ISSN 1320-2413

Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants Inc.

RHAMNACEAE STUDY GROUP

Newsletter Number 14 January 2006

Hello again, members. This is the first time for several years that rain has fallen regularly enough to keep the country here green all summer. All of the Pomaderris that I planted before and during the drought have survived, and, thanks to the welcome moisture, have put on a lot of new growth this season. The rain was also good for the grasshoppers though, and great swarms of them hopped and flew around for several weeks. On the whole, they didn't cause much damage to the native plants, but a few of the Pomaderris, probably because of their softer leaves, got nibbled a bit. The three *Pomaderris queenslandica* plants near the fence got a little grasshopper damage, but much more from the leaf-cutter bees which excised large, round pieces of leaf for their nests.

This year, I'm trying to get more Cryptandras and Spyridiums into the ground. Spyridiums are extremely attractive, with their decorative white floral bracts, but not quite as easy to grow as the tough little Cryptandras. I'd be happy to hear from members about their experiences of growing Cryptandras and Spyridiums (Pomaderris, too) for the next Newsletter.

ABC Gardener of the Year – Bob O'Neill Congratulations Bob!

Bob, who has been a Rhamnaceae Study Group member for some years now, was the winner of the 2005 ABC Gardener of the Year Award. Bob and Dot O'Neill's Katandra Gardens at Wandin North in Victoria is a three hectare, mainly native, garden of great beauty. It does have fertile soil, a northerly aspect and consistent rain – which is a good starting point – but Bob estimates that he puts in about 1000 plants a year and propagates a lot himself, so a great amount of hard work goes into it too. And, beautiful as it is, it isn't just a pretty garden. Katandra Gardens holds the Ornamental Plant Conservation Association's Correa collection and received Land for Wildlife status in 1994 – 85 bird species visit the garden. A lot of humans visit too, evidently – Dot and Bob had 630 visitors during Open Garden Week! There are quite a few Pomaderris in their garden now, and I was delighted to see one pointed out while Bob was showing John Patrick around for the ABC Gardening program. It had finished flowering, unfortunately, although the beautiful silky seed capsules were admired. I sent some photos and seeds to John Patrick, and Pomaderris got another mention when Bob received his golden spade. Well done, Bob.

Rhamnaceae Field Trips

Some of the Study Group members have been quite busy searching out Rhamnaceae over the last six months or so. In spring, I went up to Denman with Natalie and Roger Peate to see the *Pomaderris precaria* and *P. reperta* that Natalie had discovered on a previous trip (see her account in Newsletter Number 12). More local trips to locate some interesting species were undertaken in spring and early summer, and are described below.

Pomaderris Hot Spot **Ros Cornish**

For the October 2005 Rhamnaceae Study Group meeting, we had a field trip to what could be termed a Pomaderris Hot Spot. Most of us had been through the area on a number of occasions with the Wednesday Walkers – a dedicated group of Canberra Region Australian Native Plants Society members who explore the surrounding countryside on Wednesdays, looking at native plants. The previous week the Wednesday Walkers had visited the new Nadgigomar Nature Reserve which is on the Sandy Point Road in the locality of Mayfield. It is about 50km north-east of Canberra and about 30km north of Braidwood. On the trip we noticed some Pomaderris flowering but couldn't spend time looking at them so decided that a special trip by the local members of the Study Group was warranted.

Four of us met at Bungendore and proceeded in one car via Tarago to Cullulla Road, heading towards Sandy Point Road. Our first stop was just after Sturgiss Road where we found *Pomaderris andromedifolia* ssp *confusa* flowering beautifully. Jo pointed out some distinguishing features – reddish new growth, leaves look blunt and the upper leaf surface is shiny. Within 400m we found another species – *P. delicata* which is actually quite rare, being confined to an area between Bungonia and Goulburn – not far from where we were. We had previously found two populations of *P. delicata* on this road but these were two new plants, in a clearing just before a quarry. Alongside was, we think, *Cryptandra amara* var. *floribunda* but with a narrower flower than we're used to. We had found similar plants the previous week in Nadgigomar Nature Reserve.

A few hundred metres on, at the edge of the quarry, we found a few plants of *P. ferruginea* which had finished flowering. In a dip a little further on we found one of the main populations of *P. delicata* which we had found previously. They were flowering well and we were very pleased to see that they had recovered from the drought conditions that we'd experienced for the previous years and were looking much healthier than they were on our last visit in 2004. There were even some new, young plants. Our concern is that all of the plants are on a very narrow roadside and every time the road is graded, plants are damaged and earth and debris pushed onto them. Whenever we visit this population it takes a while to spot them because they are covered in grey dust from the road and their normally dark green leaves are disguised.

Only 200 metres further on there is a much larger population of *P. delicata* just inside a property. The owners have cleared along a fence line to put in a new fence, and, perhaps because of the disturbance, many *P. delicata* plants have appeared and seem

to be flourishing. They are also dust-free and the bright golden-yellow flowers looked lovely against the dark foliage.

