

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS  
ACACIA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER NO 58

Dear Members

Spring was a very wet one for northern Tasmania and the rate of growth of the grass has been alarming to say the least. The plants have reacted positively too! The rains must have been widespread as members from different parts of the country have reported a much better than average flowering this spring.

Thank you for your subscriptions, donations and letters. Our thanks also to the regions and study groups for their newsletters.

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to new members who have joined us since July. Their names are included in the accompanying member's list.

SEED BANK

Deletions

alpina  
amblygona  
bidentata  
binervata  
megacephala  
mitchellii  
oxycedrus  
rhetinocarpa  
siculiformis  
stereophylla  
strongyophylla

Additions

aphylla  
bailevana prostrate form  
dempsteri  
lucasii  
affin. multispicata  
affin. myrtifolia (Mt Desmond)  
Salt Gully Wattle

SEED of any of the above deleted species or those not on the seed list would be appreciated. If you have the opportunity to collect seed from the natural bush this is best as there is less likelihood of hybridisation occurring. Please label the packets with whether it is garden grown or collected from natural bush, date and place of collection. Thank you.

TREE PLANTING FOR A GREENER AUSTRALIA

Planting trees has become a popular pastime in many parts of Australia. Certainly this enthusiasm and realisation of the need for action to revegetate our land is to be applauded and encouraged, as we have lost and are losing so much of our tree cover. Surprisingly it is a pressing problem in the Midlands of Tasmania.

After the decision to plant trees has been taken, good planning is paramount and here such programmes as the 'Whole Farm Plan' which is on trial in Tasmania, provides good advice after a thorough assessment of the site. Local native species are used for regeneration projects wherever possible, and these include both trees and smaller shrubs.

For those who are considering planting trees for whatever reason, a careful selection of appropriate trees and shrubs for each site should be the first priority. I understand that in some areas trees are being planted in great numbers - just any type of tree!

Fortunately the alarm bells began to ring and concerns were publicised that planting all these 'foreign' trees could endanger or destroy the indigenous plants in the areas involved.

One risk is that the introduced species, whether overseas or native from other areas, may become 'environmental weeds' as they have done in South Africa, United States, some other countries and even in other Australian States.

So the call is to plant local flora wherever possible. Seeds and cuttings are easily on hand to start a plant propagation programme so long as some original vegetation is left. Roadside verges are often the source of an amazing variety. Also on farms fencing off an area and excluding stock can bring some surprises in the form of a variety of local plants that may not have been seen for years!

Of course we would include quick growing Acacias as being an essential part of any planting to prepare the soil and provide cover for other more slowly growing plants.

We would like to receive a report on any plant regeneration project which may be under way in your area, especially of the Acacias being used.

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#### MEMBERS NOTES

A letter from Dorothy and Arnold Sandell from Tamborine Qld. with the news that sadly their lovely property will go under water with the building of a dam. They will move to Beaudesert in the New Year and we wish them well. I hope that Arnold still keeps his enthusiasm for growing Acacias!

Irene Champion from Slade Point Qld writes of the book '101 Trees of Mackay' produced by the local group with which she has been involved. Congratulations! All trees described have been illustrated with black and white line drawings. The book launch was on 17 November.

Irene mentioned that several local members had Racosperma paniculatum flowering this year. This species was published as Racosperma so does not have an equivalent Acacia name. Irene reported that growers were quite impressed with it and its bright golden ball flowers. Must be tough, too, as it is growing in a clay bed, has been blown over in a cyclone, staked upright again and hasn't looked back!

Helen Bizzai of Gawler SA wrote about the local and SA wattles she is concentrating on growing. They are propagating most of the plants themselves. She reported that some of those which are doing really well are: A. quornensis, araneosa, rupicola, microcarpa, brachybotrya, acinacea, rhetinocarpa, spinescens, rigens, sclerophylla (local), menzelii, wilhelmiana, montana, confluens, notabilis (local), hakeoides, wattsiana and lineata.

A letter from Thomas Ross in West Germany in early September told us that his Acacias were growing well in open ground and in containers. One plant of A. alpina was about 1 m tall and in bud.

In the plantation in Spain, A. argyrophylla was full of buds as was A. dealbata. A. anceps flowered in June, A. saligna in spring. The latter is naturalized in old parks and wet areas near Barcelona.

It was interesting to note that Thomas and a grower of Australian native plants in England, were collaborating to write a book about our plants in Europe. He said that of course wattles would figure prominently.

After totally failing to germinate A. leptospermoides (WA) after boiling water treatment, Thomas tried soaking the seed in water at about 60 c warm (by mixing cold and boiling water (a very unprecise method, he said!). He was rewarded with 'massive germination' and the plants were growing on well.

