

S.G.A.P. ACACIA STUDY GROUP
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Dear Members

The last growing season in Tasmania has not been kind to many of our native plants. The garden is showing disturbing signs of distress from too little rain. Some mature shrubs. Grevilleas in particular, are dying before we become aware of their condition.

NEW MEMBERS - Welcome

Mr Terry Land, "Wattle Hill", Rylestone, NSW 2849
SGAP Qld Region, PO Box 809, Fortitude Valley, Qld 4006
Mr John Lauricella, 46 Ashley St, Hornsby, NSW 2077
Mrs J Gay, 3 Bauman's Rd, Riverwood, NSW 2210
Mrs Irene G Chapman, 20 Swift St, Slade Point, Qld 4741
National Botanic Garden, GPO Box 158, Canberra, ACT 2601

I would like to acknowledge receipt of newsletters from the Melaleuca, Brachyscome, Dodonaea and Eucalypt study groups and from the Queensland, Victorian and New South Wales Regions, also the Beaufortia and Callistemon Study Groups.

SEED BANK

Thank you to those members who forwarded seed; it is much appreciated.

Additions

A. bynoeana
A. laricina
A. lasiocarpa var. *lasiocarpa*
A. leptospermoides
A. plicata
A. varia var. *parviflora*
A. wardellii
A. sp. Coolgardie (?)

Deletions

A. dallachiana
A. harpophylla
A. horridula

New stock is needed of the above deletions and the following:-

<i>A. amoena</i>	<i>A. dodonaeifolia</i>
<i>A. ausfeldii</i>	<i>A. echinula</i>
<i>A. aulacocarpa</i>	<i>A. georginae</i>
<i>A. baxteri</i>	<i>A. kettlewelliae</i>
<i>A. blakelyi</i>	<i>A. lanigera</i>
<i>A. difformis</i>	<i>A. mitchellii</i>
<i>A. dimidiata</i>	<i>A. restiacea</i>

and of course, any seed you may be able to locate that does not appear in the seed list. Thank you.

SPECIFIC PROJECTS

Ten members responded to my requests in the last newsletter – thank you. I would still like to hear from more of you, so we can receive a wider coverage of species suited to different conditions. There is usually so much difference between species which are great successes here in Tasmania and those in, say, Townsville. Sometimes there are surprises, like the extraordinary adaptability of *A. baileyana* and *A. floribunda*, to mention just two species.

MELBOURNE WILDFLOWER SHOW

Our group has been invited by Maroondah Group to take part in the wildflower show to be held at Ringwood Cultural Centre on 4 and 5 August. Quoting Marilyn Gray – “As part of the show we wish to highlight some of the study groups, showing the public the work that they do, with a massed display of their particular genus. We would like to know whether you or local members of your study group would be interested in having a display at the show. This would be an excellent way to promote your own study group. By manning your display you could answer questions and sell information such as newsletters, booklets that you produce. Last year we featured the Dryandra Study Group and the massed display of dryandras created a lot of interest among our visitors.

If it is not possible for you to present a manned display, we may be able to feature a massed exhibit using your particular genus.”

Could members in the area either undertake to supply flowers or pot plants for a massed display, offer to man the display for a time or work in with the Maroondah Group in some way so we can be represented?

Does any member have photographs (coloured) which could be displayed or a set of slides on acacias which could be shown?

We could arrange to have printed appropriate information sheets for handing out to the public, but I need your offers of help or your suggestions on what we can do to participate effectively. Please let me have them as soon as possible.

AUSTRALIAN FLORA FOUNDATION

The Foundation through Mr Bill Payne has written to our group as follows:-

“The Australian Flora Foundation has offered to initiate scientific projects related to the work of your study group. You will appreciate the enormous value of this offer. The Foundation has the services of trained scientific workers at all levels of scientific endeavour, together with unlimited facilities in the form of laboratories, equipment, national gardens etc.

All the scientist now needs is your advice as to direction or preferred projects

I have written to Mr Payne asking for more time to contact you, meanwhile proposing one aspect of acacia growing that I thought could benefit from study and experiment. This is a project which I had intended that we, as a group, should undertake anyway. This is to experiment with growing Acacias from “leaf” cuttings and of course, it can go ahead at both levels.

