STYLIDIUM STUDY GROUP
NEWSLETTER NO.1.

June 1978.

The group has now been in existence for almost a year, and has been effectively active for about six months. As we now have enough members and plants to provide a reasonable beginning, I thought it was time to issue a newsletter.

First, the aims of the group. The principal aim is to establish the horticultural requirements of the genus Stylidium. To do this we will need to investigate means of propagation, cultivation in pots and in the garden, and the production and collection of seed. In the latter case we may need to investigate artificial pollination.

To achieve these aims it will be necessary for members to share both their plants and their experiences with Stylidiums. There are about 140 species, so we have plenty of potential material to work with.

Progress to date.

(a) Stock. Unlike many groups, we began with a "bare" larder", but we have been very fortunate in that one of our members in W.A. has been collecting W.A. species and has sent specimens to me from time to time. These plants have been sent bare rooted, by air mail, wrapped in wet paper, enclosed in plastic, and in general have arrived in good condition, even in hot summer weather.

These plants have been potted up into a very free draining mixture consisting of 4 parts washed gravel, 1 part coarse washed sand and ½-1 part local soil (volcanic brown clay loam). After a period in the cutting box, for a time depending on the condition and type of plant (usually 4-6 weeks) they have been potted into 5" pots and placed in semi-shade protected from winds. An unheated glasshouse or a bush house could be an advantage here. 19 Species have been received, and 17 have survived enough to warrant further potting on. Most of the species received to date have come from the wetter areas of the south west from Albany to Manjimup.

So far over 30 plants, representing 12 species have been distributed to five active members in Victoria. Some species are represented by only one specimen, which I will retain until it (optimistically) grows large enough to divide. Because of the scarcity of material, not everyone will have all the species, and this is where the sharing comes in. As members' plants grow to "dividing" size, then others will benefit by generous sharing. I have a record of what everyone has, so if any of you have successfully divided your plants, please let me know and I will arrange for them to be passed on. If you swap among yourselves, please let me know so that I can keep track of who has what.

(b) Seed. is very scarce and not generally available, other than S. graminifolium and S. laricifolium. However, I did receive some seed heads of unknown species from W.A. in summer and since the seed was so fine I sowed the whole head. Germination was good, but there were losses due to damping off. The remainder are now beginning to grow, and hopefully will be available for distribution later in the year.

Production of plants from seed is important because it is the only way at present to get the numbers of plants necessary for experiments with growing conditions, so we must try to produce our own.

(c) Experience of members. In addition to the 19 species mentioned above, none of which has yet been identified, members have 11 known species growing in pots or in the garden. The most common is the Victorian species S. graminifolium, and general concensus seems to bethat the fine leafed forms are longer lived than the broad leafed forms which often collapse after only one season. There's a problem to look into right away. Varying success is reported with the other species, but the key to success in most cases seems to be good drainage, even with swamp species.

(d)) Information. There is a detailed description of Stylidiums in the book "Triggerplants" by Rica Erickson, published by Paterson Brokensha P/L, Perth. This book has many illustrations and contains a key to all the species recognised at the time of publication. There is also a key to the S.W. of W.A species in Part IV of "How to know Western Australian Wildflowers" by Grieve and Blackall, published by the University of W.A. Press. These should be regarded as essential equipment for growers of Stylidium.

As a matter of interest, Erickson lists 98 species in the S.W. of W.A., not including varieties or subspecies, whereas Grieve and Blackall list only 87 of these but includes 14 species not listed as such by Erickson. Clearly there has been some work done between the publication of Erickson's book in 1958 and Grieve and Blackall in 1975. I leave you to investigate for yourselves.

Well, so much for generalities. I hope the next newsletter will contain more specific information, and hopefully, notes from some of the members.

Membership List.

I anticipate that the next newsletter will appear at the end of the year.

R.G. Davidson.
Stylidium Study Group Leader