

Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants Inc.

# RHAMNACEAE STUDY GROUP

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 2

MARCH 1994

Hello again to all of you. Since the last Newsletter, we have gained several new members and some of you have written with news of plants you are growing.

## New Members:

Dick Burns, Plant Release Liaison Officer with SGAP in Hobart and Secretary/Treasurer of the Epacris Study Group  
 Jill Roberts, President of the North-west District Group of SGAP in Tasmania  
 Marilyn Gray, Horticulturist at Karwarra Australian Plant Garden at Kalorama in the Dandenong Ranges east of Melbourne. Marilyn has suggested that Karwarra Gardens be the site of the living collection of Rhamnaceae which we hope to develop. This seems a good idea - it means our plants will be easily accessible to members and the public.

## News from Members:

Several members answered my request for information about Rhamnaceae in cultivation. I was impressed by the number of species already being grown!

Dick Burns lives in Penguin, Tasmania. His garden consists of gritty grey soil on chert or old clay (not claggy) from ancient basalt. Aspect is a moderate slope to the west. Climate is mild with few frosts, regular rain in winter and generally dry summers. Average rainfall is 600-700 mm yearly. Most of the garden is unwatered, although some of it gets 10-15 minutes of automatic watering. Most of the garden is mulched. Following is a list of plants tried.

Key: C=Cutting, P=Plant from wild, N=plant bought or received  
 F=Flowered W=Watered

## Tasmanian species:

*Cryptandra alpina* (PW): tried twice, died

*C. exilis* (NW): died quickly

*Pomaderris apetala* (PFW): 6 x 2 metres; just grew from manfern log; drops seed which germinate

*P. elachophylla* (C): didn't strike

*P. elliptica* (NF): local form; good strong grower; flower colour better in coastal forms

*P. intermedia* (P): seedlings collected September '92, dead after 9 months

*P. oraria* (PFW): 2 x 1.5 metres; no luck with cuttings but plant collected from sand dunes has done well

*P. phyllicifolia* (P): 1 x 0.2 metres; east coast form; grows well

- Spyridium gunnii** (CFW): 3 x 0.5 metres; took nearly 10 years to flower, but others grown locally have flowered earlier, vigorous grower
- S. microphyllum** (CFW): 10 x 60 cm; vigorous, fast grower
- S. obcordatum** (NF): 15 cm x 1 metre; plant too shaded  
(PFW): 10 x 50 cm; growing well, weak stems but healthy
- S. obovatum** var. **obovatum** (P): 0.6 x 0.4 metres; vigorous healthy plant
- S. obovatum** var. **velutina** (C): 10 cm, not a healthy plant
- S. parvifolium** var. **molle** (P): 10 cm; collected in north-east September '92
- S. parvifolium** var. **parvifolium** (PFW): 0.5 x 0.5 metres; good growth, but badly affected by borer one year
- S. vexilliferum** (NF): 0.8 x 0.2 metres; fine-leaf east coast form
- S. vexilliferum** (PFW): broad-leaf coastal form; 10 x 20 cm; two seedlings collected - one in red soil, shade and summer water; the other in full sun, dry gravel; both healthy
- S ulicinum** (CF): 1.5 x 0.4 metres; fast grower
- Stenanthemum pimeleoides** (C): tried several times; successful in pots, but dies when planted out

Species from other states:

- Spyridium cinereum** (NF): 10 x 80 cm; healthy, slow-growing; dense growth in semi shade
- S. parvifolium** 'Austraflora Nimbus' (NFW): 5 x 50 cm; mostly full sun

Pests:

A borer causes damage to **Spyridium gunnii**, **S. parvifolium** var. **parvifolium** and **S. ulicinum**. It also attacks **Allocasuarina** and **Myrtaceae**.

