



Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants

# ACACIA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER

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a bit. With the strange weather we have had all summer, the mealy bugs were prospering and it seems this was the story in many places. In my garden at present, **insects of all kind are very active**. I can see many long stalks of lacewing eggs while nearby the ants are protecting the aphids. I just smile and think to myself, 'Wait till they hatch'. Lacewing larvae are voracious predators and can clean up an infestation of aphids in no time. There will be no chemical insecticides used in this garden.

As usual though, life is very hectic and once again I need to apologise to some members for being slow in getting the **seed requests** sent. Be assured I have not forgotten about you and think of you all regularly. With a recent computer system changeover, I am hoping to get back on top of things. If you are worried about your request, I don't mind receiving reminder emails to nudge me into a little more action.

We have some great news this month with an incredible **new release to hit the market in May 2010**. Be sure to order soon as stock is limited. Read about this on page 3.

A lot of preparation work is going on behind the scenes as we also get ready to compile a **complete issue of Australian Plants on Acacias**. The actual **cut-off date is at the end of June**. A few members have been approached to write some articles and we appreciate their help very much. If you would like to contribute with something interesting that you feel should be a part of the issue, please feel free to contact either Bill or myself about the matter to discuss.

Cheers,  
Esther Brueggemeier

## From The Leader

Dear Members,

What a start to Autumn in Melbourne. Lots of rain with strangely hot, humid weather. Like in many places around Australia it would seem the drought has broken, at least for

# Welcome

A special welcome to the following new members and subscribers to the Newsletter:

Jason Dawe, SA, Native Plant Wholesalers  
 Phillip Dowling, SA, Native Plant Wholesalers  
 John Gibson Tas, Plants of Tasmania Nursery  
 Val Hall, Maryborough, Vic  
 Margaret Peters, Hopetoun Park, Vic  
 Lindsay Sutherland

## From Members and Readers

**Jan Hall** (Yarrowonga, Vic) writes as follows:

Dear Esther & Bill,

As a new member I am delighted with the great information in the newsletter.

Over the years I have grown many Acacias in an effort to sort out the best for our area and the best in each size category for different purposes. It has gradually become apparent which are more tolerant of our climate and the degraded farm soils we have in the Northern Plains. Some places in the north have rocky rises with good drainage and other spots are sandy but in and near Yarrowonga it is reddish clay which sets like a brick in summer.

Wattles have been a mainstay for the vital windbreaks and shelter within the new gardens. I'm interested in the use of inoculating with rhizobium as I have felt for years that the missing link in seeing robust, healthy growth on all our plants is the loss of biota in cultivated and grazed soils.

I did use "Wattlegrow" following the Acacia seminar and think it helped but hard to say with some species which, anyway, may never have adapted to our site. No doubt you have previously written about "Wattlegrow" and inoculants and my guess is that we would need many different inoculants for the large number of different species we try to grow. Meanwhile, we continue to add compost, gypsum and sand to amend the problems of our soil.

We started our second garden here 5 years ago (and have written in Growing Australian about its development). You could say we have 3 sections i.e. perimeter windbreaks using our indigenous wattles, the outer gardens using plants which, once established, will not be watered and which interest us for colour, form, size etc. The inner garden receives more attention (e.g. spraying with 'antifreeze' to avoid frost damage) and could include less hardy species.

One of our aims for this garden was to collect small and prostrate growing species and, as well, certainly inland

drought-tolerant plants. In 2009 we had our 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest recorded rainfall with just 285mm and 2006 brought the lowest on record with only 230mm. Acacias are generally resilient but some of the smaller ones will always need extra watering, especially if cutting-grown. Shade is very important for some from woodland areas (e.g. *A. phasmoides*) and getting many others started. We use tree guards at first for everything.

My letter is getting long winded but I thought I'd add a list of the prostrate spp which we have established during the past 5 years.

