

Region
30/6

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

VERTICORDIA STUDY GROUP

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NEWSLETTER NO 36 -- AUGUST 2001

MEMBERSHIP

Members are reminded that subscriptions for year 2001/2002 are now due, the nominal rates remaining at \$3.00 and \$10.00 for overseas

Prompt remission of subscriptions would be appreciated.

A red tick indicates you are **financial for the current year 1.7. 01 to 30.6.02.**

This takes account of some members who have made advance payments, reciprocal Study Group membership, honorary membership and recognises special contributions, (other than Donations as separately noted).

A list of current membership has been included later in this Newsletter

FINANCES 1.7.00 TO 30.6.01

Credit Balance 30.6.00-----	\$425.54.
Receipts since 1.7.00 -----	110.15
Expenses since 1.7.00-----	173.99
Nett Debit-----	63.84
Credit Balance 30.6.01-----	\$361.70

DONATIONS

Gordon Curtis-----	\$2.00
SGAP Queensland Region Inc-	10.00
SGAP Canberra Region Inc----	2.00

CULTIVATION NOTES.

Recent Newsletters have included many observations regarding cultivation procedures and results in Eastern Australian gardens

I am very pleased now to have another report, (Feb/01) from **Dick Mills**, with some very objective comment. Dick's garden, on deep Bassendean type sand, is in a summer-dry climatic zone at Banjup, West Australia.

Members will also find of great interest, a copy he has sent me of a letter to recent member Russell Dahms of South Australia in reply to a request. This letter included comment on the success of his grafting experiences with Verticordias and has inspired me to increase my own efforts with this aspect of cultivation.

Dick reports:-

"As per our recent telephone conversation I will try to make some useful comments. First a few items re Newsletter 35.

On page 2 you refer to the hazard of water retained in the leaf axils. I also find this but generally the heat of my poly-tunnel seems to avert problems, most of the time. My experience is high humidity is only detrimental when temperatures are lower

On page 3 you refer to the potting mix. I use a proprietary mix with about 10% coarse sand added. When using a very free-draining mix, watering twice daily may be required in hotter weather. Good conditions will grow most plants as long as special factors, as for Proteacea, are considered. All plants require moisture. If the soil or potting mix becomes dry the plant will die. With my mix I water small pots daily and larger ones as required, but some

plants in a similar mix will use more water. This depends on the transpiration rate of the plant.

Referring to your list of species and results on page 5:-

V. brownii is one which uses more water.

V. etheliana var. *etheliana* appreciates shade from other plants in the garden, but doesn't dry out in a pot

V. pennigera generally grows in heavier soil and will appreciate being kept moist.

V. plumosa var. *plumosa* likes to grow near rocks, so probably wants a cool root run. Mine grow around a concrete tank and get no watering, which creates a deep dormancy where the plants look dead, then revive quickly when the winter rains start.

V. plumosa var. *vassensis* which grows in heavier soil near Busselton, requires watering to acquire a similar result, but does not reach deep dormancy

V. pulchella which also comes from heavier soil, reacts similarly and only goes semi-dormant on my drip irrigation.

Paul Niehoff's *V. polytricha* is about par for the course. Both Pat Moyle's and mine suffer the same problem at times. Sometimes however they seem more resistant and have little or no die-back evident.

Now onto my garden.

On February 27 28 and 29/2000, I planted 17 Verticordias along the west side of my drive; all grafted on to *Chamelaucium uncinatum*. This means they get afternoon shade and varying degrees of morning sun. The species are :-

V. forrestii (white form) - 2.

V. comosa.

V. pityrhops -2

V. oculata -2

× *V. albida* x *serotina* -2

V. eriocephala x *argentea* (pink form)

V. argentea (white form) -2

V. serotina -2

V. albida

V. dichroma var. *syntoma*

V. Champagne Glow.

One *V. oculata* was damaged in planting but has survived

The *V. dichroma* var. *syntoma* was not so lucky and was the only loss.

Due to the vigour of *C. uncinatum* it appears to be the only worthwhile rootstock"

The following is from Dick's February letter to Russell Dahms.

"Caterpillars etc.

You probably have a different caterpillar to those here. I usually have most trouble with tip-borers and a webbing caterpillar on fine-leaf species.

I mostly don't spray for bugs. If a particular bug becomes serious, I use whatever is recommended for that bug. Sometime aphids are bad, but they can be hosed off, or squashed by hand if only on one or two plants. Ants are my main problem, digging nests in the damp earth under a bush, or sometimes setting up house in a pot. Keep away from severe poisons, they can kill you

Watering.

