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Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants Inc.

RHAMNACEAE STUDY GROUP

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Hello members. A very dry and hot summer here has kept me busy supplying water to the plants, but the Pomaderris, Cryptandras and Spyridiums have stood up well to the somewhat harsh conditions. Thankfully, we have had good rain this week, and, as I write this, rain is coming down steadily and looks set in for the night.

Natalie Peate visited earlier in the year and came to one of our Friday meetings - brought a pile of herbarium specimens of Pomaderris and joined the Study Group. Natalie also gave me a packet of *Pomaderris ferruginea* seed collected from her garden. Judy Baker of the Daisy Study Group also sent me some seed of the same species from Airey's Inlet, Vic. and a photo of the beautiful plant it came from - a really floriferous, compact plant. This is one species I don't have growing yet, so look forward to getting some in the ground.

My *Cryptandra scortechinii* produced a lot of seed this year, the first time this has happened. I've collected some and will try it out.

• Members' Reports:

Merren Sloane has given us a report on the Rhamnaceae she is growing in her Greenleigh (Queanbeyan) garden:

Pomaderris aurea (previously called *P. humilis*) - still doing well - about 1.2 m across but under 50 cm high . It may be a low-growing form.

P. phyllicifolia - small narrow leaves, silvery buds most of year - quite big now, 2m across, but only 60 cm high (seems to prefer

to grow sideways.

P. obcordata - died.

Pomaderris sp. - a seedling from the NSW coast - I originally thought it was *P. elliptica* but it seems more likely to be *P. ferruginea*. It is 1.3m high and 80 cm wide with cream flower panicles. The leaves often droop in summer, as it needs more water than we get.

I also have *P. aspera* which is recovering well after having all its leaves eaten by the rabbits (or the wallabies), *P. elliptica* still in a pot and *P. prunifolia* (grown by Jo from seed) only planted in the garden for a few months.

Spyridium parvifolium - 1.5m high and 2m wide. The mid-green leaves and white floral bracts create a lovely effect in the shrubbery.

S. parvifolium (prostrate form) - 80cm in diameter. Dark green leaves and very conspicuous white floral bracts, Bought as *S. cinereum*.

S. eriocephalum - fine leaves, 50cm high and 50cm wide. Doing very well on rocky bank in full sun. Nearly always has flowers.

S. vexilliferum - small narrow leaves, bought in Victoria. Half of the shrub died in our very hot summer (97/98) but the rest struggles on.

S. phyllicoides and *S. halmaturinum* var. *scabridum* still in pots but outside and seem to be surviving our conditions. I'll try them in the ground in spring.

Cryptandra buxifolia - I've had this in a pot for a few years. It is about 50cm high and 50cm wide, rather rangy, some flowers most of the time. Will plant out this spring.

C. spinescens - in the ground but still tiny, covered in buds.

Discaria pubescens - haven't planted this out yet, but it should do well as it occurs locally.

● Report on the Canberra Region Rhamnaceae Group by Ros Cornish:

There are eight members of the Rhamnaceae Study Group who live in Canberra or close by in NSW. We try to get together every few months, at Jo Walker's place to look at plants from the Rhamnaceae family. Jo is well set up for such meetings as she has a number of Rhamnaceae species native to or planted on her property and a variety of species in pots in her nursery. As well, she has the appropriate reference books, a binocular microscope, and some pressed samples of named specimens. Invariably, we will look at some unidentified samples and try to key them out.

I am one of the newer members of the group, and at the first few meetings I would pose many questions which tended to side-track us - such as what makes a Rhamnaceae species a Rhamnaceae species? However, as we looked at various plants and worked our way through the key in *Flora of NSW* to try and identify them, I became familiar

with some of the key features.

At our most recent meeting, we focussed on the narrow-leaved **Pomaderris** species found in our local area - **Pomaderris phyllicifolia**, **P. angustifolia**, **P. pallida** and **P. helianthemifolia** - which Jo had available in pots. Using the **Flora of NSW** key, we quickly assigned them to 'Group 2' - that is, they have entire leaves (rather than toothed) with hairy upper surfaces (as opposed to glabrous).

