

## EPACRIS STUDY GROUP

Group Leader: Gwen Elliot, P.O. Box 655 Heathmont Vic. 3135

### NEWSLETTER

**No. 25**

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**MARCH 2008**

Warm greetings to all Study Group members.

Most of us continue to be challenged by the weather and in many cases the lack of rain, but fortunately we are finding ways of meeting the challenge, and in general our gardens are surviving well. It is fairly certain that with Australia's increasing population and a corresponding increase in demand for water by home owners and also agriculturists who provide our food, we will all need to moderate our requirements in regard to water use. Most *Epacris* do prefer moist soils rather than very dry conditions, but there are some ways we can help our plants to survive. A short piece on watering and grey water use is included on page 4 and any other tips you may have would be very welcome for future Newsletters.

Talks on *Epacris* have been provided for a number of Australian Plant Society regional groups and an *Epacris* Study Group display was included in the annual Flower Show of the Yarra Yarra group (Victoria) last spring.

One of our Study Group members has recently been involved in discussions with the local Horticultural Society and looking at the possibility of establishing a garden of Epacridaceae plants including *Epacris* within the Society's large display garden.

If any other Study Group members are involved in community garden areas where plantings of *Epacris* have been undertaken or are being considered, please let us know as the *Epacris* Study Group may be able to provide some assistance.

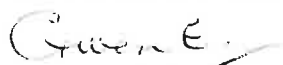
Special news for Victorians is that **Dick Burns**, founding secretary of the *Epacris* Study Group will be visiting in April, and speaking on **Plants of the Tasmanian Highlands** at the Maroondah regional group at 8pm on Friday April 18th. The venue is the Manchester Unity Hall, 8 Main St. Blackburn, very close to the Blackburn Railway Station, and all *Epacris* Study Group members will be warmly welcomed on this evening.

The renewal date for *Epacris* Study Group membership is in June each year. Many members take advantage of the opportunity to renew only every two years, as each year seems to come around so quickly. Individual membership renewal dates are printed on each mailing label, so it is easy to know whether you need to renew this year or not.

Thanks to all who have been recording the flowering times of *Epacris* species. It is an ongoing project for the Study Group, and further details will be found on Page 7.

Please also remember that items for the Study Group Newsletter are always very welcome. Please let us know what you are growing, and your successes and challenges with *Epacris* species.

Greetings and happy gardening,



Gwen Elliot

**New challenges & opportunities for one Study Group member**

**Kris Schaffer** has during the last year moved from South Hobart to a new sea-level garden in **Murdunna, Tas.** Her report on Epacridaceae plantings after 10 months in the ground was that the plants were doing remarkably well. We hope that this has continued during the summer months Kris, and look forward to receiving your update in due course.

**Study Group member from USA travels 'Down Under'**

Special greetings to Epacris Study Group member Mary Sue Ittner who with husband Bob plus six hiking friends spent four weeks in Australia late last year. They spent a day in Sydney, then two weeks in south-western Western Australia before travelling to Victoria, spending time in Bacchus Marsh, Halls Gap and at Apollo Bay.

All eight members of the group were taking photos, so undoubtedly there has been much re-living of their travels since their return to California.

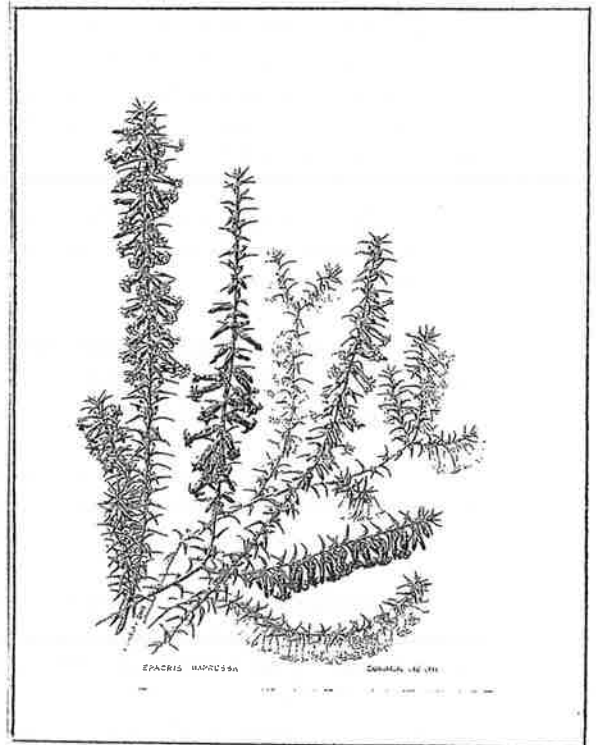
Bob suggested that Mary Sue take the opportunity to renew her membership of the Epacris Study Group while in Australia - with some Australian cash in hand, so her membership has now been renewed until 2013 ! Hopefully Sue and Bob will be able to visit again by then, to renew once more 'in person'.