Now I would like to receive your suggestions of what you consider other worthwhile areas of study and experiment to forward to Mr Payne.

ACACIA DISTRIBUTION PROJECT

Mr Bruce Maslin, botanist from the WA Herbarium has written and asked that Beverley O’Keefe be thanked for her efforts in collecting Acacia specimens for the Herbarium. He is very pleased with the results. As well as getting a number of new distribution records for her area, Beverley has provided the Herbarium with some good specimens which they are always pleased to receive.

Bruce would like to see more work of this type undertaken by people living in different areas. I would suggest that any member willing to assist with this important project, please contact Bruce Maslin first.

MEMBERS' NOTES

David Shiels mentioned that *A. calamifolia* was thought to grow in the Shepparton area, but this plant has now been identified as *A. loderi*.

Jacqui Dullard commented that the seeds of *A. pinguifolia* were very slow to germinate whereas *A. restiacea* germinated overnight. Both received hot water treatment, in some cases several times.

Lindsay Johnson of Tamworth no longer uses boiling water as he feels he has better success planting the seeds as they are. For example, he says that *A. farnesiana*, *A. pendula*, *A. omalophylla* were up in 4 days, *A. brachystachya* 83 days, *A. calamifolia* 84 and *A. aspera* 89 (he must be much more patient than I am!).

Lindsay has been attempting to grow the rare *A. peuce* with varying degrees of success – it seems that it abhors red clay! He now has some plants ready to plant out in his garden. He describes *A. peuce* – “the solitary tree we found was enormous, probably 70 feet high. It looked like a scraggy Norfolk Pine. The pine needles are very long (up to 12 inches) and stiff and it is fairly obvious why they were misnamed Casuarinas by early settlers. Anything less like an Acacia would be hard to imagine. Close examination of the “needles” shows them to be square in cross section (not round as they appear).”

Chuck Young of Canberra commented that apart from the usuals, his most successful Acacias are *A. cognata* and *A. muelleriana*. The latter has reached about 5m in 2 or 3 years but has virtually grown straight up, whereas *A. cognata* which is about 6 years old appears to have stabilized at about 5m, but exploded laterally and during summer has to be lightly pruned once a month to keep it from suppressing nearby plants. After about 6 failures with *A. pulchella* he now has it growing apparently happily. He feels that it prefers a clay soil as the plant in clay is much more vigorous than the one in other soil. Chuck, too, has found that the boiling water treatment is of limited usefulness, he soaks the seeds until they swell, then he breaks the seed coat with fine tweezers where the stem will emerge, then plants them halfway in the soil – he says it seems to be working.

Tony Scalzo from Vic. sent seeds and a long interesting report on the acacias he is growing, in particular the small bipinnate leafed species on which he is concentrating. From his comments it seems that any member who is growing what was labelled *A. nigricans* batch (2) from the seed bank, probably has *A. leioderma*. Check newsletter July 1982 for information or send a flowering piece next flowering season for identification. Any plants you have grown from seed bank seed labelled *A. strigosa* will probably be *A. lateriticola*. Tony suggests that if members are not growing the latter, they should be because it is a very attractive species with large deep yellow flowers and bright green foliage. Seed from seed bank labelled *A. obovata* has grown up to look suspiciously like *A. myrtifolia* although it is hard to be certain as no flowers are present on the specimen forwarded.

PRUNING – Tony has pruned many of his plants, many lightly, some moderately and some heavily. All plants are very young (2-3 years only). It is a long list. I will include those plants which have responded to moderate and heavy pruning.

Moderate	<i>A. amblygona</i> prostrate	Heavy	<i>A. continua</i>
	<i>A. buxifolia</i>		<i>A. glaucoptera</i>
	<i>A. curvata</i>		<i>A. howittii</i>
	<i>A. drummondii</i> ssp <i>elegans</i>		<i>A. leioderma</i>
	<i>A. glandulicarpa</i>		<i>A. lineata</i>
	<i>A. imbricata</i>		<i>A. pulchella</i> var. <i>glaberrima</i>
	<i>A. lanuginosa</i>		<i>A. trigonophylla</i>
	<i>A. redolens</i>		
	<i>A. trineura</i>		

Tony maintains the view that regular light pruning shaping of Acacias in a home bush-garden is essential to maintain the vigour and compactness of individual specimens. After looking at our garden and some not so compact bushes, I totally agree with him.

