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ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS
THYSANOTUS AND RELATED GENERA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER No 6

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AS received with thanks
Changes in the administration of our study group have occurred, as some of you will have noted on reading Australian Plants. Andrew has resigned as coordinator due to pressures of work. On your behalf, I would like to thank Andrew for the enormous amount of work he has done over the last couple of years for the study group. We wish you every success with your Ph.D. thesis and your future in whatever endeavour you choose. We hope it will include Australian Liliaceae, if not Thysanotus.

I have taken over the coordination of the study group and for the moment I am still writing all of the newsletter. My contact address is above. If anyone is able to assist with either job, I would be very grateful. We also need a curator for the huge collection of slides that will soon come flowing in. Any volunteers in N.S.W.?

At this stage, some comments on how Thysanotus grows in your district (species, time of flowering, surrounding plants, degree of disturbance, district climate etc) would be a useful addition to our newsletters. The format I am going to use today may indicate how you might organise your information. We can publish your comments in future newsletters giving us a permanent record of ideas, similarities and differences within and between species.

While you are out looking for Thysanotus, don't forget your camera. We have a few photos. None of mine are particularly good - the editor of Australian Plants politely told me he had better ones for the article on Thysanotus. Load your camera with film for colour slides. We can always produce good prints from good slides, but the reverse is not as easy.

SOME THOUGHTS ON Thysanotus IN THE WILD

Thysanotus tuberosus in Armidale and Walcha, northern tablelands of N.S.W.

T. tuberosus was observed only on gravelly, sandy well drained soils associated with open Eucalyptus woodland. Plants became obvious the spring/summer following a fire, when they regenerated from their tubers. Plants generally grow from a rootstock though several plantlets may arise from one base. Leaves are grey/green, needle like, 8 - 18cm tall. Leaves are present from about early September to late January. In dry seasons, leaves may die back before flowering is complete. Flowers form what appears

to be an umbel, up to 10 have been seen on one inflorescence, though not all open at once. The inflorescence is up to 20cm high. Flowers first appear in late December and may continue to open till late April if the weather is warm and moist enough. Flowers on each bud are similar and can be anything from pale mauve to deep purple. Flowers appear to be self fertile. Mature seed is scattered from the pods from about six weeks after flowering. T. tuberosum appears to do well in disturbed and undisturbed areas.

I believe that selected types of this species would be suitable for garden culture. The propensity for flower formation and the colour of flowers seem important. Cut flower heads will continue to open in vases provided the cut is in sufficient light.

This species is one of the best garden plants of the species of Thysanotus found in the eastern states.

Thysanotus patersonii in the Adelaide Hills and lower Flinders Ranges, S.A.

T. patersonii can be seen on loamy and clay soils associated with open woodland and dry sclerophyll forests dominated by trees such as Eucalyptus obliqua. It is usually found twining up and over low shrubs, fences, tussocks or sprawling over open ground. A tuft of a few short leaves appears first in late winter. These die back and the inflorescence emerges. The flower shoot twines and branches such that mature plants will cover a small bush. Flowers open from about early September and continue to early November unless the dry weather kills off the shoot. Single flowers open in early morning and are usually closed by early afternoon. However, on sunny days, mature plants look magnificent, covering their shrubby companion with a mauve to pale purple dappling. Seeds mature within about 6 weeks and some plants seem to be self fertile. T. patersonii is most commonly found growing in undisturbed vegetation. Kings Park think of it as a weed that they get along with seedlings of other plants collected from the wild.

I think the species has some potential as a pot plant grown with another plant, perhaps a small Myrtaceous shrub like Kunzea, Leptospermum or Melaleuca or some small Pultenea like species.

Thysanotus fractiflexus on Kangaroo Island, S.A.

Plants occur in Eucalyptus dominated mallee vegetation on the north side of the island. I have not seen it on the southern side. The soil is a lateritic clay loam and is very poor. The plants occur in amongst grasses and sedges and can be quite difficult to see. Leaves appear before the flower shoot and may be dead before flowers appear. The flower shoot is a zigzag like structure, but flowers are so sparse that even though they are relatively large,

they do not seem appropriate for the garden. Flowers appear in late spring and summer and seed can be mature from about December onwards. The plant does not appear to be able to tolerate disturbance and I suspect that it is grazed if it occurs in agricultural land.

Thysanotus juncifolius of the McLaren Vale to the Murray Mallee of S.A.

Found on sandy soils associated with mallee scrub, usually close to the base of a myrtaceous bush. Shoots and leaves arise from a perennial rhizome, leaves being short and dieing very soon after emergence in early spring. The flower shoot appears in late spring and can be quite tall, some I've seen were 1.5m high. Flowers appear during summer, usually only one or two at a time. The colour of flowers ranges from white to deep purple. Shoots die back after flowering and the plant resembles Juncus species. The plant seems to only occur in undisturbed areas.

I do not think this plant has much merit except for the enormous variation in flower colour.

Anne, how about some information on T. baueri/tuberosus from the Murray Mallee? From what I have flowering in the glasshouse at present, it would seem that we have a plant that fits about half way in between the two species and we may have to describe it as a new species. I also think it has some potential as a garden plant for dry areas.

And please folks, keep the notes on growing plants from seed rolling in. I plan to devote another issue on it soon as some more problems are occurring. Could I also ask for the subscriptions for 1989/90 from the few who have not sent them in. I'm afraid I can't afford to pay for photocopying and mailing as Andrew seemed to do.

Happy gardening,

Peter.