Progressing through the key of Group 2, all four met the first criterion - "leaves more or less narrow-oblong to linear, lamina usually <6mm wide and mostly <20mm long; flowers in short axillary cymes forming narrow terminal leafy panicles". From there we were able to distinguish **P. phyllicifolia** from the other three because it had leaves "<1.5mm wide, more or less terete, margins strongly revolute, lower surface of lamina not visible". **P. angustifolia**, **P. pallida** and **P. helianthemifolia** met the alternative criterion - "leaves >1.5mm wide, more or less flat, margins recurved but at least part of lower surface of lamina visible".

The next criterion split **P. pallida** from the other two - "secondary veins not apparent on either surface, lamina usually <3mm wide; capsule glabrous or hairy". We didn't have capsules to look at, but it was fairly clear that **P. pallida** had secondary veins visible on both surfaces of the leaf and the lamina was >3mm wide. The next criterion clinched **P. pallida** - "upper surface of leaves velvety with a covering of minute stellate hairs".

We had to cheat slightly to distinguish between **P. angustifolia** and **P. helianthemifolia**. The next alternative criteria in the key required looking at the capsule and ovary which weren't available. If the capsule and ovary were hairy the key would have put us at **P. phyllicifolia** again and we knew that was not correct so, we assumed that the capsule and ovary were glabrous. The next alternatives enabled us to distinguish between **P. angustifolia** and **P. helianthemifolia**. **P. angustifolia** has bristly upper surfaces of the leaves with scattered stellate hairs and the leaves are more or less narrow-oblong with margins recurved, whereas **P. helianthemifolia** has bristly upper surfaces of the leaves with scattered simple hairs and the leaves are narrow-elliptical to oblanceolate and more or less flat.

We congratulated ourselves and read through the full descriptions of each species. With **P. phyllicifolia** we found there are actually two varieties - var. **phyllicifolia** and var. **ericoides**. This was why **P. phyllicifolia** appeared twice in the key. We confirmed that the sample we had was var. **ericoides**, that is the leaves were <1.5mm wide (rather than >1.5mm wide), more or less terete, secondary veins not visible (rather than sometimes visible) and with margins strongly revolute so that the lower surface of the lamina was hardly visible (rather than the leaf being more or less flat, margins recurved but the lower surface of the lamina visible). Both varieties occur in the Southern Tablelands, but var. **phyllicifolia** is rare and is usually on the coast and escarpment ranges from Sydney to Braidwood - a bit east of us.

A number of our group also belong to the Wednesday Walkers - SGAP members who meet each Wednesday to bushwalk in the local area - but concentrate on plants rather than covering vast distances. In our

wanderings, we have discovered a large patch of *Pomaderris pallida* (quite rare) on Tuggeranong Hill (ACT). The only place we have seen *P. helianthemifolia* is in Molonglo Gorge, a popular picnic spot on the Molonglo River, slightly north-east of Queanbeyan (NSW). It occurs there with *P. angustifolia*, *P. andromedifolia* ssp. *confusa* and *P. eriocephala*. *P. angustifolia* is quite common, particularly on our walks near the Murrumbidgee River and Queanbeyan River and is also on Tuggeranong Hill. We have seen *P. phyllicifolia* var. *ericoides* in the Queanbeyan Nature Park (NSW), at Corin Dam (ACT) and at various places in Namadgi National Park (ACT).

● **Feature Plant: *Pomaderris lanigera***

This species is found from near Carnarvon in Queensland, through the eastern section of NSW into Victoria. It grows on acidic, often rocky soils in open forests or heaths and sometimes along roadsides at the edge of forests or in the open. I have seen it growing at Beehive Falls Road (off Cann River Road), along the Tamboon Inlet Road (south of Cann River), Merriwa (Central Western Slopes of NSW) and at Wingello (between Marulan and Bundanoon, NSW).

P. lanigera is a shrub usually 2-3 metres in height - although the Flora of NSW states that it can grow into a small tree of 5 metres. Because it bears its bright yellow flowers in large corymbose panicles on the tips of sometimes quite long stems, it is an extremely attractive plant when in flower. The rusty tan new growth contrasts sharply with the soft green leaves later in the year to further extend its interest as a garden plant. It can get a bit leggy, but responds well to pruning which should be done after flowering. It tolerates moderate frosts and dryness and will grow in the open - but probably does even better with a little dappled shade.