**Two delightful Epacris products**

An attractive full colour greeting card featuring dark pink, pink and white forms of **Epacris impressa** has been produced from a painting by Margo Heeley and is now being sold to raise funds the Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater group, east of Melbourne Vic. The cost is just \$2.00 each.

The Helmeted Honeyeater has been listed as an endangered bird now for many years and the Friends group has spent countless hours assisting in breeding programs and revegetation of local areas including the Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve.

Also available from the group is a dark navy-blue, warm and soft polarfleece-type beanie hat with pink **Epacris impressa** embroidery. These are just \$15.00 and would be excellent as a gift or for your next camping or walking trip.



If you would like to purchase either of these items you can order them directly from the **Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater, P.O. Box 131, Woori Yallock, 3139**, adding 10% to cover postage and handling.

Alternatively you can include an order when renewing your Epacris Study Group membership this year and we will arrange for the items to be sent to you as soon as possible.

**For our Epacris puzzle and Sudoku enthusiasts**

Most people would hopefully have been able to solve the puzzle included in our Newsletter No. 24, but in case you have been waiting for the solution - Here it is !

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A	C	U	S	P	O	E	R	I
P	I	R	A	C	E	U	S	O
S	E	O	I	U	R	C	A	P

**Wanted !****Plants of *Epacris microphylla* var. *rhombifolia***

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne is currently establishing a special collection of Victoria's RARE AND THREATENED SPECIES.

One of the plants which they hope to be able to include in the collection is ***Epacris microphylla* var. *rhombifolia***.

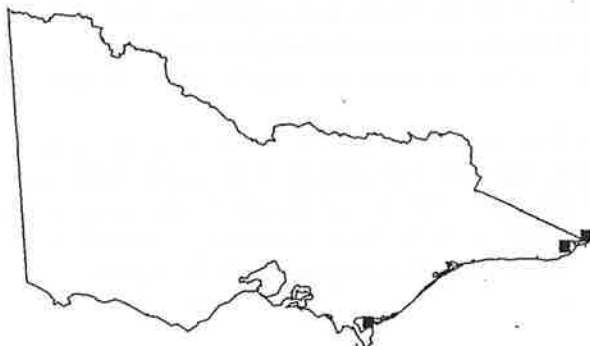
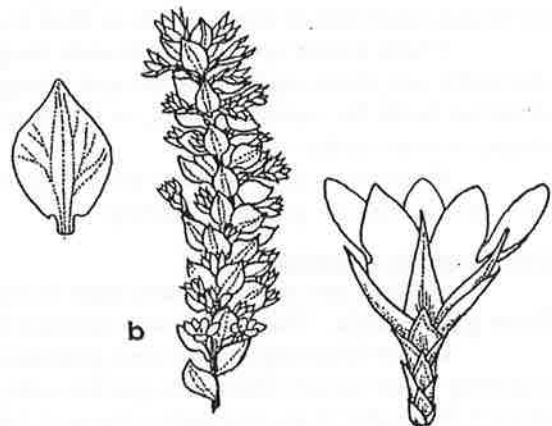
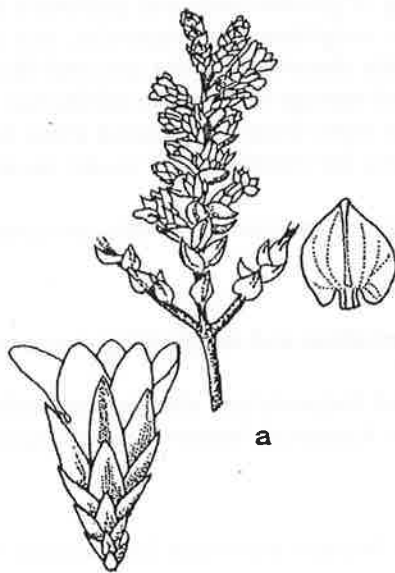
*Epacris microphylla* occurs in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania. The var. *rhombifolia* occurs primarily in New South Wales with a small number of disjunct populations in Victoria, in subalpine bogs of wet heathlands including in the Blue Range near Marysville, the upper Thomsdon River area near Mt. Whitelaw, Snowy Range. It is found often at altitudes above 1400 m. The leaves of this variety taper towards the base and are rhomboid in outline.