P andromedifolia ssp. *andromedifolia* was the next species to be found. Jo pointed out the difference between the earlier ssp. *confusa* – new growth rusty not reddish, upper surface of the leaves matt and a silky lower leaf surface. The leaves are more pointed – elliptic – and "softer".

In another 3km we reached Sandy Point Road and stopped by the roadside for morning tea. We must have looked odd sitting on the roadside – four women of the older variety, sipping from thermoses with heads down looking at vegetation – because one car stopped to see if we needed help. A kind gesture which, luckily, we didn't need. Along this stretch of road we found *Pomaderris elliptica* flowering. There were many of them along the roadside and inside the properties.

Instead of continuing along Sandy Point Road to Nadgigomar Nature Reserve, we turned right on Willow Glen Road to do a loop which would take us back to the Cullulla Road. Again we saw *P. elliptica*, shortly followed by what looked like a low, small-leafed form of *P. andromedifolia* which we felt was different from any we had seen before. Within a short distance, just before a left turn to Coghill Road, we found *P. lanigera* and some more of the low, small-leafed species.

We decided to check Coghill Road and found more *P. lanigera* and the low, small-leafed species as well as *P. andromedifolia* ssp. *andromedifolia* – tall and with a bigger leaf than the low species. By this time we could all see that the two were different. We continued along Willow Glen Road seeing mainly *P. lanigera, P. elliptica* and the low, small-leaf species until suddenly we noticed a new species – *P. ledifolia.* Even those of us who had glazed over with Pomaderris overload could see that this was a new species for the day. It too was flowering. I should say that from about Coghill Road onwards the main roadside species were Pomaderris – all in flower. It was quite breathtaking.

We also recorded *P. andromedifolia* ssp. *confusa* on Willow Glen Road near a magnificent large, flowering *Coopernookia barbata.* We then found what we were calling the "tall" *P. andromedifolia* ssp. *andromedifolia* quite close to the low, small-leafed form and agreed that they were quite different. Another road on the left – Millendale Road – didn't yield any more Pomaderris species but we found more of the *Cryptandra amara* var. *floribunda* that we'd found earlier in the day.

By this time we were ready for lunch and had it on the roadside of Willow Glen Road among *P. lanigera* and *P. andromedifolia* ssp. *andromedifolia.* I think we were all a bit overcome with the displays that we had seen and for all of us, I think it was the biggest Pomaderris count we'd ever had in one day – in order of appearance: *P. andromedifolia* ssp. *confusa, P. delicata, P. ferruginea, P. andromedifolia* ssp. *andromedifolia, P. elliptica, P. andromedifolia* (low, small-leaf form), *P. lanigera, P. ledifolia.* The interesting thing is that the difference between the speedo reading for the first Pomaderris to the last was only 17.2 km. Truly a hot spot.

Pomaderris on the Mulloon Firetrail (Jo Walker)

The Mulloon Firetrail runs through the Tallaganda National Park from Forbes Creek (near Hoskinstown) to Bombay (west of Braidwood). Last year, some of the Study Group members visited the area in early October, when most of the Pomaderris were flowering, and again in November. This northern section of the National Park lies directly between Queanbeyan and Braidwood as the crow flies. It abuts onto Tallaganda State Forest to the south, and there is a long, narrow southern section of the Park south of Captains Flat which eventually joins up with Badja State Forest. The northern section we visited is at the drier end of the Park (without the leeches!) with some areas of tall trees, but also more open forest and rocky outcrops and platforms. There were also extensive patches of shrubs and other understorey plants and areas of heath.

Our October trip was exploratory, after Roger Farrow (one of the ANPS Wednesday Walkers) had told us of large stands of Pomaderris, and this area turned out to be a real find. The first Pomaderris we came across was 2 km into the National Park – a few *Pomaderris aspera* growing beside a small creek. Then, after another 5 km or so, we saw some tall Pomaderris growing under trees on a slope below the road. They looked rather strange, and, on closer inspection, we found they were suffering from a witch's broom disease with clusters of stunted twigs at the ends of some of the stems. The healthy branches were bearing clusters of silky, pinkish buds – unlike most of the local Pomaderris which had then been flowering for some weeks. We later identified this one as *Pomaderris costata* – the first time we'd seen this species. There were several other very small populations of just a few plants along the rest of the trail.

A little further on, about half a kilometre short of the Gourock Firetrail, we found some *P. andromedifolia* ssp. *andromedifolia*, one of the more common species in our area. Then, on the lower slopes of Mount Palerang, a spectacular sight – whole hillsides of *Pomaderris* sp. 'Bungonia", crowding out just about everything else.