Sincerely, Jan Hall

Acacias, Prostrate and Low Cascading	
Successes	
<i>aculeatissima</i>	Unfortunately lost the tiny form from Puckapunyal
<i>cardiophylla</i>	The larger prostrate form hangs on in a very dry spot. "Gold Lace" about 2 years in a pot before planting & now very successful.
<i>cognata</i> 'Green Mist'	Still the best for us. 'Bower Beauty' seems to need more shelter
<i>genistifolia</i>	From Tasmania & growing on a high mound. Died back last year in dry times but, after watering, recovered.
<i>glaucoptera</i>	A mistake to buy the large foliage form which is a small tree. A small prostrate one will go in soon.
<i>howittii</i>	On high mound & looking very nice overhanging a large log.
<i>lasiocarpa</i>	Lost terminal foliage last year and needs watering occasionally. Low, spreading. Needs more room than the allocated 1.5m.
<i>lachnophylla/cometes</i>	Lost one but a plant from S.A. is looking good.
<i>ligulata prostrate</i>	Very hardy to the dry. Slow to get going but OK after 2 years
<i>maxwellii</i>	Looked good over logs on a mound until overgrown by <i>A. fimbriata</i> dwarf. Did not like shade but OK now - after some overhead pruning
<i>redolens</i>	No trouble in the outer, low maintenance, area. Had one previously and was 1m x 6m and many years old
Losses	
<i>amblygona</i>	Lost but had (2) 20 year old plants in previous garden - on clay. They were in dappled shade under trees. Will have another try
<i>cultriformis</i>	Under drought conditions, did not establish this time.
<i>gunnii</i>	Under drought conditions, did not establish
<i>mitchellii</i>	On high, exposed mound probably reached its tolerance level. Hard dry conditions
Other acacias nearby & OK are <i>A. delphina</i> , <i>A. guinetii</i> , <i>A. sessilisipica</i> & <i>A. continua</i>	

## Feature Plant – *A. terminalis* (Sunshine Wattle)

by Esther Brueggemeier

*Acacia terminalis* is an extremely variable plant and runs a close second to my favourite. Habit ranges from a small shrub of 1 metre in height to a small tree almost 6 metres tall. *Acacia terminalis* is widespread in the open forests and woodlands of northern New South Wales all the way down to Tasmania. The world wide wattle website mentions four sub-species with intergrades occurring, especially in the Sydney Basin. *Acacia terminalis* subsp *terminalis* is rare and listed as an endangered species.



*A. terminalis* – lush green fern like foliage Photo: Esther Brueggemeier

Depending on locality, flowering occurs in abundance from early autumn to mid-spring and sometimes later. The beautiful, large perfumed flowers can be anywhere from bright yellow to pale yellow and almost white. *Acacia terminalis* flowers well in full sun or dappled shade. Growing quickly from seed, *Acacia terminalis* is an attractive garden plant and reliable in a range of soils. It is known to be fire retardant and quite drought and frost tolerant once established. Lush, fern-like, bipinnate foliage makes it an excellent species for use in ferneries and rainforest style gardens as it blends in easily with other ferns.

### And A New Release – 'Pink Sunshine'

Yes, we are talking about one of those rare discoveries of a natural form with stunning pink flowers found in the wild. About 20 years ago on the east coast of Tasmania, this pink variant of *Acacia terminalis* was discovered and seeds were collected.

From then on various attempts had been made to bring the **pink wattle** into cultivation. Unfortunately, the plants proved rather difficult to propagate from cuttings and tissue culture. Will Fletcher, from Plants of Tasmania, was given seed from the original plant and has spent the last 5 years building up a well established stock of seed grown plants in

which the gene pool of pink wattles has grown stronger each year. So successful have his efforts been that at present, close to 70% of all seed grown plants retain a beautiful pink colour. As the common name for *Acacia terminalis* is generally the 'Sunshine Wattle', how appropriate then to call this wonderful new form, 'Pink Sunshine'.



