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Association of Societies For Growing Australian Plants
Thysanotus and Related Genera Study Group Newsletter No 8

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Newsletter time and I am disorganised. I am supposed to have an annual financial statement ready by the end of August and I doubt if I will. It will follow soon.

The last six months has been a busy time for several members. Joyce Linnel has been to WA for a holiday and returned with photos of T. patersonii and T. multiflorus in the wild. Most welcome. I have also had photos taken of T. tuberosum and T. "murrayanum" by a friendly professional photographer. The store of slides is starting to look reasonable. My original contributions can be eased out soon - they do not look as good as the current contributions.

We have a new member in Melbourne who is interested in growing members of the Liliaceae from his locale. As his employer is paying for him to do it, I hope we can all get to hear of his results when they come in.

The company interested in tissue culture of Thysanotus has stopped the project because outplanting has become too complicated for them. Never mind. I am still growing a few species in tissue culture and registrations of interest are on file. I have had some success with T. tenellus, taking four original plantlets to 40. I have just "repotted" the plantlets but now the roots seem to have stopped growing. Bit of worry as I had hoped to inoculate the plants in tissue culture with a mycorrhizal fungus and the fungi require actively growing roots. I have not had as much success with T. patersonii from Victoria, T. tuberosum from the Blue Mountains of NSW and completely failed with T. dichotomus, T. multiflorus and T. juncifolius. The latter three species all have rhizomatous roots and I may be using the wrong medium for growing plantlets. If only I had more time.

The Australian Flora Foundation has given me a small research grant. The project is to examine how mycorrhizal infection of Thysanotus occurs. The eventual aim is to work out means of getting the seedling infected in the nursery such that outplanting will result in survival of plants. We know that the mycorrhizal fungi are important, but often they will not survive outplanting and the local fungi may not infect the Thysanotus rapidly enough.

I am extremely grateful to the Australian Flora Foundation for their assistance. If you are in a position to assist them in their search for funds for research of the Australian Flora, please give generously. The Foundation is doing a superb job on very small resources. They are the only research foundation that I am aware of who concentrates on increasing our understanding of the biology and culture of Australian plants. Given that so many flowers are taken from the wild and that a huge market for Australian wildflowers exists in Europe and Asia, we should be doing more to ensure the survival of our native environment and developing the methods to grow some of these exquisite plants in nurseries and orchards.

To go back to outplanting, I came across two plants of *T. multiflorus* in a nursery at Cranebrook, near Penrith NSW. I swooped. They looked a little past their best and had finished flowering and no seed had set. Despite my supposed understanding of their culture, both plants died within three weeks of transplanting into my garden. I don't think pathogens were the problem. I do think I had no mycorrhizas in the plants and none in the soil where I planted them. I will have to try again.

A member from Queensland has had success with transplanting *T. tuberosum* from a graded roadside. He managed to transplant a companion plant with two plants and in March all were surviving. Many thanks Irving, and good luck with the batch of seedlings. Several members have reported starting with seed again. Good luck.

The taxonomy of members of the Liliaceae has been under review recently. Dr John Conran has been examining the genera *Arthropodium* and *Dichopogon*. He has suggested they may be one genus. Certainly, I have always had difficulty in determining the differences between the two genera. I have also heard that a student at the University of Queensland has examined several members of the Liliaceae and has come to some interesting conclusions about *Thysanotus*. I don't know what, but I will have to find out when I get back from Europe. If any of the Queensland members can get to the University of Queensland, they should make contact with Professor Clifford in the Department of Botany. I would not be surprised if the rhizomatous and tuberous plants were placed in separate genera or at least separate sections in the one genus.

I am soon leaving for three weeks work in Europe and will be back in mid September. Remember that this is the time to start looking for flowers - in fact *T. patersonii* has been flowering in the glasshouse for over a month now.

Happy gardening

Peter McGee

Newsletter Editor