I water plants in the ground on drip for an hour, once weekly. This seems satisfactory for survival and flowering, but is sometimes less adequate for growth of cutting material.

Generally plants in pots are hand watered on a one to three day basis, as required. The requirement varies as the size of the pot and the size of plant; ie, transpiration level. Once again, generally, I scratch the surface of the pot and if moisture is evident in the top 2-3 cm, I don't water. If I am unsure, I give the plant enough to avoid drying out and check it later, or next day. This does pose a problem with some plants which have been potted too long, as the mix sets solid and you can't scratch the surface. With those, it seems you can water every day with no problem, as they have a high transpiration level and usually fairly matted roots. Maybe a bit of unwettable mix problem too.

Grafting Techniques

I am by no means an expert but this is how I do it :-

I use the normal wedge graft, ie. I split the rootstock as centrally as possible and make a wedge on the base of the scion, which is wedged into the split in the rootstock. The wedge should be as long as possible, in order to make a longer union, as short unions are more likely to fracture. As all the books say, the cambium needs to be lined up accurately, at least on one side of the wedge. I use PARAFILM laboratory film. I believe Doug McKenzie used plumbers thread tape. An airtight seal is necessary to prevent drying of the union. To avoid problems when taping the joint, I do a couple of turns around the rootstock below the split before inserting the scion. Getting the tape started is the difficult bit.

The material for the union is probably fairly important. I like it pretty soft as I believe this will make a quicker union

First the root-stock. When you look at a *C. uncinatum* cutting, or small rooted plant, you will notice, at a distance of maybe 10 cm from the tip, a reddish, freshly grown section maybe two or three weeks old. This is good root-stock material which will bond quickly. Below this the bark is a pale greyish colour, indicating it is starting to harden. This can be used but will take longer to heal or graft

Second the scion. When you select your scion material, it depends on what is available. That reddish material on the *C. uncinatum* is a good guide to what you want. As I said, I like it soft, but if it is too soft, it will wilt and fail to survive long enough to make a union. Therefore you look at the cutting which is available and make your selection. If the tip is very soft I cut it off, but if the cutting has flower buds in the leaf axils you will not get any vegetative growth from those and must go further back where there are no flower buds. Here the cutting may be too hard for a fast union and the slower the union, the greater the chance of failure. You may be able to get suitable material by going back to the first leaves with no flower buds. These will give you branching shoots and by retaining some of the leaves which have flower buds (with those buds removed), you will have enough leaves on the scion to draw sap to assist the union. Possibly the answer is to take a very small cutting from a shoot which has only just started to grow and has not developed that softness which will cause it to wilt. These very small scions are very hard to handle, but who said it would be easy."

Dick makes the final comment:-

"Since writing to Russell I have used harder material as rootstock with satisfactory results. It is probably more important to have softer scion material so long as it does not wilt."

Graham Eastwood, Batemans Bay NSW reports (July 01):-

" After a very humid summer, but strangely with very little actual rain, most of my *Verticordias* however have remained healthy looking. During autumn and early winter rainfall has again continued to be minimal.

Vert. densiflora v. densiflora, planted October 1991, died in the recent April.

Vert. huegelii v decumbens receded badly but is now putting on new growth.

Vert. helichrysantha has performed similarly.

Vert. minutiflora also went through a post-flowering dormancy but is now also putting on new growth. A seedling from same is now two years old.

Vert. cooloomia has been very slow to progress. For a few seasons it has gone into dormancy following flowering. I lopped it each season to see if this would stimulate more active development but without success, as it only grew back to the previous dimension. This year however it has really responded. Perhaps it needed the long dry autumn spell.

Four *Vert. staminosa* subsp. *cylindracea* are now in flower or budded

Several *Vert. chrysanthella* are making good pre-flowering growth. The younger ones are seedlings from three year plants from specimens planted 10 years ago. One of the originals died recently.

Vert. plumosa v. plumosa, (three), remain healthy

Vert. fastigiata remains healthy

Vert. attenuata remains healthy

Vert. densiflora v. cespitosa remains healthy.

Vert. fragrans planted two years ago flowered well last spring. To make sure it did not become leggy I pruned it by two thirds after flowering. This caused a drop of many leaves and the remaining ones turned a greyish green. It has now produced new very green foliage all over and I expect it to flower profusely this year.

Vert. grandis is still very healthy. After a profuse flowering last season I gave it a good prune. It has regrown well and is currently showing a few flower buds. This would seem to indicate that this species can adapt well, for at least a few years, in this climatic zone. It could be pointed out again however that the recent autumn has been relatively dry, by our standards. It will be interesting to note how it responds to a heavier rainfall pattern when this does eventually occur.