*Acacia* 'Pink Sunshine'

Photo: Nuytsia@tas

Being grown solely from seed, *Acacia* 'Pink Sunshine' has developed into three main shades for choosing: Light, medium and dark. Like the yellow form of *Acacia terminalis*, plants generally flower from their third year on in mid-late autumn. With each passing year flowering grows more abundant as the plant matures. This beautiful pink wattle produces a relatively **dense habit, spectacular bronze-coloured new growth and abundant full flowering.**

With the growing period being rather long and tedious, both Will Fletcher and John Gibson (current owner of Plants of Tasmania Nursery) are keen to get the plants out into gardens to ensure its survival. So, after a very long gestation period, a **limited number** of this wonderful form will be released to the public on the **8th May 2010** when they will be in full bloom. Each plant is a few years old and a good sturdy size of 1m in 250 mm pots. A donation of \$5 for every plant sold will go to the Tasmanian Land Conservancy Group ([www.tasland.org.au](http://www.tasland.org.au)).

From the release date on plants may be ordered directly from Plants of Tasmania (03 6239 1583, email: [Plantsoftasmania@gmail.com](mailto:Plantsoftasmania@gmail.com)) or if you are in my area of Melbourne, plants can be ordered through Wild about Wattle (0411 148 874) to be delivered to the nursery.



**Acacia 'Pink Sunshine'** Photo: Nuytsia@tas  
 The two photos of Pink Sunshine have been reproduced with permission. For more excellent photos, refer to:  
[http://www.flickr.com/photos/nuytsia\\_pix/2415345275/in/photostream/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/nuytsia_pix/2415345275/in/photostream/)

## Acacia 'Spicy'

This is not a new plant, but it is the name under which the plant previously known as *Acacia* aff. *verniciflua* is now being marketed (it also has the common name of Sigma Weeping Wattle).



Our thanks to Sue Forrester, Austraflo Pty Ltd ([www.austraflo.com](http://www.austraflo.com)) for the above photo and the following notes on this plant:

A small softly weeping shrub (1.5m x 1.5 – 1.8m) with aromatic foliage and bright yellow perfumed flowers in spring. Grows in well drained clay or sandy soils, in temperate to sub tropical and semi arid climates. Likes full sun or light shade, and withstands heavy frost. Suitable for 2<sup>nd</sup> line coastal planting.

*Uses:* as a specimen, or for light hedging. Flowers attract butterflies, and pigeons forage for seed under plants during early summer.

*Maintenance:* light pruning for shape if required. No feeding or extra watering needed once established.

## Acacia linifolia

Ray Turner and Eva Kowal have provided the accompanying photograph of *Acacia linifolia*, taken in their garden at Cranbourne South (which is south east of Melbourne).

Ray and Eva find the plant very attractive, especially as its flowers brighten up their garden at a time of year when few Acacias or other plants are in flower. This photo was taken on 4 March and it had been in flower since about the start of February. Ray and Eva note that their plant is about 3m high, growing amongst other shrubs, and it has a slightly weeping habit. They also note that the plant has cream, rather than golden yellow, flowers, and it has light green new foliage whereas the older foliage is darker green.



**Acacia linifolia** Photo: Ray Turner

It is growing in well drained sandy soil, in a position where it gets morning sun, and then filtered sun in the afternoon.

This species occurs naturally in eastern NSW, mainly from the Hunter Valley south to the Hill Top district, and is common around Sydney.

The species name refers to the likeness of the leaves to the flax leaf (*Linum*). It has a common name of Flax Wattle.

The following notes are from references that we found to this species.

**Propagation** – The only references we have found have been to propagation from seed, so we don't know whether cuttings would be successful. In relation to propagation by (pre treated) seed, most reports indicate good rates of germination are achieved, and germination may be fairly quick (as early as 5 days, and often within 3 weeks).

**Traditional Uses** - A poster, Useful Plants of Cooks River, produced by Marrickville Council in 2007, featured traditional knowledge of the D'harawal people. This lists some of the traditional uses of *A. linifolia* (Boori), as follows:

“Fresh gum eaten raw, seeds made into flour for damper. Seed coats used as tinder. Leaves used as poison to stun fish. Wood used for carving.”

**Seed** - In studying some Acacia species in Sydney in 1983, Tony Auld observed that *A. linifolia* and *A. terminalis* were both early flowering species, but that their fruit maturation roughly coincided with all of the species studied (being in the October – November period). Ray and Eva have only been in their current house since the start of last year, and do not recall whether their *A. linifolia* set seed last year and, if so, when it matured. However, they will take note this year.

