

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

VERTICORDIA STUDY GROUP

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STUDY GROUP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Despite the fact that in Newsletter 39 (February 03), I foreshadowed an increase in annual subscription to our Study Group, to take effect from 1/07/03, and repeated the advice in Newsletter 40; (August 03), I am still receiving incorrect subscriptions.

The correct amounts as from 1/07/03 are \$5.00 for Australian members of SGAP and \$20.00 for overseas members (if applicable)

In regard to the above, I have been surprised and disappointed that the most recent advices given in Regional Newsletters of New South Wales, Tasmania and Canberra, and ASGAP Newsletter 31 are still incorrect.

MEMBER DONATIONS

The following member donations in excess of the nominal \$5.00 subscription are gratefully acknowledged:-

SGAP Queensland	\$10.00
SGAP Victoria	\$5.00
SGAP New South Wales	\$10.00
SGAP Blue Mountains Group	\$3.00
Darren & Louise Allen	\$2.00
Bob & Dot O'Neill	\$5.00

AWARD for 'THE TURNER OF HEARTS'

Reprinted from the Wildflower Society of Western Australia Newsletter August 2003.

'Verticordia, the Turner of Hearts', published by UWA Press last year and recently shortlisted for the Western Australian Premier's Book Awards has won the TREAT National 'Australian' award for Excellence in Educational Publishing 2003, (Scholarly Reference Category).

The book, written by Elizabeth George and illustrated throughout with beautiful water-colours by Margaret Pieroni, one of Australia's most talented botanical artists, is the definitive guide to this exquisite and unique Australian wildflower.

The awards were established ten years ago by the Australian Publishers Association and the University of Sydney Teaching Resources & Textbook Research Unit (TREAT), with the support of the 'Australian' newspaper, to recognise and honour the best educational materials published during the year.

MEMBER REPORTS.

Graham Eastwood, Batemans Bay, reports that because of the drier than usual conditions prevailing over the year, some Verticordias have flowered rather poorly this recent spring. These included *Verticordias plumosa* var *plumosa* and *densiflora* var *caespitosa*, which have since been pruned back. A newer specimen of *Verticordia lindleyi* subsp *lindleyi* has flowered for the first time.

Despite the drought however, all has not been lost, as seedlings of some species have appeared including several *Verticordia huegelii* var *decumbens* and two *Verticordia mitchelliana*.

Bob and Dot O'Neill, Katandra Gardens, Wandin, Victoria say the recent season there has been mixed, with the loss of many cuttings in the propagation section and *Verticordia grandis* not being happy. *Verticordia mitchelliana*, *plumosa*, *galeata* and *chrysantha* are progressing well. He notes with some surprise, that two plants of the latter, both of similar size and planted eight months ago, started to flower three weeks apart. They grow in differing soils aspects and elevations, however.

SPECIES REVIEW CHERRYBROOK

The following review covers *Verticordia* species currently being garden grown or maintained in 200 diameter pots as stock. Garden results to date have encouraged me to apply the planting in prefilled post holes, to all recent plantings. The following notes contain special observations of some species. These are additional to earlier Newsletter cultural comments and may not necessarily be taken as significant Australia wide. Other factors such as particular climatic pattern, local garden topography and aspect, or particular cultural treatment, may come into the equation. Your experiences, either confirming or contradicting these observations would be very welcome, and would add to our overall cultural knowledge of *Verticordias*.

In Sydney we are still experiencing severe drought conditions and under threat of even more strict water restrictions. Despite the weather conditions, subsequent watering, after initial establishment, has rarely been necessary, or at most seldom applied. This post hole planting treatment though, is yet to be proven under our wetter, more traditional, late summer conditions.

Dates shown, e.g. '10/01' refer to planting time of garden specimens.

If prefixed P/H, indicates specimens being grown in filled post holes. Refer N/L 40 for more complete details and comment.

V. acerosa var *acerosa*

Stock and P/H - 8/03- tipped early to encourage complexity. Very good to date.

V. argentea

Stock-Growth initially decumbent due, I believe, to the mode of propagation:- After earlier attempts had failed under mist, for the most recent attempts, cuttings were placed at an angle to throw off excess water from leaf axils. This proved more successful. Upon flowering however, new growth has become yellowish. Iron chelates, Seasol, weak Nitrosol, a little pelleted fertiliser and treatment with a little trace elements in solution have, to date, failed to correct same.

P/H - 3/03- Growth form and leaf colour for most of the growing period noted similar to stock plant. With the advent of warmer summer conditions and a little epsome salt, leaf colour now considerably improved. Flowering at present, but still quite small. Second stage leaf growth however, seems to be tending more erect.

V. attenuata

This species, as noted in earlier Newsletters tends to grow quite tall and become vulnerable to wind damage to root systems. Accordingly a 3/02 plant in garden soil has been pruned to restrict it to about 600 maximum. This summer it has responded with a second flush of flowers.

