S.G.A.P. ACACIA STUDY GROUP
NEWSLETTER
FEBRUARY 1966

A C Keane
544 Brunswick St
North Fitzroy

In an address to the Victorian Branch of the S.G.A.P. during the year, Mr R. D. Croll stated that one cannot lay down rules for all Acacia species or can predict where a species will grow from a knowledge of its native habitat, the only method is to try it and see – or check with someone who has tried it. Personal observations support this as many non-Victorians are growing at Montrose. Here are some examples of those that will not only grow here but grow well:-

A. acuminata (WA), *A. bivenosa* (Q'ld, NSW), *A. cyanophylla* (WA), *A. decurrens* (NSW), *A. saligna* (WA), *A. prominens* (NSW, Q'ld), *A. pulchella* (WA)

As there is really only one way to find out which species will grow in your state or district, try one or two non-indigenous types for yourself. When you report on the growth of a specimen, it is necessary also to mention the mature height in your district as there is, as previously stressed, a difference according to conditions. Last October, Mr Holliday wrote: "In Mr Croll's list of shrubs (3 feet – 5 feet) I have to disagree strongly with two in particular – *A. rossei* and *A. anceps* – both of these grow to 15 feet or more in the wild in poor sandy soils, so will probably grow even larger under cultivation. This is a point I have found almost always – in cultivation practically all of the wattles (dwarf or otherwise) grow larger than in their natural environment – except trees – probably due to regular water and often better soils."

I asked Mr Croll for his comments and quote his reply: "This is the usual trouble with stating average maximum heights. And yet to quote extremes is misleading to the grower, particularly as your audience is spread over a large variety of climate. However, I am very surprised to hear of 15 feet for *A. rossei* and most interested to have information of this sort; I hope more will come to hand. I'm also surprised with *A. anceps*, but 15 feet is quite a size – 2½ times the height of a tall man. If you are mentioning the need for height observations to readers, please stress the need for care. I find I tend to overestimate height in the field."

As some may be contemplating growing small wattles in containers as suggested, here is a list of those I have planted over the past 3 years and which may be some guide in making a selection:-

A. aculeatissima (1 ft), *A. buxifolia* (6 ft), *A. glandulicarpa* (5 ft), *A. sclerophylla* (1 ft), *A. gladiiformis* (4 ft), *A. continua* (2 ft), *A. decora* (5 ft), *A. drummondii* (3 ft), *A. pulchella* (3 ft), *A. craspedocarpa* (4 ft), *A. brownii* (3 ft), *A. alata* (3 ft), *A. farinosa* (3 ft), *A. acinacea* (6 ft), *A. gilbertii* (3 ft)

Of these, *A. acinacea* and *A. glandulicarpa* have been disappointing. They are probably too big for tubs.

Miss Pearson in December sent me a list of the seeds she has on hand and said: "Of course, this is only a drop of what is needed. Yes, I did have many requests this year." There are 114 varieties, nearly 80% of which are marked "a few". Your assistance please. Mr Holliday has suggested "two really prostrate beauties we saw in Western Australia last October" ie *A. cometes* and *A. scabra*. Seeds of these would be much appreciated. He also mentioned *A. strongylophylla* – "a dry area species to 15 ft with quite the largest flower balls of any Acacia." A small quantity of seeds are available from the seed bank. I acknowledge with thanks receipt of the following seeds from Mr O'Donnell – *A. floribunda*, *A. sophorae*, *A. baileyana*. These he says do well in his own district of Greensborough which is only a few miles out of Melbourne. He expects to be able to send a small supply of *A. subporosa* and *A. podalyriifolia* a little later.