**Reference:**

Auld, T. D. (1983) Seed predation of native legumes of south-eastern Australia, Australian Journal of Ecology 8, 367-376

## Acacia podalyriifolia as a Street Tree

In our Newsletter No. 106 (September 2009) we referred to Don Perrin's sad story relating to the removal of a row of *A. podalyriifolia* along the front fence of the local state school.

On a more positive note, we can report that our new Study Group Co-ordinator, Geoff Lay, has an *A. podalyriifolia* as a street tree in front of his house (in suburban Melbourne). This is a tree that was planted by Geoff at a time when most of the trees in his street were plum trees. Subsequently, the local Council decided that the existing trees in the street should be replaced, and residents were given a choice of either oak trees, or an exotic rainforest tree (Geoff does not recall the species). Both of the new options were described as having a height of 10m – 15m.

Fortunately, Geoff was allowed to retain his Acacia, and he believes it is an excellent street tree. It is only about 4m high and so does not interfere with the power lines that are

about 8m high. It looks superb all year round with attractive foliage and bright golden yellow flowers over winter.

When the residents were given a choice of the two exotic species, Geoff did query why the chosen species were both 10m – 15m high, in a street with 8m high power lines when one of the council priorities was to minimise pruning. It was explained to him that this was required because the street has wide footpaths. Not surprisingly, these trees had to be pruned back in the third year of their life.

Although not related to his Acacia, Geoff also reports that at the time the Council was preparing to plant the new trees in the street, he saw a Council employee placing white crosses in the gutter, at rather irregular intervals. He was advised by this person that these crosses indicated where the trees were to be planted, and they were irregular because according to Feng Shui a tree should not be planted in front of a door way – so the trees were placed so as not to line up with doors.

## Acacia complanata

I recently had the opportunity to visit one of Melbourne's best private native gardens, and probably the outstanding plant in the whole garden at that time was *Acacia complanata*. The accompanying photograph was taken on 20 March.

This species occurs in south east Queensland and northern NSW, and it was suggested that by all rights it should not be growing as successfully as it is in this Melbourne garden. The particular plant is about 20 years old, a great autumn flowering Acacia.



*Acacia complanata*

Photo: Bill Aitchison

# Unfortunate Deaths and Post-Mortems

In our previous Newsletter No. 107 (December 2009), reference was made to an *Acacia leprosa* 'Scarlet Blaze' growing at Melbourne's Maranoa Gardens. The particular plant in question had only been planted in July 2009, and after some spring pruning the plant was looking great in December.

Sadly, by the end of February, this plant was dead, barely six months after it was planted. At about the same time, another *A. leprosa* 'Scarlet Blaze', in the same garden bed, but about 5 years old, also died.

It does seem that this particular cultivar is often short lived, and one theory that has been advanced in the past is that over-watering, rather than under-watering, can contribute to a premature death.

Andrea Dennis and Paul Birch are Curators at Maranoa Gardens, and these two recent deaths have prompted them to speculate on possible causes in relation to these particular plants.

In relation to the 5 year old plant, this plant was attacked by borer about 2-3 years ago, but the borer was removed at that time. Whilst it is possible that the borer may have contributed to the death, Andrea and Paul doubt that this was the reason. Possibly, the plant may just have come to the natural end of its life.

In relation to the six month old plant, the cause of death is not clear, and Andrea and Paul have only been able to speculate as to a possible cause of death. They have listed 5 possible reasons, as follows (note that this plant was not affected by borer):

1. When the plant was originally purchased from the Nursery, it was already quite large and was in a 12 inch pot. It appeared that it had been potted up from a smaller sized pot in which it had apparently been root bound. The plant may therefore have been too advanced at the time of planting, and it was also somewhat loose in the pot.

2. It is possible that the preparation of the area where it was planted was not good enough. The soil is a yellow buckshot over clay, and at the time of planting a well may have been created in the clay – with the result that with rains in September and October, the plant may then have been sitting in water. Maybe the planting hole was not deep enough and more preparation of the area would have been beneficial.