Stock and P/H - 3/03 + several P/H - later. All plants of this species under post hole planting treatment have been tipped early and are now robust, multibranched, tenacious and compact in form. Some are currently producing first flowers. I intend to limit them to about 450mm tall.

V. blepharophylla

I have found this species reluctant to make good growth both in the garden and as a stock plant until approach of the summer flowering period. Additional watering has not helped. An earlier specimen: P/H - 3/03, was never vigorous and died 8/03.

P/H - 11/03- Slow at first but commenced active growth 12/03. Currently vigorous.

V. brownii

Stock and P/H - 11/03- Acting on a comment from Dick Mills that he had found this species needed more water than most, I incorporated a small quantity of water crystal into the potting mix for both of the above situations. Though still quite young, both specimens are progressing very well.

V. carinata

Too small as yet for planting out, but apparently improving with summer conditions..

V. chrysanthella

P/H - 8/02 + several later- All plants have grown particularly well and consistently better than specimens planted earlier, direct to various soil types. Early and progressive pruning has, I believe, contributed to multibranched, complex development. When necessary at planting, the species has responded well, without any apparent ill effect, to removal of coiled roots and even, on occasions, to complete bare-rooting..

V. densiflora var *densiflora*

Stock and 6/99- The only problem encountered has been poor acceptance and risk of loss, from pruning early after flowering.

V. densiflora var *cespitosa*

This is another species I have found intriguing. I have been growing it from 1997, but until spring /03, I have not succeeded in producing even one flower. It has been a tall grower and has responded vigorously to occasional heavy pruning.

Stock and P/H - 10/02- This specimen was tipped in early growth. In 4/03 it was multibranched and pruned back hard to 300 maximum x 300 diameter. By 10/03 it was 450 x 550 diameter and showing signs of budding. By 11/03 it was in full flower, the corymbiform flower heads completely obscuring the foliage.

V. drummondii

Stock and P/H - 3/03- Early tipping has produced a tenacious compact multibranched specimen currently commencing flowering. Seems a little slow in early growth.

V. fastigiata

Stock and P/H - 9/02. A little slow in early growth but now tenacious, multistemmed and compact

V. fragrans

Stock and P/H - 11/02. This species seems to be best planted out from late spring to mid summer rather than through cooler parts of the year, when growth rate can tend to stagnate. It is currently doing very well, but because some earlier growing efforts in soil suffered from wind damage to foliage and root systems I am keeping it pruned to limit the height and promote more complexity.

V. galeata

Stock and P/H - 10/02. At planting, species has proved very tolerant of pruning of coiled roots and even complete bare rooting. Plants currently compact, multistemmed and to date, very tenacious and drought tolerant.

V. grandis

11/89 I have referred on occasion to this specimen which still remains healthy, despite a little trauma on occasion, such as complete defoliation from a wet autumn in 1990 and suffering, 11/93 from wind blown chlorine. After Graham Eastwood, Batemans Bay, pruned his specimen, as reported in earlier Newsletters, I have been trying to reduce this specimen to a more compact form, it having become a little open. In 12/02 I pruned it again but with the drought conditions continuing, very little new growth had ensued until recently, despite occasional watering. With a hot 1/04 however, good new tips are now active. These unfortunately, are confined to newer wood rather than from the older low growth, for which I had hoped. A recent advice from Graham incidentally, reports the unfortunate loss of his specimen after a second, more severe pruning.

V. helichrysantha

During the recent spring, Graham reported that a plant in his garden, which he had thought he had lost, had started to show a little activity. In 11/03 he reported a few flower buds forming.

Stock and P/H - 3/03 and P/H - 8/03- Although my stock specimen; planted 1/03 has done very well, having made continuous growth, the story about the other two garden specimens is a little different. It suggests that the species has a predominant tendency for summer growth. The 3/03 specimen, despite encouragement with Seasol, Nitrosol, pelleted fertiliser and Epsom salts showed no growth response at all until 10/03, when the first new tips appeared. The second specimen made continued growth from planting time, but the earlier one has now passed it to become a more robust plant.

V. helmsii

Stock only, which remains small and a little inclined to chlorosis.

V. huegelii var *decumbens*

Stock, 5/96 and P/H - 8/03. The latter specimen is a little slow at present, but this would seem to be normal for this species. I think it was Dick Mills who reported that the species has a rather long summer dormancy. The stock plant has been a little more vigorous but is currently slightly chlorotic. From my own garden experience, vigorous growth can be expected to commence in late summer or autumn.

V. lindleyi subsp *lindleyi*

P/H - 4/03. Tipped early. Now multistemmed and robust having just finished flowering.

V. longistylis

Neil Marriott once referred to this species as unkillable.

8/85- I believe this date supports Neil's comment. Currently flowering.

V. minutiflora

12/88 and P/H - 10/02- I am attempting to keep specimens small, complex and compact by early tipping. Currently flowering and very robust.