Mrs E Chandler writes re wattles in tubs – "Firstly on general principles, I agree with Mr Young about containers, but they can serve many useful purposes for difficult specimens enabling you to shift them around until you can prepare a permanent spot to their liking. However, I feel that so long as a plant is in a pot, one cannot claim to have established or acclimatised it. Re the smaller Acacias, Mr Althofer of Box 5, Dripstone, NSW has (in the special Acacia list):

amblygona	*brownii*	*continua*
conferta	*craspedocarpa*	*drummondii*
flexifolia	*gladiiformis*	*gilbertii*
hakeoides	*merrallii*	*multispicata*

The NSW SGAP seed bank has *A. alata* and A. *conferta*."

She concludes: "I would like to add to my remarks about containers – it has been my experience that all natives make much more rapid progress when taken from the containers and put into the ground. I am speaking now of things I have tried to keep in containers for longer than normal periods, I feel that they enjoy the natural competition with the roots of other plants and that they are lonely when imprisoned away from their own community."

Mrs McHaffie (apologies Oonah for mis-spelling) in her report asks: "How long can seed be kept after collection before sowing?"

According to the late Professor Ewart of the University of Melbourne, many years. He even mentions some that were still fertile after 50 years. Seeds with a very hard capsule like Acacias should remain fertile for a long time. However, I am aware that many believe fresh seed gives better results. Mrs McHaffie also asks if there are any particular Acacias I want you to try to grow from seed. Yes, as suggested, I would like to see what results you get of Acacias indigenous to States other than your own. She also reports that an *A. calamifolia* has split down the centre on a windless day and that an *A. prominens* often has broken branches in its centre without severe winds. The answer may lie in the following article taken from a previous Newsletter on Pests affecting Acacias. As promised I am sending excerpts from earlier from earlier communications which may be of interest to our newer members.

PESTS AFFECTING ACACIAS

It has been found after numerous enquiries (any information on wattles us hard to get) that they are attacked by several pests, some of which can destroy them as follows:-

1. A few like *A. mollissima* are attacked by **wood moths** whose larvae riddle the trunks and branches. Patches of sawdust and exuded gum are a sure sign of infestation.
2. **Wood boring beetles** (Borers) are common destroyers. A small hole surrounded by a mass resembling spittle is the well known indication.
3. **Gall flies** which particularly affect *A. baileyana*. On cutting open these the larva of a fly (a type of wasp) can be found in each one.
4. **Mistletoe**, especially the grey mistletoe, which has a penchant for *A. melanoxylon*. About this latter, I know nothing. I have never, to my knowledge, seen it on Acacias. It is said the mistletoe should be destroyed before fruiting, but unfortunately the leaves and flowers are very ornamental and are frequently left for this reason. Nature provides partial protection in the larvae of certain butterflies which devour the leaves of mistletoe clumps. Can anyone obtain more information?

Treatment: Nothing seems to be able to be done about the wood moths except tree surgery, that is if caught early enough and provided the main trunk is unaffected.

Regarding 2: Again, if seen early enough the injection of petrol or kerosene into the borer's hole followed by plugging with soap is efficacious.

Regarding 3: In previous letters I mentioned I had simply cut off as many as possible of the swellings and was hoping for the best when the fires put an end to the experiment. From what I saw I believe the removal of the majority would give the tree a chance. One, *A. floribunda*, has apparently recovered before being burned.

The Forestry Commission of Victoria reports re mistletoe – "Manual means of eradication would probably be best, ie the removal of the parasites by tree surgery. Recurrence of the infestation is certain unless other sources of infection in the locality are also treated since birds and possums readily distribute the sticky seeds."

The Department of Agriculture says inter alia of galls – "Spraying with an insecticide is the usual way of protecting a plant against infestation, but in order to do this effectively quite a powerful unit would be required for a large tree and, of course, it would be necessary to know the pest's life cycle so that the spray could be properly timed. The important gall disease of a citrus which is caused by a wasp is currently under investigation but, so far, a stage has not been reached when a recommendation could be made."

To date, no criticisms of or views on my remarks re dwarf acacias have been received, the holidays, no doubt, accounting for this. I trust I will have your ideas in time for the April paper.