

## RHAMNACEAE STUDY GROUP

*Newsletter* Number 8

December 2000

Hello members. It's beginning to hot up here, as I write, and is becoming very dry. So far, over the years I've been growing Rhamnaceae, I've lost very few to drought, but this year looks like being the real test. Since I last wrote, we have had three more members join (or re-join) the Study Group:

Bob O'Neill has a large acreage garden at Wandin North in Victoria (recently included in the Open Garden scheme) where he grows everything from arid region vegetation to rainforest plants.

John Emms, from Loch in Victoria, has a keen interest in Kangaroo Island flora, especially the *Spyridiums* endemic to that area.

Hazel O'Connor, from north of Port Lincoln on the lovely Eyre Peninsula in S.A., has re-joined the Study Group. She has a particular interest in South Australian *Spyridiums*, a genus of beautiful plants seemingly neglected by most growers of Australian plants.

### Members' Reports:

**Bob O'Neill** has germinated six species of *Pomaderris* seed I sent him and has potted up about a dozen each of *P. intermedia* and *P. ferruginea*.

**John Emms** writes that he is growing the following mainly young plants:

<i>Pomaderris paniculosa</i> ssp. <i>paralia</i>	<i>Spyridium microphyllum</i>
<i>P. elliptica</i>	<i>S. parvifolium</i> (prostrate)
<i>Cryptandra</i> ( <i>Stenanthemum</i> ) <i>scortechinii</i>	<i>S. cinereum</i>
	<i>S. obcordatum</i>

These are all grown in containers except for *P. paniculosa* (which, John says, was given to him as a *Correa* cutting – what a surprise!).

**Hazel O'Connor** wrote to say that she thought the *Spyridium leucopogon* I mentioned having found near Wanilla was in fact a form of *S. bifidum* named by Dr. Bill Barker of the S.A. State Herbarium as *S. bifidum* var. *wanilla* (entire form). It doesn't have leaves notched at the tip like *S. bifidum* var. *bifidum*. Both of these forms have larger leaves than *S. leucopogon*. To complicate matters even further, there appears to be a hybrid that occurs fairly commonly with *S. bifidum* var. *wanilla* and *S. vexilliferum* on the Wanilla Conservation Park Road. Hazel kindly sent me samples of all of the above as well as some pieces of *S. nitidum*, *S. phyllicoides* and *S. spathulatum*. I kept a tiny piece of each as herbarium specimens and used the rest to

make cuttings. The *S. leucopogon* died, but all the rest look reasonably healthy and I potted up five rooted cuttings of *S. bifidum* var. *wanilla* the other day.

### **Feature Plant: *Cryptandra amara***

This species is usually a small twiggy sub-shrub with dark green leaves about 4-5 mm long and 2 mm wide. It bears dense clusters of small white bell-shaped flowers in late winter or early spring. Because there are often epacrids flowering at the same time and in the same vicinity, they are sometimes confused with these plants. But, if you examine the tiny flowers, you will find that *Cryptandras* have small dark stamens just inside the corolla tube protected by hood-like little petals. Epacrids do not have these petals. There are three varieties of this species:

*C. amara* var. *amara* and *C. amara* var. *floribunda* have shorter (2-4 mm) and more globular flowers than *C. amara* var. *longiflora* which has tubular flowers 4-6 mm long. Although the flowers of the first two varieties are similar, the hypanthium of *C. amara* var. *floribunda* is constricted in the lower half giving it a waisted appearance.

All three varieties are found in NSW, Qld and Vic, with *C. amara* var. *amara* also occurring in Tas and SA and *C. amara* var. *longiflora* in Tas.

These are tough little plants often found growing along roadsides and on dry rocky slopes. They respond well to garden conditions and are very useful small plants as they flower in late winter to early spring when not much else is out. Even before that, the small white buds are evident during the winter months. They respond well to pruning and usually flower profusely.

They are relatively easy to grow from cuttings, even quite woody ones (which is often the only material available when collecting in the field). They would probably grow well from seed (*C. propinqua* seed germinates very well), but *C. amara* seed is difficult to collect. I've tried picking the capsules a day or two before I judge they should be opening, but the capsules fail to open once off the plant. If they open on the plant, the seed seems to disappear before I can get to it.

Last year, near Moomboodool, NSW, we found a large bushy form of *C. amara* growing by the roadside. It seems to key out to var. *floribunda* but is very different to our local one. This one was about 60 cm tall and nearly a metre wide and very floriferous. The flowers had a not unpleasant scent – a sort of dusty sweet perfume. We had seen this form once before near Narranderra a few years ago. There were two large plants on the road verge, but the road was later widened and they are no more. Anyway, I took some cuttings of the Moomboodool plants, which have rooted and been potted up and are growing very quickly into bushy little plants. I look forward to growing and distributing this one – it really is an eye-catching plant.

### **An Interesting Find – *Discaria nitida***

During a SGAP walk a few weeks ago, we discovered several plants of *Discaria nitida*, a rare plant with a 3VC rating. This means it is a species occurring over a 100

sq km area, but in scattered or small populations and often restricted to specific habitats; not presently endangered but vulnerable to disturbance; and known to occur in a National Park or other reserve.

It is not a plant that gets a mention in many native plant books, and certainly not those slanted towards gardeners, as it is probably the sort of shrub that would only inspire admiration in a study group member or conservationist. However, it is a quite dense, bushy shrub – and spiny – and would make a good traffic barrier and possibly a refuge for small birds. The specimens we saw were about 3 m tall and about 1.5 m across, with multiple stems from near the base. Spines along the stems were about 10 cm long, and the glossy green leaves (10 to 20 mm long) grew grouped near the base of the spines. The flowers are creamy white and tiny (about 2mm) and fairly sparse (usually 10 or less per node).

*D. nitida*, according to the “Flora of NSW” (G. Harden), occurs in the Snowy Mountains and through to Cobungra in Victoria in country above 1000 m. The tiny population we found consisted of three plants, including one relatively young one, on private property at Yaouk just south of the ACT border on a rocky bank of the Murrumbidgee River. The current owners’ land use poses no threat to them, with fire or serious flooding being the only likely risk.

I was given permission to take a few cuttings and now have four small plants growing well in pots.

On the same property, we also found *D. pubescens* (I always think that’s a lovely name for something with 20 cm rigid spines!). It was in full bloom and covered in clusters of little cream flowers. Although not much to look at for the rest of the year, this one would be worth growing just for the short flowering period.

### Field Trips

There were several SGAP trips to the coast and nearby ranges in winter and spring during which we saw a few species of *Pomaderris* that I hadn’t seen before. These were:

*Pomaderris discolor* – a small group of plants beside the track on the Corn Trail at the top of Clyde Mountain between Braidwood and the coast.

*Pomaderris cinerea* – in forest on the ranges inland from Moruya.

*Pomaderris brogoensis* – by the roadside along the Araluen Valley. Similar to *P. cinerea* but with smaller leaves.

*Pomaderris betulina* (a very small-leaved form) – on a creek bank at Half Moon Reserve near Mongarlowe. A substantial population of large shrubs. *P. betulina* is common in the ACT and surrounding areas but usually has leaves about 1.5 to 2 cm long and 1 cm or more wide. These had much smaller leaves, and I thought at first they were *P. pauciflora*.

### Seed List

*Pomaderris aurea*  
*P. helianthemifolia*

*P. angustifolia*  
*P. intermedia*

*P. ferruginea*  
*P. prunifolia*

**Finances**

Balance April 2000			453.19
Subscriptions	27.00		
Interest	0.07		
FID		0.01	
Balance December 2000			480.25

**Membership List**

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