

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS.  
THYSANOTUS AND RELATED GENERA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER  
No 11

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Christmas for 1991 is now past and we can look forward to 1992. By the time this newsletter arrives in your mailbox it will be the new year. May your plants grow as you would want them to.

Many things have become clear in the past few months and many have become confused. First the clear issues. I have been wrong about *Thysanotus multiflorus*. The plant is now available from at least two retail nurseries and you can grow it without a companion plant. I bought a potplant 15 months ago and kept it in my garden. It had just finished flowering for the first time and I wondered whether I could keep it growing for another season. I gave the pot about a cup of dilute aquasol per month and watered it daily when it was not raining. I have harvested seed from the plant this year (1991) and the seed is now in a pot to germinate. We will experiment on the seedlings as they emerge. We will see if we can grow plants to maturity with and without mycorrhizas, with and without fertiliser. We will also see if we can grow the plant in tissue culture.

The plant is available from Merricks Nursery in Victoria. I understand that they use a free draining mountain loam (10%) mixed with coarse sand (20%) and coarse composted pine chips. They then fumigate the soil. They add some slow release urea and long lasting Nutricote as well as some iron chelates and gypsum. We are using a coarse sand mixed with a sterile silty soil (10%) and approximately 10 pellets of Nutricote per 10cm pot. I will report on the results when they come in.

*T. multiflorus* is quite different from other members of the genus. It has a grass like root system and perennial leaves. The others have either rhizomes or tubers. The tuberous species (e.g. *T. patersonii*, *tenellus*, *tuberosus*, *baueri*, *thyrsoideus*, *manglesianus* etc) all have short leaves that die back as or before the flowering scape emerges. The flowering scape dies back after seed release.

The rhizomatous members of the genus have annual leaves with the flowers borne directly on the branched perennial stem. (e.g. *T. juncifolius*, *fractiflexus*, *dichotomus*, *fastigiatus* etc).

We are going to explore this difference a little further. We have ordered seed from Nindethana and will attempt to grow plants in the manner of Merricks and compare the

growth with the method I have developed for some tuberous species. All of this will be in pots because I still lose plants as soon as I plant them out. They seem to be intolerant of nematodes, root pathogens and just about any disease. How they survive in the wild still puzzles me.

I have been joined by two people living in Sydney. Christine is a student at the University of Technology. She will attempt to grow the various species in tissue culture. She has also been working on the pot experiment. Francis is an electron microscopist who is interested in following the development of mycorrhizas in Thysanotus using a new technique. First he has to get the technique going. Our funding from The Australian Flora Foundation will soon finish and hopefully I can get more from elsewhere to finish some of these interesting ideas.

A small group of gardeners from the York Peninsula in South Australia have also expressed interest in setting up a group to look at attempting to plant out material from tissue culture. We need to know more about the diseases and pests, and techniques to plant out from tissue culture to the garden. I will keep you informed. If others can form a group of three or four friends who will work together, we might set up other groups. At present, we are a Study Group spread all over the place and have no contact or support from each other. Most members of the Hibbertia Study group come from a small region in Victoria. As a way to enjoy the study group, it seems a sensible way to go. Perhaps we might include some of our neighbours if we want to succeed as a study group. Your comments would be appreciated.

That's all for the moment. Happy gardening.

Peter McGee  
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