I also have a number of other species but these are as yet quite small and will be the subject of later reporting when significant observations can be made"

I find some of Grahams comments particularly interesting.

In Sydney *Vert. huegelii v decumbens* and *minutiflora* usually go into pronounced dormancy after flowering when relatively mature.

I have also had *V. cooloomia* look very much on the way out from late summer and make good recovery with the advent of winter.

I have had trouble at times with *V. fragrans* after the first or second flowering. I note with particular interest then, Grahams reference to heavy pruning after flowering

His heavy pruning of *Vert. grandis* seems to confirm an ability of the species, not only to accept this treatment but further to benefit from same. Early last autumn I accepted his offer of cuttings some of which seem to be striking despite the lateness of the season (in my view) for setting same. What did impress me however was the general appearance of the cuttings, which were very lush green with very large leaf size. I do have a nine year old specimen but it has never produced such foliage. I think I could be well advised to risk a little pruning here also.

In Newsletters 33 and 34 I have commented at length on the progress or otherwise of Verticordia species in **Ted Newman** and **Pat Kenyons** garden at Dural, NSW.

The following is a brief update of plant performance :-

- V. acerosa* Good
V. attenuata Of 2 specimens: One died after recent autumn rain; Apparent root rot plus suspect collar rot. Other plant remains healthy
V. blepharophylla Fair following post-flowering dormancy
V. brownii Fair with some new seasonal growth
V. chrysanthella Very good
V. densiflora v. densiflora Fair
V. densiflora v. cespitosa Very good. Good pruning response
V. drummondii Good
V. fastigiata Good
V. fragrans Of 2 specimens: One grew very well but died after first flowering. The other was chlorotic early but later recovered and is currently fairly good
V. galeata New small specimen. Very slow growing but healthy.
V. helichrysantha New specimen progressing well
V. huegelii v. decumbens Good
V. hughanii Died after partially holding on for long period.
V. longistylis Very good
V. minutiflora Good
V. mitchelliana Still very good. New specimens also progressing well.
V. monadelpha v. monadelpha Fair. currently flowering with fair new growth.
V. multiflora New specimen. Growth fair
V. pennigera Fair
V. plumosa v. plumosa Very good
V. plumosa v. ananeotes New specimen. Growth Fair
V. plumosa (Open form) Good after slow development earlier.

Gordon Curtis, Happy Valley, South Australia comments on a few species he has been able to acquire:-

“*V. grandis* (2)- One died, the other still struggling. The survivor was pale in leaf with the veins showing. Anything I gave it made it worse so I left it alone. At the moment it is reshooting from the main stems with the old leaves dropping off spindly branches.

- V. etheliana v etheliana* (2) Both thriving in pots.
V. dichroma v. syntoma (2) Both thriving in pots.
V. fragrans Small but healthy.”

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP LIST**New South Wales**

Nich Derera	Winston Hills
Gordon Brooks	Castle Hill
Graham Eastwood	Malua Bay
Pat Kenyon & Ted Newman	Dural
Dick MacFarlane	Mogriguy
Darren & Louise Allen	Abernathy
Peter Olde	Illawong (Reciprocal with Grevillea Study Group)
Max Hewett	Cherrybrook

Victoria

Michael Mattner	Cudgee
Suzanne Clark	New Gisbourne
Paul Whiley	Maffra
Paul Niehoff	Blackburn
David Lightfoot	Surrey Hills

South Australia

Gordon Curtis	Happy Valley
Jeff Jones	Banksia Park
Max Ewer	Avenue Range
Ian Otto	Port Lincoln
Russell Dahms	Athelstone

West Australia

Alec Hooper	Maida Vale
Pat Moyle	Mandurah
Elizabeth George	Alexander Heights
Alex George	Kardinya
Dick Mills	Banjup
Judy Grows	Parkerville

Queensland

Dave Gordon	Glenmorgan (Honorary)
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Regional or Sundry

- SGAP Victorian Region
- SGAP Canberra Region
- SGAP South Australian Region
- SGAP Tasmanian Region
- SGAP Queensland Region
- SGAP NSW Region
- West Australian Wildflower Society
- SGAP Maroondah Group
- Royal Botanic Gardens Library Canberra
- West Australian Wildflower Producers Association
- Burrendong Arboretum Mumbil NSW (Honorary)

H.M.Hewett, ASGAP Verticordia Study Group Leader
 11 Harvey Place
 Cherrybrook, NSW 2126
 Tel (02) 94842766