A PROFILE PAGE on ***Epacris microphylla*** including var. ***rhombifolia*** was included in Newsletter No. 21 - March 2006.

If you happen to be growing ***Epacris microphylla* var. *rhombifolia***, David Roberts at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne would be delighted to hear from you. His email contact is - David.Roberts@rbg.vic.gov.au.

Alternatively Epacris Study Group Leader - Gwen Elliot (Ph. 9879 1427) will be happy to pass on any information to David.

The illustrations below with distribution maps are from THE FLORA OF VICTORIA, Volume 3, edited by N. G. Walsh and T. J. Entwisle of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne and National Herbarium of Victoria, and published by Reed International Books / Inkata Press in 1996.

***E. microphylla* var. *microphylla******E. microphylla* var. *rhombifolia***

## **Epacris in the garden - Watering and Grey Water Use**

Most *Epacris* have very fine roots which do need regular moisture to sustain them, without the soil being waterlogged.

We are all now very aware of the need to use water wisely and generally Australian gardeners have discovered that we do not need to use as much water in the garden as was done in previous years. There are various ways in which we can assist our plants to survive and even thrive without regular supplementary watering.

### How to Water

While some methods of watering including tall erect sprinklers are extremely wasteful, often distributing water also on pathways and into gutters, there are other much more efficient alternatives which can be used. Soaker hoses and trickle irrigation systems are two excellent means of water application. Direct the water ONLY where it is needed.

Watering with a hand-held hose or watering can will also allow you to see just where the water is needed.

### When to Water

The first main consideration is that we should only provide supplementary watering to a garden when it is needed by the plants. Because we are permitted to water for a certain number of hours on a specific day, that does NOT mean that our plants will benefit from being watered then. Poke a finger into the soil to see if it is dry. Have a good look at the foliage and you will usually be able to observe whether all is well, or if the plant needs a drink.

Water only in the early morning or in the evening, to allow the plant to take in the moisture and reduce evaporation

### Availability of Water

Ensuring that all available rainwater which falls in your garden stays in your garden is one of the easiest and most successful methods of garden watering.

It is often possible with just some minimum contouring of garden beds and pathways to make sure that rainwater does not quickly run off into drains or neighbouring properties, but is held in swales, channels or even ponds so that it can be more gradually absorbed by the soil and the plants.

There is now an extremely wide range of water tanks and storage facilities available for domestic use, from upright metal and fibreglass tanks which can store several thousand litres, to slimline tanks for narrow spaces, or horizontal tanks and bladders for storing water under decking, steps, or even under the house.

Most municipalities now encourage the collection of water from roofs and this can certainly be a real bonus for garden watering.

### Aids to water retention

Mulches are an important asset in regard to water conservation and minimising evaporation from garden soils. This aspect was covered in our Newsletter of

Water-retaining liquids and granules such as *EcoWet* and *Saturaid* can also be very helpful in assisting water penetration into garden soils, while products like *Rainsaver Water Storing Crystals* will absorb the water then gradually release it into the soil later.

### Grey Water from the House

Water which is collected while waiting for the shower to become warm can be collected in a bucket and used in the garden when next it is needed.

Grey-water from baths or the laundry should not be stored, but should be used in the garden within 24 hours. Grey water is not recommended for use on edible herbs and vegetables, but is generally fine for ornamental plants including *Epacris*. It is recommended that grey water be distributed around several different areas of the garden rather than using it regularly for the same plants.

The choice of soaps and laundry detergents is of paramount importance if grey water is to be used in the garden. We should avoid products containing high levels of phosphorus and sodium, and there are a number of these now available. Further information and an evaluation of products can be found on the website of Lanfax Laboratories, Armidale NSW - [www.lanfaxlabs.com.au](http://www.lanfaxlabs.com.au), although there are some excellent products introduced in recent years which are yet to appear on this website.



ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS Inc.  
EPACRIS STUDY GROUP      Plant profile

***Epacris calvertiana***

**var. calvertiana** F. Muell.

**var. versicolor** Maiden & E. Betche

*calvertiana* = after Mrs. J. S. Calvert,  
 19th-century botanical artist and collector  
 Distribution - New South Wales

***Epacris calvertiana*** is an eye-catching species from the Comboyne Plateau to Pigeon House Mountain and west to Berrima in NSW. There are two distinct forms.

The var. ***calvertiana*** has white to creamy green flowers which are produced mainly during August - December, while the var. ***versicolor*** has slightly larger, pink to reddish flowers tipped with white and an earlier flowering period which is mainly during June - October.

