

Association of Societies For Growing Australian Plants  
Thysanotus and Related Genera Study Group Newsletter No10

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I apologise for the delay in putting together this newsletter. I have been overwhelmed by the response from members indicating their interest in the group. All three of them have forwarded me material and some of their comments will be included in this newsletter.

I must admit to having little success recently in my attempts to get some Thysanotus growing in my garden. In fact all transplants have died. The plants in the glasshouse are still growing so presumably it is something that I have or have not included. I now know that my garden is riddled with nematodes. I have just drenched the soil with nemacur, somewhat reluctantly. From what I understand, I will have to repeat this on a regular basis if I am to keep the nematodes under control. The poison will then last till the nematodes develop resistance to the pesticide. All very depressing.

Difficulties with the tissue culture work continue. I still have only one species, I. tenellus, growing satisfactorily in tubes. I. patersoni does not persist and the others as reported earlier do not grow at all. I have inoculated the plantlets with mycorrhizal fungi, only to have the fungi take over the whole tube. Not what I wanted at all. Needless to say, I will have to attempt another method. I assume I have too much sugar in the growth medium and the fungus just loves it all. I can plant out from tissue culture. A friend at Griffith has just planted out into her native garden. I will await results with some interest. I. tenellus is from a drier part of South Australia and will probably not succeed in the wetter areas. Griffith is a good test site of the survival under usual garden conditions for this species. My friend also planted out some Bulbine bulbosa from tissue culture. They are growing away. It is easy to grow from seed, so tissue culture is a waste of effort.

I am having difficulties with Arthropodium. Few plants are lasting long in the garden. They grow vigorously for a few years then do not reappear. I assume it is due mostly to the nematodes. I have plenty of seed so it is relatively easy to replace them but what is going on?

Which brings me to the first letter. Similar problems are being experienced by P.A. of Essenden. He has failed to get seedlings of Thysanotus growing in his garden, even when he has kept them from being taken over by the

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damping off fungi. I wonder whether we are not dealing with a problem beyond the absence of adjacent mycorrhizal plants? His pot plant of I. multiflorum once transplanted, died too. I have a pot plant of I. multiflorum which I am keeping in the pot, no companion plant, no fertiliser, in the hope I can get one more flowering from it for fresh seed. Why do they survive in the pots but not the soil?

To T.O. of Murrurundi, might I suggest that you try germinating your seed in the natural soil under your Casuarina. Clear a space in the litter where you want the seedlings to grow. Near the drip line on the sunny side might be the best site for the plants. Gently tickle the soil surface. Put the seeds about 1cm below the soil surface. Dampen the soil and put a shallow layer of litter over the top of the seed. Place a lot of snail bait around the patch. Only water the soil if the weather remains dry. Let us know if you succeed. I am beginning to think that we are too trained in the traditional methods of growing from seed. Lets try something else - our traditional methods are definitely unsuccessful.

It seems that many can grow Arthropodium (Dichopogon) successfully. As we seem to be floundering with Thysanotus, would it be a good thing to find out what members thought about the usefulness of this genus in the garden? If you have a good type growing, can you let us know and might we have a description? Who would like to try to grow different types of Arthropodium?

Which brings me to the next to final point. The SGAP of NSW have invited all members of Study Groups to an exchange of ideas and information day and tour of the facility at the Mount Annan Botanic Garden. While really only applicable to folks from NSW and probably only southern Sydney, anyone interested should contact Betty Rymer (02) 654 1831 to get more information and let her know you will be attending. Bring your lunch and morning tea. The meeting place is the Main Car park near the Education Centre; the time is 10am, Sunday 11th August, 1991. It sounds like an interesting day. The Garden is just beginning to look good.

Finally, my moan for the day. I am extremely busy, my work filling each day and more. I am not alone in this problem. Most of you are also extremely busy. I get little feedback from members and often wonder whether we would be better off without the status of study group. I dont think anyone is doing anything they would not otherwise do. Is this study group fulfilling a useful purpose? A time to ponder.  
Regards,

Peter McGee, Newsletter Editor.