3. The plant was in a fairly open position and not surrounded by other plants that may have taken up extra moisture from the spring rains, nor provided other

protection (note that the 5 year old plant, although in the same garden bed, had been in a position where it did have protection amongst other plants).

4. During its six month life span, there were also some periods of dryness, which could have been harmful to the plant – so maybe, it is a matter of avoiding extremes of both wetness and dryness.

5. It is also possible that genetically, this is a short lived species, and an early death can be explained in this way – although 6 months seems too short to be explained by genetic factors.

Andrea and Paul note that their possible reasons are pure speculation. But, maybe their advice would be to buy a healthy plant that is not too advanced nor root bound, to prepare your site well before planting, to maybe provide some protection with other plants, and to avoid extremes of either wetness or dryness.

## Wattle Recipe Corner

Wattle seed is fast becoming an Aussie favourite. The following recipe is reprinted with the kind permission of [www.outbackchef.com.au](http://www.outbackchef.com.au). See their website for more great ideas and yummy flavours. We understand that they are just about to put some Wattleseed and chocolate nougat that they are introducing into their product range on site....we are told it tastes great and there will be bars and bite size chunks, all very exciting. Over the next few months there will be a lot of new product coming onto their site.

### Wattle Seed Tiramisu

This delicious desert will have your guests wanting more. Best made the day before, to enable the flavours to move through the biscuits. Another great thing about this recipe is that by simmering the wattle seeds and using the flavoured liquid, the wattle seed paste that is left behind can be used for another recipe, ie wattle seed pasta. (In our next issue or take a sneak peak at their website.)

#### INGREDIENTS

30g ground, roasted Wattle Seed  
2 egg yolks  
2 egg whites  
400g Mascarpone (Italian soft cheese)  
1 packet of Savoiardi biscuits (Lady Finger biscuits)  
1 cup sugar  
Cocoa for decoration

## METHOD

1. Bring wattle seed to simmer in a saucepan with 2 cups water. Allow to cool.
2. In a large bowl beat the egg yolks and sugar until fluffy.
3. Add the mascarpone cheese and mix.
4. Beat the egg whites until peaks form and then fold them gently into the mascarpone mixture. Mix gently.
5. Have your plate ready. Dip the lower half of the biscuits into the wattle seed flavoured water and lay them in a row on the plate.
6. Cover this layer with the mascarpone mixture.
7. Create another layer of wattle seed flavoured biscuits and mascarpone
8. Sprinkle the top with cocoa powder through a sieve.
9. Refrigerate for 24 hours.

## Australian Food Plants Study Group

We are now exchanging Newsletters with the Australian Food Plants Study Group, following a suggestion by the Leader of that Group, Lenore Lindsay. Lenore suggests that there should be considerable mutual benefit in the exchange of information between our two Groups. She notes that while it is true that wattle might not get a mention in every Food Plants Newsletter, or that not every Acacia Newsletter would contain anything on edibility, there should be sufficient overlap to make it worthwhile.

We have received a copy of the Food Plants Newsletter No. 57. This Newsletter made reference to a number of edible Acacia species, including *A. macradenia* and *A. podalyriifolia* (flowers), *A. bidwillii* (root), and *A. holosericea*, *A. oswaldii* and *A. salicina* (seeds).

We thought the reference to the use of Acacia flowers was interesting, and asked Lenore how these are used. Lenore replied as follows:

“We use the flowers of both *Acacia macradenia* and *A. podalyriifolia* in wattle pikelets, which we serve with cream which has been whipped with a little ground wattleseed and icing sugar. I did try a liqueur, by steeping flowers in vodka and sugar, but that one needs a bit of refining yet. The idea came from a French recipe.”

If any Acacia Study Group member would like to read the Food Plants Study Group Newsletter, please advise Esther or Bill.