V. mitchelliana

Stock and P/H - 3/03. I have reported my difficulties with this species on occasion, viz. sudden leaf drop in mid autumn, followed by plant loss, after typical Sydney late summer weather. I have suggested in Newsletters that the cause is foliage or peduncle fungal attack, brought on by our humid weather at this time and I have noted my intention to spray with Pest Oil in an effort to anticipate the trouble and give plants some light coating for protection? The above plants are both healthy at the moment and vigorous. I have just started the treatment, which I intend to repeat at appropriate intervals during the next two months or so until the danger period has passed. In January, when humid conditions prevail, particularly overnight, they adopt a brilliant light grey appearance. After spraying, the bulk of the leaves appear mid-green, but new tip growth continues and is glaucous grey as above.

V. monadelpha var *monadelpha*

I have had some difficulty in recent times, establishing specimens of this species, both in my garden and as a containerised stock plant. Trouble seems to have started approaching the first preflowering stage.

Plants generally have made good early growth, but at the stage noted, the leader foliage has turned yellowish with loss of vigour. I have tried various treatments, such as Iron Chelates and epsom salts but to date, I have not been able to restore the affected specimens to good foliage colour, and plants have either been lost completely or have lost vigour and have just hung on for some time.

Seasol applications have also been ineffective as have been treatments with Nitrosol.

A nursery acquired specimen planted P/H - 4/03 has been the latest casualty. At planting it was discovered to have developed considerable root coiling in the lower region of the pot. These coiled roots, representing about 30% of the total root system, had turned brownish in colour and were discarded. To compensate, the plant leaders were pruned heavily and used for cuttings. I might add here that this species has generally proved slower than many other *Verticordias* to propagate.

Planted P/H - 4/03, the plant made particularly good progress until early 11/03, but with heavy budding starting to develop, the trouble noted above started to show.

Acting upon the assumption that the development of flower buds was placing undue strain on a relatively young specimen, I carefully removed all of same but to no avail. The plant merely languished for a while but by the end of the year it was completely dead. Root inspection did not suggest a reason.

P/H - 10/03-A struck cutting from above was planted. It is now a mound 250mm high x 260 mm average diameter and is in full flower with vigorous new terminal growth extending approx. 50mm beyond all flower heads. In this case the roots, at planting had only just reached the bottom of the 150mm deep staging pot.

I have wondered if the seasonal planting time could be of significance with this species. With the garden planting method I am currently using, planting from late spring through summer appears to be the most desirable period for many *Verticordias*, with little or no later watering necessary after initial establishment, irrespective of weather pattern.

A stock specimen was planted in a container in 9/02. The root system had collapsed at planting, but nevertheless it made reasonable progress until 10/03 with good budding. At this stage the dreaded yellowing started to develop and after a few flowers had opened, it gave it away completely. Examination indicated a reasonably balanced root development which appeared healthy.

It had been an exceptionally dry early spring in Sydney but the plant had received regular watering and other treatments with Seasol and fertiliser.

I currently have other new plants progressing in the garden in various situations, and I am keeping my fingers crossed. As with the above these have been planted without necessity for any root pruning or soil disturbance, the roots having barely reached the bottoms of the nursery pots. Could it be that this species is a little sensitive to early root interference at planting or early tipping at the juvenile stage?

Looking over earlier records back in the 80's and 90's, I did have some reasonable successes with this species, although on occasion, loss of vigour to leader growth was occasionally recorded, generally in early spring.

Perhaps the soil types I have tried here have been a little below optimum desirability, or perhaps climatic factors of recent years have had some influence??

V. nobilis

Stock and P/H - 8/03 This specimen remains healthy and retains linear juvenile foliage, but has not progressed since planting. This would seem to be confirmation of the comment by Elizabeth George regarding a rather long dormancy period and slowness to establish.

V. pityrhops

Stock only. Still small and yellowish, although a little leader growth is currently evident. It has not responded to corrective treatments as noted above for a few other species.

V. plumosa var *plumosa*

Stock-8/90 + others. Species has been reliable and robust. Pruning in recent years has improved plant appearance.

V. plumosa var *ananeotes*

Stock and 3/96. Plant has remained healthy but rather open despite occasional pruning. In 1/04 it produced it's first flowers, (about 6). I intend trying it in a more open situation shortly using P/H planting treatment.

V. plumosa var *vassensis*

Stock and 1/04. Scott River form Too juvenile for comment.

V. pulchella

Stock only. Potted 8/03. Has progressed well. First cuttings taken.

V. staminosa subsp. *staminosa*

Stock only. Grafted specimen currently vigorous and flowering

V. staminosa subsp. *cyndracea* var *erecta*

Stock, 12/88 and P/H - 4/03. Vigorous and multistemmed from ground. The 12/88 garden specimen is now very gnarled and leggy but remains healthy and continues to make new seasonal growth and flower.

V. stenopetala

Stock only. Still small and yellowish, although a little leader growth is evident. It has not responded to corrective treatment, as attempted for a few other species: see above.

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