Just after passing the Bombay Firetrail, we found a patch of *P. phylicifolia* ssp. *phylicifolia* and then some *P. ledifolia*. We thought, by then, that we'd had a pretty good Pomaderris day, but we hadn't quite finished. Turning towards Bombay and then Braidwood when we left the Park, we spotted a few small-leaved Pomaderris on the roadside that turned out to be *P. pauciflora*. Then we stopped at the Bombay Reserve on the Shoalhaven River for some afternoon tea – wandering around, we found some *P. betulina* ssp. *betulina* and *P. andromedifolia* ssp. *confusa*. Altogether, that was nine species of Pomaderris we came across in a trip of about 20 km, some of them in sizeable populations – a very successful day.

In November, we made a return trip to see the *P. costata* in flower. In the NSW Flora, it is described as having white flowers, but 'our' *P. costata* plants were different – they were in full bloom and had distinctly yellow flowers. Because they were the only Pomaderris in flower on this visit, they were more noticeable and we found another small, but much healthier, population.

Pomaderris on the Tugalong Road (Jo Walker)

Tugalong Road is in the Canyonleigh area, just into the Southern Highlands. It is reached via the Hume Highway some 12 km north of Marulan – turning left onto Inverary Road, right at the T-junction and finally left onto Tugalong Road, from which the Bangadilly National Park can be accessed. Cathy Hook first found this area and collected some Pomaderris samples. Later, when we were on our way to the National Park one day, we realized there were quite a lot of Pomaderris along the roadside, and have been back several times since to check the area.

About 5 km along Tugalong Road, Pomaderris plants begin to appear on the roadside and in adjoining properties. The first species we came across is a bit of a mystery. It is similar to *Pomaderris eriocephala* in that it has roundish leaves with the veins ending in tufts along the edges of the leaves and compact heads of cream flowers. But the leaves are larger and much darker green than those of *P. eriocephala* and theveins far less indented – and at least some of the flowers have petals, unlike *P. eriocephala*. We found several extensive populations of this one, so this is something to follow up.

A further quarter kilometre down the road there was a stand of *P. elliptica*, and then, almost 5 km on, a small population, with plants both sides of the road, of what seems to be *P. ferruginea*. Although this one seems to key out to *P. ferruginea*, it is very different to the plants of the same species on Cullulla Road and several others I've seen. Natalie says, though, that it's similar to some she's seen in Victoria. It differs from the Cullulla Road plants in having narrower and more pointed leaves and more pyramidal flower heads as well as being a more slender and upright shrub.

The main reason for several return trips was a further 9 km on – a large and robust population of *P. cotoneaster*. The first time we saw these was on the visit to the National Park. On the way back, we stopped to investigate, as I was sure it was a Pomaderris we hadn't seen before. That visit was made memorable by the presence nearby of a rotting wombat corpse – to the extent that this rather lovely plant is still referred to by some (not Study Group members, of course!) as "the dead wombat Pomaderris". Anyway, we have been back to see it flowering, and, with or without flowers, it is a superb shrub (see **Feature Plant** below). Unfortunately, on our second visit, we found a lot of the plants had been uprooted or damaged by a bulldozer driven off the road and into the roadside vegetation – for no apparent reason as far as we could see. Keith McDougall of the Endangered Species Unit (NSW Dept. of Environment and Conservation) is interested in *P. cotoneaster* (it is listed as an endangered plant) – we went out with him to see this group of plants, so, hopefully, they will be safe from further motorised depredations.

Feature Plant - *Pomaderris cotoneaster*

P. cotoneaster is listed as an endangered plant in NSW and nationally. It is a tall, rather upright shrub, and can grow to over 3 metres. The stems curve outwards towards the top of the plant, and the leaves are held in a somewhat horizontal position, which gives it a very attractive appearance. The whole plant does indeed have a distinct similarity to a Cotoneaster bush.

The leaves are elliptical to roundish, about 30 mm long and 15-20 mm wide and are rounded or notched at the tips. The upper surface of the leaves are covered in fine hairs and the mid-vein and secondary veins are deeply indented; the lower surface is densely covered in whitish, short stellate hairs. Flowers are pale yellow and have no petals.

This species occurs in widely scattered populations – at Nungatta (east of the Cann River Highway and just north of the Victorian border), near Tumut, Tantawangalo area, near Tallong, Yerranderie area, Canyonleigh and Ettrema Gorge (off the Nerriga Road). It usually grows in forested areas and often in steep country. Although the population we found at Canyonleigh was growing on a flat bit of country by the roadside, there are deep valleys and gorges in the country on either side of the road which in all likelihood harbour other populations of *Pomaderris cotoneaster* .

Endangered and Vulnerable Pomaderris in NSW

Cathy Hook has looked up Pomaderris species currently listed as threatened species (under legislation) in NSW on the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation website.

The species below are listed as endangered:

P. adnata
P. cotoneaster
P. delicata
P. elachophylla
P. queenslandica
P. reperta
P. sericea

Vulnerable species are:

P. brunnea
P. gilmourii var cana
P. notata
P. pallida
P. parrisiae

For those with Internet access, this is an interesting website to visit, as it has detailed descriptions and lots of information about these species.

Membership List

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