## Books

### **What South East native plant is that?**

**by Neville Bonney**

**Published 2010 South East Natural Resources Management Board, RRP \$45**

Although not evident from the title, this book relates to the flora of the south east of South Australia. It is largely intended as an aid in identifying plants of this region, but also includes a section on historical changes in the flora, information on seeds, seed collection and propagation, and a glossary of botanical terms.

The book includes five separate sections covering tall shrubs and trees, medium to tall shrubs, low to medium shrubs, prostrate plants and grasses, sedges etc. For each species, a short description of the plant is provided, information on distribution and, in some cases, historical uses.

34 species of Acacia are covered in the book, all of which are included in either the tall shrubs and trees section, or the medium to tall shrubs section.

The tall shrubs and trees section (3m – 20m) includes 8 species (*paradoxa*, *leiophylla*, *pycnantha*, *melanoxydon*, *longifolia* ssp *sophorae*, *mearnsii*, *ligulata* and *dodonaefolia*), and in addition 5 introduced species (*longifolia* ssp *longifolia*, *saligna*, *decurrens*, *dealbata* and *baileyana*).

The small to medium plants section (1m – 3m) includes 21 species (*mitchellii*, *verticillata* ssp *ovoidea*, *oxycedrus*, *myrtifolia* var *myrtifolia*, *stricta*, *cupularis*, *acinacea*, *euthycarpa*, *brachybotrya*, *farinosa*, *hakeoides*, *microcarpa*, *rigens*, *rupicola*, *gunnii*, *enterocarpa*, *continua*, *hilliana*, *suaveolens*, *trineura* and *spinescens*).

A key is included for identifying Acacias using phyllodes or flowers, and line drawings are included for most species. The book is also illustrated with colour photographs, although only a few Acacias are illustrated in this way.

### **Ngambunjarri: Thalanyji Plant Names and Uses**

**Compiled by Anne Hayes and Shirley Hayes  
Published 2007 by Wangka Maya Pilbara  
Aboriginal Language Centre**

Ngambunjarri is a book written in Thalanyji and English. This ethnobotanical work documents some of the plants, their various names, traditional uses and locations of where they are found on Thalanyji country, around the Ashburton

River and Onslow areas of the southern Pilbara region in Western Australia.

Acacias form a significant part of the flora of the Pilbara, and it is not surprising that they are well represented in this book, with about 10 species being covered. Some of the traditional uses recorded for Acacias include the use of seeds and sap for food, use of wood for fighting sticks and fence posts, and branches to provide shade for sheds and as bush brooms.

I thought one of the interesting uses related to *A. trachycarpa*, where smoke from the bush is described as good for calming kids who are crying and screaming too much – when a child becomes too silly, you put them in the smoke and this calms them down.

The recording of the type of information regarding traditional uses of plants found in this book is surely very important, before it might otherwise be lost. The importance of this is perhaps underlined by the fact that the Thalanyji language is now spoken fluently by only 5 remaining elders.

The book is available for \$51 through the Wangka Maya and Buarabalayji-Thalanyji Association.

### **Flowers of the Mallee, North West Victoria by Mallee Wildflower Committee, RRP \$25**

In their introduction to the book, the authors refer to the lines by Dorothy McKellar, “I love a sunburnt country, a land of sweeping plains ...”, and suggest that these words aptly describe the area known as the Mallee in North West Victoria. This area has a harsh climate with low rainfall, and the book refers to the drought tolerance of the flora of this region.

The book is intended to be used a field guide, and the plants included are those most commonly seen. It includes 156 species, including 8 Acacias (*A. acanthoclada*, *A. brachybotrya*, *A. colletioides*, *A. ligulata*, *A. montana*, *A. rigens*, *A. spinescens* and *A. trineura*). The plants included are illustrated with colour photographs and a description of the plant is included.

### **Find That Flower – A Colour Guide to the Wildflowers of the Cape to Cape Track and Leeuwin – Naturaliste National Park by Jane Scott Published by Cape to Cape Publishing September 2009, RRP \$19.95**

This book is intended to assist in the identification of 280 species in this area of the southwest of Western Australia.

Colour photographs of each species are included together with a short description, and hints about locations and flowering times.