Dick strongly recommends the following species:

- Pomaderris elliptica**: the yellow-flowered form contrasts beautifully with the rich glossy green leaves
- P. intermedia**: large, interesting, greyish, non-glossy leaves
- Spyridium gunnii**: looks like a cotoneaster until it flowers, when it is one of the most striking bushes in the garden
- S. microphyllum**: the small-leaf form looks terrific in a rockery
- S. obovatum**: so many interesting forms; leaf colour and size varies; flowers from cream to yellow
- S. ulicinum**: brilliant species, interesting foliage and stem colours, and tiny masses of white, star-like flowers

Kerry Rathie (Greenbank, Queensland) grows his **Rhamnaceae** in raised sandy beds. He has **Spyridium cinereum** (which has flowered), an unidentified NSW **Pomaderris** (a year old and 2 metres high), and two local **Cryptandra** species. One of these, **Cryptandra longistaminea**, is 0.5 metres tall and doing well. Kerry considers it a particularly good small garden plant and useful as a cut flower.

Marilyn Gray is growing Rhamnaceae at her garden in Montrose and at Karwarra Australian Plant Garden. Although both are in the Dandenong Ranges, Karwarra has deep, red volcanic soil while that at Montrose is shallow grey clay over yellow clay.

Species at Montrose:

<b>Stenanthemum scortechinii</b>	<b>Pomaderris elachophylla</b>
<b>Cryptandra amara</b> (upright form)	<b>P. racemosa</b>
<b>C. tomentosa</b>	<b>P. ferruginea</b>
<b>Spyridium parvifolium</b>	<b>P. aspera</b>
<b>S. parvifolium</b> 'Austraflora Nimbus'	<b>P. lanigera</b>
<b>S. cinereum</b>	<b>P. humilis</b>
<b>S. eriocephalum</b>	<b>P. obcordata</b>

Species at Karwarra:

<b>Cryptandra amara</b> (upright form)	<b>Stenanthemum scortechinii</b>
<b>C. tomentosa</b>	<b>S. pimeleoides</b>
<b>C. alpina</b>	<b>Pomaderris aspera</b>
<b>Spyridium cinereum</b>	<b>P. ferruginea</b>
<b>S. parvifolium</b> (Kalorama)	<b>P. racemosa</b>
<b>S. parvifolium</b> 'Austraflora Nimbus'	<b>P. prunifolia</b>
<b>S. vexilliferum</b>	<b>P. humilis</b>
<b>s. eriocephalum</b>	<b>P. phyllicifolia</b>
<b>S. obovatum</b> ssp. <b>velutinum</b>	<b>P. lanigera</b>
<b>S. gunnii</b>	<b>P. elliptica</b>
<b>S. obcordatum</b>	<b>P. obcordata</b>
<b>S. microphyllum</b>	

Rachel Makinson (Mount Victoria, NSW) has **Pomaderris andromedifolia** growing naturally in her garden. The garden has a rock shelf a few inches from the surface at the front which makes it a pretty arid site in dry weather and very wet after rain. Rachel is growing **Stenanthemum scortechinii** there (it's a nursery plant) and after three years it is still doing well. She has pruned the plant to improve its appearance, and it is now a neat bush with lots of flowers. **Cryptandra amara** is not faring as well. It went into a well-drained spot eighteen months ago, but after a dry winter and little watering it has deteriorated. Rachel has made an interesting observation: her **Pomaderris andromedifolia** and a population of the same species at Blackheath usually have biscuity-coloured flowers, but last year they opened a bright golden yellow. Has anyone else noticed a colour change in the flowers of an individual plant?