We pruned a mature *A. imbricata* (14 years old) down to less than 1m after flowering. It sat in stunned silence and shock for months and only now has it put out a tentative new shoot or two near the base. One must take into account that we have not had more than one decent fall of rain in three months to help it along, but recovery is certainly doubtful at this stage.

Terry Land commented that in the Rylstone area NSW *A. decora*, *A. terminalis*, *A. mearnsii* and *A. baileyana* are not affected by rabbits. Do others find this is so? He says that *A. baileyana* is the only acacia favoured by the local council. *A. melanoxylon* grows there in waterlogged conditions.

Inez Armitage is anxious to know if any member has successfully grown *A. complanata* as she is having problems with it even though it grows naturally a bit further north. Please advise.

Harry Infield from Coomba Park reported that his 12 *Acacia cardiophylla* have grown into a bushy cluster and flowered marvellously last August-September. He mentioned that they are heavily mulched, yet underneath are well drained.

MOUNTING OF SPECIMENS

Inez Armitage has commented that if specimens are glued one cannot easily handle them for future investigation or comparison. The alternative is to file and store specimens loose in a paper folder to protect them. Damage does occur to the specimens treated in this way because of movement when handling the folders and specimens. The choice is yours.

NEW PROJECT – Growing Acacias from ‘leaf cuttings’

As mentioned earlier I would like you to conduct experiments with the above, choosing species with firm or slightly fleshy phyllodes and see what results you obtain.

I realized that it was possible because in September last year I planted ‘leaf’ cuttings of a prostrate unnamed acacia which a friend in Bute, SA, was growing. A few weeks ago I found that there were roots down to the bottom of the 12.5 cm pot while there was still only one ‘leaf’ to be seen on top. This acacia had fairly thick linear phyllodes about 2mm wide.

It should be an interesting exercise. Maybe someone has already tried it, please set down your experiences, if this is so, and send them in.

REVEGETATION OF A MINING AREA

Mt Isa Mines conducts a continuing program of revegetation of their mining sites.

Three years ago we were shown large areas newly planted out with native plants. By June 1983 another area on the old quarry had been planted with over 3500 trees including *Acacia holosericea*, *A. hemsleyi*, *A. cowleana* and *A. victoriae*, *A. orthocarpa*, *A. monticola*. Most species natural for the area.

In 1981 the Environment Services Department of the mines planted another area on top of a hill and irrigated it for a year and by June 1983, among other plants, they had *A. cowleana* at flowering stage and good plants of *A. cambagei*. Another hill was planted in March last year with many more species of Acacia, Eucalypt, Hakea and Grevillea.

At the time of writing (June 1983) work was underway on a park which was to become a native plant park with 400 trees of mixed eucalypt and acacia species.

At the same time in conjunction with CSIRO, experiments are being carried out on the biological control of *Salvinia*, together with other projects with the James Cook University of North Queensland.

A BOOK – COME BACK IN WATTLE TIME by Edith Coleman (published in 1935)

This is an illustrated soft-cover handbook on the Australian wattles which I discovered in a second-hand bookshop. It is made up of many short paragraphs and some poems. The paragraphs are titles for example “Beauty Not all in Flowers”, “Wattles Have Their Troubles”, “Sleep Movement of Wattles”, “Boil or Fire Seeds” and “The Wattle Poet”. There are many others as well and I shall quote from some of them in future newsletters.

BLACKWOOD (*Acacia melanoxylon*) THE PRIZED TIMBER TREE

Under the most favourable conditions Blackwood reaches a height of 30m, but in less fertile areas it is found as not much larger than a gnarled shrub. Its distribution is very wide ranging from Atherton Tablelands in Queensland south, mostly along the eastern highlands and up to 100-200 km inland, to Tasmania. It is found in South Australia as well, usually in higher rainfall areas where soils are fertile.