9 species of Acacia are included (*A. alata*, *A. cochlearis*, *A. cyclops*, *A. littorea*, *A. myrtifolia*, *A. pulchella*, *A. rostellifera*, *A. saligna* and *A. subracemosa*).

## **New Study Group Co-ordinator**

Some Study Group members may be aware that Philip Robinson has retired as Study Group Co-ordinator, and his position has been taken over by Geoff Lay. I am sure that we are all grateful to Philip for the work he has undertaken over a number of years and thank him for his valuable contributions.

Congratulations to Geoff on his new appointment. Geoff has kindly provided the following background on himself:

“I have been a keen bushwalker and photographer for over 40 years and have now collected over 17,000 images of Australia. My humble ambition is to photograph every plant and fungus in Australia - after 40 years I am 20% of the way there.

Although based in Victoria, I was transferred in my work to Queensland, New Zealand and Ireland. As an actuary I have spent most of my working life setting the bets for insurance companies that you will die on time (ie I devised the premium rates for Life Insurance). Although stressful and exhausting, it did leave me most weekends free to get out in the bush. I actually met my wife, Jannie, in the middle of a bushwalk in the jungle of Queensland at a place called "Meeting of the waters". I immediately fell head over heels for her – she tripped me!

As most bushwalkers were little help in identifying species, I joined the Maroondah branch of Australian Plants Society almost 30 years ago and am now Vice President. My great turning point was discovering the volumes of the Flora of Victoria. Suddenly I could follow (most of) the keys and identify (most of) the species I photographed.

Fungi knowledge was much harder to accumulate. Field Naturalists Club of Victoria has a keen fungi group and for some time I have been fortunate enough to be a volunteer at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne. I database sightings from amateurs all over Australia for Fungimap, which aims to map where and when 115 ‘easy to identify’ fungi grow and produce fruiting bodies. I have also been on many field trips with the botanists to collect seeds for the Millennium Seedbank. If you think the continuing drought makes growing plants difficult in gardens then you should try to find seeds in the bush – sometimes we cannot even find a single plant. The botanists and mycologists have been a great help in identifying many of my images.



I retired four years ago because our bodies were showing marked deterioration. This opened the way for driving trips to the top end and WA to complement my bushwalking in the south eastern states.

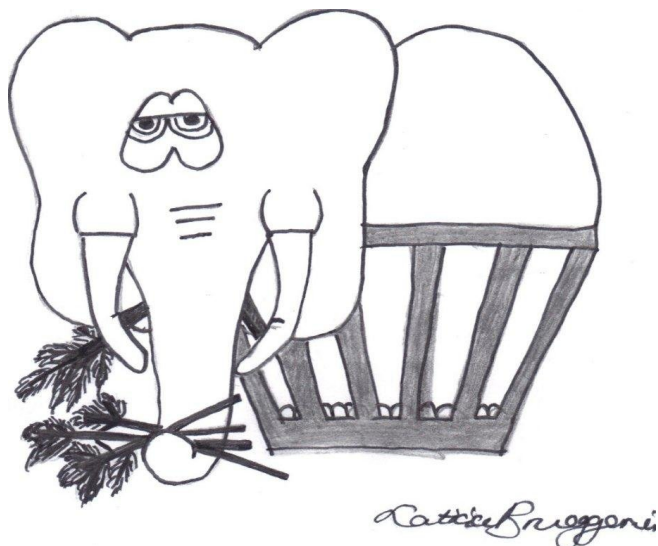
Nowadays I give many illustrated talks of fungi and flora to plant societies, field naturalists, landcare and similar groups. We're off to NZ for a holiday this week, then I present 9 talks in the next 90 days. My laptop travels with me so I could give you a talk too on one of my travels. We will be travelling to the Kimberley in August and then home via North Queensland so that trip includes every mainland state."

**Note:** For a number of years, Geoff has diligently maintained weekly records of plants which are in flower in his garden. Perhaps not surprisingly, these records show that March is when the lowest number of species are in flower. However, Acacia enthusiasts know that one can always find an Acacia in flower, and some examples in this Newsletter highlight this.