Now to my own efforts with Rhamnaceae. My piece of land is a long, narrow block, basically a creek valley running east-west with a high ridge on the northern side of the creek and a gentler slope on the southern side. The soil is shallow (in some places non-existent) clay loam over shale and sandstone. Along the creek, the soil is a thin layer of loam over deep clay, moist most of the year. **Pomaderris angustifolia** grows naturally here, and I've put in **P. aspera** and **P. prunifolia** close to the creek in the shade of some **Acacia dealbata**. Although we had a very dry summer and these plants were only watered once when they were actually beginning to droop, they are growing well. The **P. prunifolia** flowered and set seed, although it is only

about 30 cm tall. Two other *Pomaderris*, *P. humilis* and *P. oraria*, were planted in my driveway in heavy clay loam in slightly raised beds. They grew well during spring and flowered, later setting seed. They didn't like the hot sun and dry conditions in summer but got through with minimal watering. *Cryptandra amara* var. *longiflora* grows naturally here - I have three plants growing on rocky sites with little surface soil. These came back from gnarled woody stumps about three years after sheep were taken off this country - an indication that *Cryptandra* will probably take a lot of pruning! This is a low-growing, quite dense form which makes a good rockery plant. I grew several from cuttings and have one growing in heavy clay loam behind a retaining wall. This is a harsh site, baking hot in summer and cold and wet in winter, but this little plant flourishes there. So too does another *Cryptandra* from northern NSW (not yet identified). This one was found growing by a roadside in similar conditions to this piece of garden. Two plants grown from cuttings are now well-established and growing well. A twiggy, open small plant, it has bright brown buds followed by slightly scented white flowers. *C. arbutiflora*, a WA species, does less well, but it is holding on, growing a centimetre or two this year and flowering in winter. I am going to try this species again as a pot plant. I have a *Spyridium cinereum* thriving in a pot under my carport. Since I brought it home from a nursery and left it in this shady spot it has grown rapidly. Its new leaves are several times larger than its original ones, presumably in response to the reduced light. I have several other species in small pots, but will report on these when they have been planted out. One thing worth mentioning: I was given a small plant of *Pomaderris lanigera* last winter, and, as it gets quite frosty here, I kept it inside on my windowsill. Towards the end of winter it flowered for several weeks. Perhaps some of the Rhamnaceae may be suitable as indoor plants!

#### Propagation:

Just as I was collecting seed from all of my *Pomaderris*, Judy Barker of the Australian Daisy Study Group wrote to me about germinating *Pomaderris* seed. Geoff Clark, a nurseryman friend of hers, pours boiling water over the seed and leaves them soaking overnight before planting. I tried this with some *P. lanigera* seed (from the above-mentioned plant) and now have six tiny seedlings from ten or so seed. I have treated seed of *P. oraria*, *P. humilis* and *P. prunifolia* the same way and hope for similar results. Seed of *Cryptandra propinqua* planted last autumn with no treatment still have not germinated, although the seed still looks healthy.

I mentioned in the first Newsletter that I'd not had a lot of success with Rhamnaceae cuttings - but I've been persevering and have got a few more species through. *Pomaderris* cuttings seem to be the most difficult. Previously, I've usually taken soft or firm tip cuttings; these would look fine for a week or so and then would begin to brown off and die. Recently, I've been trying firm side-shoots and these seem to survive much better

although only a few have produced roots so far. Species grown from cuttings to date are:

<i>Pomaderris aspera</i> (1)	<i>Cryptandra amara</i> var. <i>longiflora</i> (8)
<i>P. phyllicifolia</i> (7)	<i>C. amara</i> var. <i>floribunda</i> (10)
<i>P. angustifolia</i> (2)	<i>C. sp.</i> northern NSW (2)
<i>P. betulina</i> (1)	<i>C. leucophracta</i> (8)
<i>P. pallida</i> (1)	<i>Stenanthemum scortechinii</i> (many)
<i>P. sp. nov</i> Tumut (4)	<i>Spyridium eriocephalum</i> (7)
<i>P. obcordata</i> (1)	<i>S. parvifolium</i> (1)
<i>P. eriocephala</i> (4)	

I use IBA 2000 hormone and cuttings are placed in a mix of 1:1 sand:perlite. No bottom heat is used; cuttings stand in a polystyrene box in shade against the house and are watered daily. Dick Burns has tried Rootex on Rhamnaceae with no success and has had only minimal results using the Australian National Botanic Gardens 'Persoonia' hormone mix..

