

THYSANOTUS AND RELATED GENERA Newsletter No. 1

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The plants we wish to examine are *Thysanotus* and the genera closely related to it. *Thysanotus* is the fringe lily; a perennial herb, sometimes leafless, that has blue, mauve or occasionally white flowers. It has been placed in the family Anthericaceae with *Arthropodium*, *Dichopogon*, *Murchisonia* and many other genera, and is part of the Asparagales in the Lilliflorae.

At the start of any project of this nature, there is a lot of work to be done. We have suggested that our overall aim be to encourage the cultivation of *Thysanotus* and related genera. This aim begs many questions, some immediate and some that can be pondered over for the next few years. For example the most immediate question is how do we propagate our plants? We also need to consider where the boundaries of our studygroup are to lie. Do we only consider the four genera mentioned or do we accept all comers? This begs the more philosophical question of how are our species interrelated and can we generalise from one to another?

Thus we have a range of interests to suit any members who may choose to join us. There are a number of diverse areas that need totally different skills. We have few resources as yet and we have little information. We need:

Seed

A taxonomic survey

A photographic library

Members

Published literature for a library

Plant breeding skills

Cultural and gardening information

Field and ecological information

We have started collecting seed. We have small quantities of *Thysanotus dichotomus* (?), *T. fractullexus*, *T. multiflorus*, *T. patersonii* and *T. tenellus*. As there are over 40 species, we have a long way to go. If you

collect seed of *Thysanotus*, make sure you collect it from capsules that have opened (ie the heads need bagging it takes about 4 to 6 weeks for fertilised flowers to pop their seed for the species we have looked at). Seed collected green will not germinate. As well, store the seed dry in a cool dry place. The seed has a limited shelf life that can be extended by cool storage.

We also have some seed of *Arthropodium cirratum*, *A. fimbriatum*, *A. minus*, *A. strictus*, *Caesia vittata*, *Johnsonia lupulina*, *J. pubescens* and *Trichoryne elatior*. If at all possible, we would love to be able to get hold of seed of the other species of *Thysanotus* and of *Murchisonia*. Of course seed of other related genera is also welcome.

As yet we have little published information at our disposal. There is the excellent series published in "Australian Plants", the taxonomic treatment of *Thysanotus* by Brittan and the books on the Monocotyledons by Dahlgren, Clifford and Yeo. We have not yet collected the taxonomic treatments of the other genera. Any other reference material is most welcome. Initially, the information can be housed with us, but ultimately it might be wise to have a librarian to coordinate our information.

We have suggested our study group concentrate on *Thysanotus*, *Arthropodium*, *Dichopogon* and *Murchisonia*. The reason for this limitation is that there seems to be enough to do with just these genera and they seem to form a cohesive group. However, members may wish to study other related genera in their locality and I would only encourage their interest. I believe that information on many members of the Liliiflorae will be of relevance to the four genera suggested and vice versa.

We must have field and ecological data. We need distribution maps of our species, an indication of the variability within each species and the genera, their specific growth requirements such as climate, soils, sunlight, shelter from wind, associated species etc. We need to know which pests and diseases attack our plants (we already know that slugs and snails are devastating). Individual observations will help enormously. If they could be sent in, we can coordinate the information and send it back out in newsletters. We will send out sample questionnaires at a later date. There is

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already some work being done on the mycorrhizas of *Thysanotus* and this will come out in a future newsletter

We were asked for some photographic slides of *Thysanotus* the other day. We have none and will need to organise a library of them. Any colour slides will need to show a feature of relevance to the species - habitat, garden, flowers etc. Details need to be provided for each slide. If you can help it would be appreciated.

We have only just started planting seedlings out in the garden and already some problems are apparent. Anyone interested in growing specimens should contact us. Notes on cultivation are very important and should include the procedures used to germinate the seed, % seed germination, source of seed, rate of growth, time of flowering, garden conditions etc.

At some stage we will need to select some specimens for special effort - to produce commercially acceptable cultivars. While that is a long way down the track, it will involve plant breeding skills. We may need to hybridise, improve flower size, select for disease resistance etc. It may also be necessary to get the cultivars into tissue culture.

The areas of study you may wish to become involved with are wide ranging and wide open. The job at hand promises to be a long and rewarding one. We have set our annual membership (June to June) at \$5.00 to cover our basic expenses. So far there is a small group of us and we are eager for others to join in. You will be most welcome.

Peter McGee, Editor, Newsletter.