Identifying characteristics:

Stems: New growth has a dense covering of short, rusty, curly hairs. Older stems have a similar covering, but it is shorter, paler and more matted.

Leaves: Stipules ovate to about 5mm, deciduous (only found on new growth). Petiole to ± 1 cm. Leaves mostly 6-9cm x 2.5cm, mid-green, flat, lanceolate to elliptic.

Upper surface pubescent with a dense covering of very short simple hairs (feels soft to the touch). Mid and secondary veins visible. Held against the light, a very thin rusty line is visible around the edge of the leaf.

Lower surface: has a tomentum of short white stellate hairs almost covered by longer curly pale tan hairs. Longer hairs are visible along mid and secondary veins. There are mostly 11-12 pairs secondary veins.

Young leaves (at stem tips, still folded) are thickly covered in tan hairs and appear golden tan and slightly silky.

Buds: Bracts around buds are rusty brown, more or less smooth at either side of a keel of forwardly appressed pale hairs. The edge of the bracts are fringed with rusty to yellowish silky hairs.

Flowers: Bright lemon to golden yellow in terminal rounded panicles to 12cm across. Petals present.

● **Field Trip to South Australia:**

In August last year, I travelled with two other SGAPPers to the Eyre Peninsula to see what it offered in the way of Rhamnaceae species. We travelled down the east coast on the Lincoln Highway to Tumby Bay, west to Cummins, then south to Port Lincoln. There we stayed for two days to visit the Port Lincoln and Coffin Bay National Parks before heading north along the road which runs up the centre of the Peninsula.

Tumby Bay was where the interesting part of the trip started. We headed off along the road to Cummins to look for **Spyridium bifidum** which was recorded as growing in the area. We failed to find it, which was unfortunate, but I have seen this little plant growing along a roadside at the edge of the Little Desert in Victoria. However, we did find a roadside population of **Pomaderris obcordata** near Cummins, and there were several good stands of this species between Cummins and Port Lincoln. Some had just finished flowering, but others were still covered with profuse white flower heads.

In Port Lincoln National Park, we climbed Stamford Hill and found **Pomaderris flabellaris** growing along the track - attractive bluish green small leaves with rusty new growth and buds. It was just beginning to flower.

At Kellidie Bay Conservation Park, we walked down the slope and across the flat area towards the coast. There were patches of **Pomaderris paniculosa** and a large group of **P. obcordata** which had just finished flowering and was displaying heads of dark reddish seed capsules.

In Coffin Bay National Park, we were slightly distracted by the hillsides glowing with fiery **Templetonia retusa** flowers. But we found some **Pomaderris paniculosa** and **obcordata** again and a small hillside of **Spyridium phyllicoides**, a very compact and low-growing form.

Returning north along the road bordering the Muranatta Conservation Park, we began to find more **Spyridium** species - our main reason for taking this trip. **Spyridium nitidum** caught our eyes first, the beautiful pale shining leaves standing out against the other vegetation along the roadside. Nearby, we found **Cryptandra leucophracta** and **C. amara**.

Near Wanilla, we saw our first **Spyridium leucopogon**, the bracts and flowers giving the whole shrub a white appearance. Closer to Wanilla Conservation Park, we stopped at a large population of **S. leucopogon** growing on the roadside with **S. nitidum**. Both of these species are extremely attractive and would be a bonus in the garden. At the Conservation Park, there was an extensive population of **Spyridium vexilliferum** along the road and down a hillside.

At this point, we reluctantly began to head for home with just one

more Rhamnaceae stop. This was between Kamarah and Moombooldool near Ardlethan (NSW) where there is a good stretch of bush between the road and the railway. We found a large bushy form of **Cryptandra amara** (this is what it seems to key out to, but it is unlike any of the other **C. amara** we've come across). The shrub was about 60 cm tall and nearly a metre across and covered with strongly scented cream flowers. We found this form once before on the Newell Highway, but when we returned, the road had been widened and it was no more. This time, I took some cuttings - and have just potted up a dozen or so. Altogether an interesting and successful trip.

● **Finances:**

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Copying, postage		42.80	
Seed, paper, envelopes		35.55	
FID		0.07	
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