeyed motel and chose a room high up on the ocean side. At least we could watch the surfers braving the weather until dark. Still pouring all the way to Taree next day (120 mm of rain), we began to feel that NSW didn't like us.

On the following day, we drove on to Gloucester through decreasing rain and decided to look for yet another Pomaderris, *P. ligustrina* ssp. *ligustrina*, in the Coneac State Forest. Following directions, we went along Craven Creek Road, which was a rough dirt road, for about 3 km to the junction of Coneac Road that looked even rougher – in fact, it was so overgrown it may not have been used for some years! Not to be defeated, we drove up the steep hill and moved odd bits of branch etc. to let the car through. After travelling about 5 km, about halfway to our GPS destination, guess what – a big tree had recently fallen across the road blocking all further progress. Roger had given me a good sharp saw for Xmas, but of course it was in my car and we were travelling in his. The rain set in again, and we just managed to turn around and make our way down. Failure Number 4. Perhaps the moral of this story is to carry both a saw and a rope in your car!

This can't go on I thought, so decided that we should look for *P. nitidula* on the main road between Dorrigo and Armidale. We left the Pacific Highway at Urunga and drove to Bellingen where we found a small nursery growing Australian plants. Colin Broadfoot, the owner, grows a lot of local plants and had a plant of *P. queenslandica* but none for sale. He gave us directions to find it in the bush, and we decided to go searching when John Wrigley came out with us next day. Driving on through the inevitable rain, we did find a single plant of *P. nitidula* in the roadside gutter 17 km past Dorrigo. Our first success! Through the rain, I could see the encroaching farmland as I collected my first few cuttings while still getting soaked through my wet weather gear. We then drove on to the Big Resort at Coffs Harbour where the conference was to be held. The Wrigleys had dinner with us that night and we arranged to go plant hunting and visit the Coffs Harbour Botanic Gardens to meet Alex Floyd who is the volunteer curator of the CHBG Herbarium.

Next morning, we set off with John to Nana Glen and nearby areas using our new directions to search for *P. queenslandica*. We searched along Coal Water Creek Road, Nana Creek Road and along various tracks in the Wild Cattle Creek State Forest, but had no luck at all. The State Forest was really very beautiful with plants

that we didn't recognise, but, being a loyal member of the ADSG, I collected a few cuttings of a tropical looking daisy which John assured me was a local native. On the following day, we visited the Gardens and met Alex who kindly allowed us to look at all herbarium specimens of Pomaderris and also gave me a list of the specimens as well as the locations from which they came. Out in the gardens, we saw a beautiful plant of the local *P. lanigera*, and of *P. queenslandica* from which we were given some cuttings. Unfortunately, the cuttings were too soft to strike. Next day at the conference, we were presented with cuttings of an unknown species kindly collected by the Wrigleys from an area near Red Rock. John finds them as difficult to key out as I do, and would be grateful for our help with identification. This one turned out to be *P. lanigera*.

After the conference, we drove back to the *P. nitidula* past Dorrigo and collected a few more cuttings from a group of plants – then on to Armidale and to Dangars Falls where we collected the *P. vellea* that eluded us at Cranky's Corner. It was so easy to find and was growing with green-flowered *Correa reflexa*, Lomandras, native grasses and *Stylidium graminifolium* along the Salisbury Waters Track very close to the carpark.

Gradually making our way south, we decided to look for *P. cocoparrana* on Mount Bingar in the Cocoparra Ranges near Griffith. Again we were successful. Amongst hundreds of dead plants, we managed to find a very few live ones. The eucalypts and Callitris growing with them were also dying from the effects of severe drought. I told Neville, and he may have checked them recently on his way north. Fortunately, most of the cuttings collected have struck.

We now have one plant of *P. nitidula* (plus some remaining callused cuttings) and several small plants of *P. vellea*, *P. cocoparrana* and of the *P. lanigera* collected by John Wrigley. If they survive the winter there should be plants to share with member of the study group. Roger says the most important detail had been left out; that is we arrived home safely and in one piece!

Pomaderris in the news

Last year, *Pomaderris intermedia* got a mention in The Age (18 August 2003, Melissa Fyfe, Environment Reporter). Although this species is listed in the Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Act, a bulldozer contractor carrying out work for Telstra on Flinders Island managed to destroy over 300 of the plants (after a trench supposed to be 45 cm deep and cut into an existing track became an 850 metre long slash up to 12 metres wide in places!). The *Pomaderris intermedia* population was on The Patriarchs, a range of granite hills on the eastern side of the island, a site previously recommended to become a reserve. There was a photo of Mr. John Whinray, environmentalist and local plant expert, holding a sprig of *P. intermedia* with the sort of reverence usually only exhibited by Study Group members. In his opinion, the *P. intermedia* may not recover, as previous damage by fire or tracks had resulted in loss of plants. *P. intermedia* is not a rare plant on the mainland: it occurs from northern NSW to southern central Victoria, albeit in scattered populations. Close to home, we have it growing on Black Mountain in Canberra and near Tarago, NSW, some 60 km to the north-east.

Pomaderris leaves – so just what size *are* they?

While trying to identify Pomaderris specimens, our group has found that descriptions of the range of leaf sizes are often confusing. For example, in the Flora of New South Wales (ed. G. J. Harden), *Pomaderris lanigera* is described as having leaves 2.5-10.0 cm long and 1.5-3.0 cm wide. Now, this could mean that most of the leaves are 2.5x1.5 cm with a few larger ones – or that most are 10.0x3.0 cm with a scatter of small ones. Usually, of course, most leaves are somewhere between the extremes, but a range as wide as this does make for some difficulties when attempting to key out a species.

Recently, as well as recording the range of sizes, we had been taking 10 leaves that seemed to best represent the size of most of the leaves on a plant and using the average size of these as the standard for that species. During one of our study group meetings, someone wondered if a set of 10 leaves was enough or if we needed more for a reliably accurate figure.

In order to test this, we took 3 separate samples of 10 leaves from each of four species of Pomaderris (*P. eriocephala* (ovate to circular leaves), *P. betulina* ssp. *actensis* (oblong to obovate leaves), *P. lanigera* (lanceolate to ovate leaves) and *P. pallida* (narrow-elliptic to narrow-oblong leaves)).

Results:	Length	Width	Overall Average
<i>P. eriocephala</i>	2.7 2.9 2.7	1.7 1.7 1.7	2.8 x 1.7
<i>P. betulina</i> ssp. <i>actensis</i>	3.4 3.1 3.1	1.6 1.6 1.6	3.2 x 1.6
<i>P. lanigera</i>	6.7 6.9 7.2	2.7 2.3 2.5	6.9 x 2.5
<i>P. pallida</i>	1.6 1.6 1.5	0.5 0.5 0.5	1.6 x 0.5

As can be seen, there was not a lot of difference between the 3 groups of 10 leaves in any of the species sampled, so it seems an accurate estimate of leaf size could be obtained from just 10 leaves.

In the Flora of NSW, the ranges of leaf sizes for these species are:

<i>P. eriocephala</i>	1.0-3.0 x 0.8-2.8 cm
<i>P. betulina</i> ssp. <i>actensis</i>	1.0-5.0 x 0.8-2.0 cm
<i>P. lanigera</i>	2.5-10.0 x 1.5-3.0 cm
<i>P. pallida</i>	0.8-2.0 x 0.3-0.6 cm

Although it is of interest to know the range of leaf sizes, the above method seems to give a more accurate picture of the size of the majority of the leaves - which could prove helpful when trying to identify a plant.

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