## Acacias and Elephants

A recent report from California tells how Black Acacia trees (*A. melanoxylon*) are one of the favourite foods of the four elephants at Oakland Zoo. However, the Zoo has recently got into trouble for chopping down some of these trees, without the required permit.

The trees were used by the Zoo to provide a daily snack for their elephants. The Zoo Director, Joel Parrott, was reported as saying "Boy, do they love 'em".



The Zoo has now made a public appeal for residents with fallen trees (Acacias and some other species) to donate them to the Zoo.

Footnote: Our thanks (?) to Sue Guymer for the following:

Q. Why did the elephant paint its toe nails yellow?

A. So that it wouldn't be seen amongst the prostrate Acacias

And another acquaintance tells us that he has planted an Acacia by his back door, and strongly recommends this – since planting his Acacia he has not had any elephants inside the house, so he believes this Acacia is very good as a deterrent to elephants.

## Study Group Photo Library

We extend our thanks to Karen and Geoff Russell (North Blackburn, Vic) and Cathy Powers (Balliang, Vic) for some recent additions to our Study Group Photo Library (and also to Ray Turner for his photo of *A. linifolia*, referred to earlier).

Last year Karen and Geoff undertook a two month loop from Melbourne, up to the Centre, through the Great Victoria Desert, to SE WA and back across the Nullarbor. They have provided us with some Acacia photos taken on their travels. The following photo, of *A. tetragonophylla*, was taken along the Great Central Road in the Great Victoria Desert in WA.



*Acacia tetragonophylla*

Photo Karen Russell

Cathy Powers has provided a number of photos of Acacias taken in the Brisbane Ranges. One of these was of a small seedling of *A. pycnantha*, taken in March 2007 on an area that was badly affected by bushfire in January 2006.



Acacia pycnantha

Photo Cathy Powers

We have recently responded to a number of requests for Acacia photos, including a request for a number of photos for a planned magazine article on Acacias.

The Photo Library has also been invaluable in connection with a number of talks on Acacias that we have been giving to various APS District Groups in Victoria – so far we have given 4 separate talks, and have another 4 planned in coming months – at Eltham, Kilmore, Keilor and Warragul.

For the planned issue of Australian Plants on Acacias, we expect that we will be looking for good quality Acacia photos, and we also understand that Bruce Maslin may be seeking the Study Group’s assistance in supplying some photos for a project he is undertaking.

We believe that the Photo Library is serving a very useful purpose, and is enabling us to respond to requests that we would otherwise be unable to do, and in doing this to promote Acacias to a wider audience than would otherwise be the case.

However, we would like to improve the number and quality of the images in our Library – the quality of digital images taken these days is far superior to the quality of many of the older images in our Library (which are generally scanned images of old slides).

Hence, if (like Karen and Geoff, Cathy or Ray) you have some good images of Acacias, then could you think about letting our Photo Library have copies of them? Note that

where images are used, appropriate acknowledgement is given to the photographer.

## Study Group Membership

Acacia Study Group membership for 2009/10 is as follows:  
\$7 (newsletter sent by email)  
\$10 (hardcopy of newsletter posted in Australia)  
\$20 (hardcopy of newsletter posted overseas)

Subscriptions may be sent to:  
ASGAP Acacia Study Group  
Membership Officer  
Bill Aitchison  
13 Conos Court  
Donvale, Victoria 3111

Subscriptions may also be paid directly to our Account at the Bendigo Bank. Account details are:  
Account Name: ASGAP Acacia Study Group  
BSB: 633-000  
Account Number: 130786973

If you pay directly to the Bank Account, please advise us by email (acaciastudygroup@gmail.com)

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**NOTE: If you have not already paid your annual membership for 2009/10, we would very much appreciate it if you could attend to this.**  
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## Seed Bank

An updated list of species held in our Study Group’s Seed Bank was included in our September 2009 Newsletter. Requests for seed should be directed to Esther.

18 packets maximum in each order (negotiable). Limit of 3 orders per member per year. Please include \$2 in stamps to cover the cost of a padded post bag and postage.