Jeanette Closs very kindly sent me some plant material from Tasmania: *Pomaderris obcordata* and *Spyridium parvifolium* have produced a rooted specimen each and the remaining cuttings look green and healthy - but the other species were softer material and quickly died.

#### Field trips:

A group of us went out to the Tinderry Ranges, south-east of Canberra, to look for *Pomaderris phyllicifolia*. I had found a single plant of this species on a SGAP expedition last year, just before we had to retrace our steps for home, and wanted to see if there were more plants there. There was actually a population of about 50 plants just down the track. This is a swampy area and the *Pomaderris* plants were growing in very moist soil with *Kunzea parvifolia* at the edge of the swamp. These appear to be *Pomaderris phyllicifolia* var. *phyllicifolia*.

We had another look at the population of what we thought was *P. phyllicifolia* along the Molonglo Gorge near Queanbeyan and took some cuttings and a specimen for the herbarium. These plants seem to be closer to *P. angustifolia*, but definitely have only simple hairs on the upper surface of the leaves, not stellate ones.

#### Distribution of Rhamnaceae:

I would like to compile a record of as many populations of Rhamnaceae species as possible - with some reference point so that they can be easily located by members or other interested people. For example:

QUEANBEYAN: leave by Yass Road/Pialligo Avenue; turn right onto Sutton Road; 7.5 km on right- *Pomaderris angustifolia* growing along steep embankment.

If you have any precise information on locations such as this, please let me know.

John Knight has sent me a list of Rhamnaceae growing on the South Coast. If any of you are down that way, keep a look out for the following:

<b>Alphitonia excelsa</b>	<b>Pomaderris ferruginea</b>
<b>Cryptandra amara var. amara</b>	<b>P. lanigera</b>
<b>C. ericoides</b>	<b>P. ligustrina</b>
<b>C. propinqua</b>	<b>P. elliptica</b>
<b>Stenanthemum scortechinii</b>	<b>P. prunifolia</b>
<b>Pomaderris species C</b>	<b>P. gilmourii var. gilmourii</b>
<b>P. virgata</b>	<b>P. gilmourii var. cana</b>
<b>P. brogoensis</b>	<b>P. ledifolia</b>
<b>P. costata</b>	<b>P. intermedia</b>
<b>P. eriocephala</b>	<b>P. parrisiae</b>
<b>P. andromedifolia</b>	<b>P. phyllicifolia var. ericoides</b>
<b>P. aspera</b>	<b>Spyridium cinereum</b>
<b>P. cinerea</b>	<b>S. parvifolium</b>

**On a less happy note:**

John Knight, Leader of the Boronia Study Group and one of our Rhamnaceae members, recently took up residence at the Eurobodalla Native Botanic Gardens as the first Curator. He was organizing the Gardens into what was to be a showplace of local native plants when the NSW bushfires struck in January. John and his family lost their home and all their possessions and the Garden was destroyed. I'm sure you join with me in extending sympathy to John and his family. If you would like to do something more practical, two trust funds have been set up - one for the Gardens and one for John and his family:

Cheques payable to "Eurobodalla Native Botanical Gardens" will be used to help rebuild the Gardens, and can be mailed to Box 1068, Batemans Bay, NSW 2536.

Cheques payable to "J. Knight and Family" sent to the General Manager, Eurobodalla Council, PO Box 99, Moruya NSW 2537 will go to a trust fund established by the Council to help John and his family.

**Something for members to do:** Please keep me informed about any new plants you're growing, successes (and failures!) with propagation, locations of populations of local species - and anything else pertaining to the Rhamnaceae that might be of interest.

That seems to be all for now, so good luck with your growing until next time.

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