

**S.G.A.P. ACACIA STUDY GROUP**  
**NEWSLETTER**  
**AUGUST 1963**

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I wrote to two Botanical Institutions asking if shoots from burned stumps would develop into reasonable trees. I received a reply from the Burnley Horticultural College as follows:

“It is impossible to state with certainty that your burnt plants will develop again into good specimen trees.

However, we suggest that you select the strong healthy new shoots that will provide a balanced frame, then remove all other growth. These cuts should be painted over with either Prunex or Treeguard which are obtainable from the main florist stores.

Usually Oak and Ash trees recover satisfactorily, but the wattle group become subject to further damage by wood boring insects.”

Three letters from members have been received in reference to seed germination.

**Mr W G Tucker writes:**

“Propagating Camelias from seed, and its use for Acacia seed.

Many methods are used for the germination of Camelia seeds, but a method used by myself and other members of the Australian Camelia Research Society is to mix a number of seeds with damp peat moss and put them into a glass jar. (I use about 12 seeds to the average size pickle jar – the peat moss is kept just moist and I keep the jars in the kitchen where a fairly even temperature is maintained.) The seeds begin to sprout in about ten days – some of course take longer. When the taproots are about 1" to 1.5" long, the seeds are picked out of the moss and planted in individual flower pots or tins, and grown on in larger pots or tins as they make growth. I myself pinch off the tip of the taproot to encourage root branching as 90% of the seedlings will remain in pots for about 7 years – most of them are later used for grafting as the chances of growing an outstanding Camelia variety from seed are slim.

Camelia seeds like seeds of many of our natives, including acacias, are hard-shelled and when reading the difficulties experienced in our Acacia Group Newsletter, I thought I would use the same method on acacia seeds.

On Boxing Day, 26/12/62, I harvested 48 seeds from my *Acacia deanii* (being the only wattle of those I am growing which set seed) and planted them in moist peat moss as explained above. By the following Tuesday – New Year's Day, 12 of the seeds had germinated and by Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> January 1963, every one of the 48 seeds had germinated. As I was proceeding on my annual holidays on this day I did not bother to plant the seeds out into individual pots, but from observation of the very quick growth which took place, would think the seeds should be examined each day and as they germinate, be placed in tins or pots for growing on.

It is interesting to note that Thistle Harris in her book "Australian Plants for the Garden" recommends a similar method at Page 47 where she says "A simple and reliable method of germinating seeds is that of placing them in a box containing damp sawdust covered with a damp cornsack. The box may be placed either indoors or in a shaded part of the ground ... etc."

**Mr H Boyd –**

"I must emphasise Acacia seed germinates better in warmer weather. My past experiments show it is not worthwhile to propagate Acacia seed in the winter."

**Mons. Lapostolle –**

"In Australia as well as in Europe, the horticulturists and amateurs of Acacia have a lot of difficulties to make the Acacia seeds germinate.

I have asked one of my friends if he knew a product susceptible to make the Acacia seeds more quickly germinate. He told me to try to put the seeds into Sulphuric Acid.

For the species with big seeds and hard cover, we have soaked the seeds for 2 hours in sulphuric acid. For the softer species with small seeds, we have soaked them for 1 hour.

The result has been very good. After 3 days we have got a raising of about 80% of seeds.

I should like you to try this method and write me the results of your experiments."

I presume the sulphuric acid is a saturated solution.

So we have the following methods of germination suggested:-

1. Boiling water on seeds.
2. The same, with Mr Boyd's modification.
3. Nicking a piece from the hard coat of the seed.
4. Sulphuric acid (Mons. Lapostolle)
5. Mr Tucker's peat moss method.
6. Burning by a living flame.

Some planting should begin about mid-September. Would you each select three of the above methods, using a seed box for the sake of uniformity. The same number of seeds in each row, and of course, the same general conditions, and report results in the coming Autumn.

The Government Nurseries at Dubbo, NSW, give the following instructions for making a seed box. Would you again, for uniformity, adopt this method of planting.

"A good type of seed box is one made of inch-thick timber, strongly nailed, six inches deep, eighteen inches long and a foot wide. Half-inch holes should be bored in the bottom, about 2 inches apart. A layer of rubble or charcoal an inch deep, for drainage, should be placed in the bottom of the box, which is then filled with a mixture of good loam and coarse sand in the proportion of four to one. Creek or river sand is much better than beach sand. If the loam contains a good proportion of humus (leaf-mould) the proportion of sand can be reduced. Manure is not necessary unless the soil is very poor and if used should be well rotted".

Recent experience has indicated that seeds are hard to get and therefore, valuable. In view of the interest we have in this species, we should aim at establishing our own seed bank. I suggest this for your early consideration.

Many of you will be able to collect seeds of the less well known varieties. Seedlings of the commoner species can be easily obtained, but to really grow acacias, we must obtain the less known, and incidentally, often very beautiful, trees and shrubs. These can only be propagated through the medium of seeds. Seedlings will be out of the question in most cases.

I have nearly 70 varieties of seeds. Unfortunately a very few of many, and many of only a few, but it could be a start. At your earliest, I would like to know your views on this idea of mine. Could I please have opinions before the next Newsletter in November,

A C Keane