Zoe Fyfe of southern Tas. has about 58 species of Acacia growing in her garden, mostly unwatered except for the newly planted. Many species were about to flower when she wrote.

Leon Steinheidt, Laidley Qld. had many Acacias flowering for the first time this year. These included A. quinetii, merinthophora, cyclops, baileyana, (not always possible so farth north) cultriformis, brachycarpa, acradenia, jibberdingensis, dictyophleba, blakei, juncifolia, polifolia, oldfieldii and beckleri. Sounds wonderful!

Leon reported total seed germination failure with A. jucunda and A. wardellii, both lots of seed were quite soft when nicked and they became mouldy instead of germinating. (Anyone else had problems with these?) Also A. hemignosta became mouldy although the seed was hard. He said that he had had the same problem with other northern species.

Leon does not plant all the seed supplied at once so he is able to check the effects of various conditions on establishment of young plants. One of his greatest environmental problems is any long period of excessive moisture in cooler months.

Terry Tame reported failures with germination of several species, A. mitchellii was one. After resowing them he reported that he had some success with all the previous failures. This is good news.

John Wieck from Singleton WA wrote that he has been touring around the country from Esperance in the south west to Dongara north of Perth.

The country in the Ravensthorpe-Esperance area was a picture this year, as it was in the Dongara area where many Acacias were seen in flower.

A letter from Frank Prichard of Lockhart NSW reported that Acacias from Galore Reserve made a wonderful show this year. Frank mentioned that he had been surprised that, although thousands (probably millions) of Acacia seeds had been shed by many different species, very few had germinated. In contrast A. pycnantha which occurs naturally has spread in profusion.

ACIAR - Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research. Their latest Forestry Newsletter No 8 has been received. An article on dryland forestry research in Africa was interesting. After a visit to West Africa Lex Thomson CSIRO reported that 'since the early 1970's a large number of Australian acacias have been trialled in dry tropical West Africa by national research institutes'. The best performers in terms of survival and biomass production have been A. adsurgens, A. cowleana, A. holosericea, A. trachycarpa, A. torulosa and A. tumida.

'In trials in Senegal A. sclerosperma and A. ampliceps are promising on sandy and saline soils in near coastal locations. A. ampliceps is highly palatable and potentially useful stock fodder in contrast to most phyllodinous acacias which are not readily browsed.'

'A. holosericea is the best known Australian Acacia in West Africa but has not been widely planted in farmers fields because of its poor coppicing ability, competition with crops and low fodder value. Nevertheless, the species has a role in producing fuelwood, including charcoal and restoring soil fertility on degraded lands.'

From this visit it was evident that future research on promising Australian dry area acacias should place greater emphasis on the potential for fodder and human food production. A. tumida, as well as other species including inland forms of A. holosericea has a major, so far untapped, potential for human food production. These species produce large quantities of protein and energy rich seeds which have been a traditional food source for the aborigines of arid Australia.

4.

Acacia Study Group has been forwarded a complimentary copy of 'Trees for the Tropics' - Growing Australian Multipurpose Trees and Shrubs in Developing Countries by D J Boland ed. ACIAR. The book describes the first four years of a group of four ACIAR forestry projects in Australia, China, Kenya, Thailand and Zimbabwe and provides a history of their development and results to date. I have written to ACIAR thanking them for their generosity.

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#### ACACIAS NEWS

From WA Herbarium Journal 'Nuytsia' Vol 7 No 1 1989:-

Acacia veronica Maslin - A shrub or tree 3-10 m tall with variable dark green linear to linear-elliptic phyllodes (6-8-9-15(20) cm long x 3-8 mm wide usually with three longitudinal nerves; white to cream ball flowers on a raceme, two stalks to each. Flowering March-September. Pods brown linear to 11 cm x 5-5.5 mm

An Acacia from south west WA, endemic in the Stirling Range National Park and only Acacia species known to be confined to the Ranges.

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From 'Muelleria' 7 (1) 1989

#### A. caerulescens.

This species has been known as 'Buchan Blue' for many years and has been considered a variety of A. obliquinervia.

Tree to 10-15 m tall with bluish foliage; phyllodes 4-8 cm x (1)1.5-3 cm with central nerve with a fine oblique branching nerve running between it and the marginal gland. Flowers are bright lemon yellow balls on often long racemes in November. (Uncertain flowering time)

Acacia caerulescens is restricted to limestone based soils in the Swan Reach - Tambo Upper area and at Lake Tvers north to Murrindal area in Eastern Victoria. Many trees have been lost to roadworks and more are threatened. The species is preserved within the Lake Tvers Forest Park where there are a number of mature trees.

Acacia caerulescens is widely cultivated and differs from A. obliquinervia in having shorter phyllodes with a branched nerve running between mid-nerve and marginal gland and with longer finer flower stalks.

Wishing you a happy festive season.

Marion Simmons