Blackwood is a long grained timber of high strength which is used both as a solid timber and as a veneer. It is used extensively for interior joinery and panelling in commercial and home building. It is easily bent and these qualities make it suitable for boat and coach building. It is often used for making fine furniture and many items by the craft industries.

Mr R T Baker, an early curator at the Sydney Technological Museum wrote in one of his major works, "The Hardwoods of Australia and their Economics" – "This is probably one of the most gorgeously figured woods in the world. As a cabinet timber for all-round usefulness it might, perhaps, be placed next to *Cedrella toona* (or *Toona australis* as it is now known, M.S.). Red Cedar and its utilisation in this connection dates far back in Australian timber technology". This was written in 1919.

Subsequent to enquiries made to the Forestry Commission of Tasmania, I was forwarded several papers from which I have extracted the following:

The Tasmanian Forestry Commission is undertaking regeneration and management programmes for Blackwood as it is recognised that it is one of Tasmania's most valuable timber trees. The 1980-81 cut was just under 9,000 m³ almost all of which was used for furniture, veneer and other high value products.

It is considered easy to manage as it grows quickly and withstands intense competition from other trees. Blackwood occurs naturally in Tasmania in even aged stands, sometimes of high density (up to 1000 trees per hectare). In forest situations it is relatively immune to fungal diseases and insect attack. It has been found, however, that young Blackwoods are heavily browsed by native animals and must be protected by inexpensive cages during their first 2-3 years.

The blackwood swamps occur near Smithton in the far north-west of Tasmania where for almost a century most of the State's best Blackwood has been taken. An area of 7,000 ha has now been dedicated as State Forest for growing Blackwood in perpetuity. The annual rainfall for the area ranges from 1100-1800 mm and is well distributed throughout the year.

In recognition of the unique swamp habitat 100 ha in one swamp has been set aside as a State Reserve. Two "nature trails" in the swamps have been established for public use.

As part of the management plan trees will be logged in what the Commission refers to as "units" when there are between 50 to 250 blackwoods per hectare with an average diameter of 50cm (breast height, over bark) and a sawlog volume of at least 50 m³/ha. Stands of this size are economically logged today by experienced contractors. It is intended that each cut-over unit will be regenerated with blackwood.

Although basic calculations indicate a widely fluctuating sawlog availability for each 5 year period over the next 70 years, in practice the Commission feels this can be evened out to produce a steady yield into the future.

In the swamps trees need to be 30-40 years old before they develop a good heartwood colour, but 70 years will produce 50 cm trees which is regarded as an acceptable short rotation period.

Blackwood afforestation in limited areas is being tried on private properties and State Forest in various places around Tasmania.

Where seedlings are required they are grown in a Forestry Commission nursery. The pre-treatment the Commission finds most convenient and successful is to pour boiling water over the seeds and allow them to steep for 10-20 minutes.

Seeds sown in November grow to plants about 30cm high when they are planted out, by hand, from May. No fertilizer or other chemical is used at planting time.

ACACIA SLIDE LIBRARY

I have been considering for some time that we should have a pool of slides from which we could put together several interesting sets to be made available to other groups, primarily with SGAP.

With this in mind, has any member duplicates or unwanted slides of identified Acacia species which they would like to donate to the group? If you would like to do so, and when we have a sufficient number to make it worthwhile I will contact "Australian Plants" or the regions and advertise that we will loan the slides for showing.

If you are contemplating taking some especially for the pool, could I suggest that there are many interesting aspects of Acacia to photograph such as unusual bark, pods, flowers or outstanding new growth: close ups are useful for identification, too.

Let me hear from you in this matter along with any slides you have available.

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1984 - \$3.00

Subscriptions are due again. This does not apply to those who have joined since the beginning of the year. After considering present costs I have had to increase the amount to \$3.00 a year.

SUMMARY OF THOSE AREAS WHERE SOME ACTION IS NEEDED

1. Offers of help or suggestions for Melbourne Wildflower Show, August.
2. Ideas for participation in projects to be undertaken in conjunction with Australian Flora Foundation.
3. Members willing to help with the Acacia distribution project to contact Mr Bruce Maslin.
4. Start growing Acacia from 'leaf' cuttings.
5. Slides for Acacia slide library.
6. Subscriptions.

**Marion Simmons
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