***E. calvertiana*** grows as a somewhat erect shrub of about 1 - 2 m tall with pointed green leaves to 2 cm long.

The flowers are to about 1.5 cm long and are well displayed along the branchlets. The anthers are contained within the floral tube.

The fruit is a small capsule to 3.5 mm long, which splits to release the fine seeds.

Natural habitat -

Both varieties of *E. calvertiana* occur in sandstone areas. They are found mainly in protected situations which are moist yet very well-drained.



Illustration - © Bill Gunn  
 Photographs © Rodger Elliot

*Epacris calvertiana* var. *calvertiana*



*Epacris calvertiana* var. *versicolor*



## ***Epacris calvertiana*** F. Muell.

### Cultivation

*Epacris calvertiana* adapts well to cultivation and is certainly worthy of greater recognition. Plants appreciate some protection and do well in positions with filtered sun or shade for part of the day. They can also be grown successfully in containers. Pruning encourages bushy growth and healthy vigour.

### Propagation

*Epacris calvertiana* can be successfully propagated from cuttings, using barely firm young growth. Seed is not known to be commercially available.. For further information see 'Propagation of *Epacris* from Seed' - Newsletter 7, March 1999

*Epacris calvertiana* was named by Ferdinand von Mueller, and *Epacris calvertiana* var. *versicolor* was named by Joseph Maiden and Ernest Betche.

### **Baron Sir Ferdinand Jakob Heinrich von Mueller**

K.C.M.G., Ph.D., F.R.S. was born in Germany on 30 June 1825 and died in Melbourne on 10th Oct 1896. He was the most significant Australian botanist of the 19th-century, dedicating his whole life to his botanical pursuits. He studied botany in Germany then in 1847 was advised to move to a warmer climate for health reasons and travelled with his two sisters to Australia. In 1853 he was appointed as the first Government Botanist of Victoria.

He travelled widely throughout Australia, often under difficult conditions, and on one trip alone he collected nearly 800 species new to science. In 1857 he was appointed Director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, a position he held until 1873. He wrote extensively including over 800 botanical papers, and is noted for his letter writing, being estimated to have often written over 3000 letters in one year.

He was widely decorated for his work and commemorated in numerous awards.

Within the genus of *Epacris* he named *Epacris calvertiana*. *Epacris muelleri* was named in his honour by Otto Wilhelm Sonder.



**Joseph Henry Maiden** I.S.O, F.L.S., F.R.S. was born in England in 1859 and studied science at the University of London. He was unable to complete his course due to poor health and a long sea-voyage was recommended. He arrived in New South Wales in 1880. He was appointed first Curator of the Technological Museum, Sydney and in 1896 was appointed Government Botanist and Director of the Botanic Gardens.

When Maiden accepted this position the State had no herbarium, museum or library of botanical publications. He quickly set to work to remedy this situation and became one of the great botanists in the study of Australian plants. J. H. Maiden retired in 1924 and died during the following year.

**Ernest Betche** was born in Germany in 1851. He came to Australia in 1881 and joined the Botanic Gardens, Sydney as a collector. In 1897 he became a botanical assistant and held this position until his death in 1913. Ernest Betche had an extensive knowledge of the flora of New South Wales and was joint author with Maiden of the Census of New South Wales Plants (1916).

Space for additional notes on *Epacris calvertiana* -

## **Recording the flowering times of *Epacris* species**

We will continue to provide this page for recording the flowering times of *Epacris* in own garden, or in community gardens, botanic gardens, bushland areas or other sites in your region.

There is no deadline for sending the information to the EPACRIS STUDY GROUP. It is an ongoing project, with results being recorded on computer as received. The information received will also provide a reference for comparisons relating to any climate change in the future.

### **March, 2008**

IF INSUFFICIENT SPACE PLEASE USE EXTRA PAGE

Date

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### **May, 2008**

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### **June, 2008**

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### **July, 2008**

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### **August, 2008**

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### **September, 2008**

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**Epacris Study Group - Membership information.**

Membership of The Epacris Study Group and other Study Groups of the Australian Plant Society / Society for Growing Australian Plants is available to all members of the A.P.S. / S.G.A.P.

Membership of any Australian state group, not necessarily that of the area in which you reside, entitles you to membership of one or more study groups.

You can join the EPACRIS STUDY GROUP for just \$5.00 for 1 year or \$10 for 2 years renewable in June. Overseas subscriptions - \$10 Aust. p.a.

Membership renewal date is shown on address label of current Study Group members.

Memberships should be sent to P.O. Box 655, Heathmont 3135.

Please make cheques payable to The Epacris Study Group.

Sender:

EPACRIS STUDY GROUP

P.O. Box 655, Heathmont Vic. 3135