



*Acacia brunioides*

Australian Native Plants Society (Australia) Inc.

## ACACIA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER

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### From The Leader

Dear Members

I am sure that all Study Group members join me in congratulating Bruce Maslin on his recent award as a Member in the General Division of the Order of Australia. Bruce has spent a lifetime working on Acacias, and since 1967 has published more than 180 scientific papers and articles, including more than 80 papers in refereed journals. He has been a wonderful supporter of our Study Group, and has always been so willing to freely share his expertise. In response to a congratulatory note that I sent to Bruce, he commented that "of course I feel greatly honoured (but humbled) at having received that accolade ... but it would never have happened were it not for the terrific support of colleagues, friends and family."

I have had some queries as to whether the Study Group is having any field trips this year. At the present time, we do not have plans for any such trips. However, if there is a member who would like to organize and lead a trip, let me know, and I can pass on relevant information to members. Note that a report of our weekend in the Grampians last August appears in this newsletter.

The Seed Bank continues to be an important part of the operation of our Study Group, and Victoria Tanner continues to do a great job as Curator. A number of members have made recent donations of seed, and our thanks go to them. Note that there is a change to the operation of the Seed Bank (see page 12).

Bill Aitchison

# Welcome

Welcome back to Stevan Milentijevic, a rejoining member of the Study Group

## From Members and Readers

**Jan Hall (Yarrawonga, Vic)** wrote (9 January 2017) about her wet spring:

“We had the wettest September in our region which from dryer than average previous 18 months, made for very mixed growth on my plants. Many died or died back and we wait for slow recovery, while others grew and flowered prolifically. So many Acacias were lost and those from similar country thrived. This included acacias normally from wetter country like *A. melanoxylon*, *A. vestita*, *A. pravissima* forms. And those normally struggling with tree competition.

Water lay in sheets in places which was the end of several 10 – 14 year old *A. victoriae* - seed from outback trips, plus all *A. verniciflua*, *A. brachybotrya*, (sandhill country), *A. lineata* (locals), *A. microbotrya*, *A. amblygona* and *A. dictyoneura* looks doomed. *A. chinchillensis* surprisingly gets water around it after all heavy rain events, and thrives. *A. glaucoptera* small form does very well. As do most on my built-up mounds and where we created drainage lines - back to looking up their origins and adaptability before planting....

Yarrawonga rainfall was 781mm for 2016, most in July to October. Average 470mm.”

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**Judy Clark (Hastings, UK)** wrote (14 January 2017) as follows:

All my acacias are currently thriving: *A. baileyana*, *A. baileyana* purple form, *A. dealbata*, *A. myrtifolia*, *A. mucronata*, *A. acinacea*, *A. pravissima* prostrate form, *A. retinodes*, *A. melanoxylon* (which I pollard to keep under control), *A. sicutiformis*, *A. pycnantha*, and *A. pataczekii*.

Except for the very youngest plants they all have lots of buds on them and if the weather permits I hope they will flower well. Cold doesn't seem to bother them too much (though I'm a bit dubious about *A. retinodes* which I bought last year - it's pretty chilly here at the moment and that will test it) but if we get strong winds I might lose flowers again.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Victoria Tanner** recently visited Gluepot Reserve, this being a BirdLife Australia Reserve located about 40km north of Waikerie in South Australia. She was very impressed with *Acacia nyssophylla*, which she describes as

being a common plant there, very spikey but interesting seed (and a lovely area to camp, especially in winter).

The botanical name refers to the stiff, pungent-pointed phyllodes (the Greek *nyssos* means to pierce).



*Acacia nyssophylla* at Gluepot Reserve

Photo: V Tanner

In our December Newsletter, **Neil and Wendy Marriott** referred to *Acacia* sp. Yinnetharra, a superb looking plant that they had seen at King's Park in Perth. **Bruce Maslin** has confirmed that this is still an undescribed species. He notes that it is certainly attractive, with a weeping, open habit like *A. paraneura* (but its pods are like *A. ramulosa*).

\*\*\*\*\*

Further to the note on *Acacia sicutiformis* in our recent December newsletter, **Victoria Tanner (Canberra)** notes that it also grows in the ACT, and she has two in her garden which are really tough – she notes that they grow in dry conditions, both in the garden and in the bush.

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In our previous newsletter, reference was made to **Helen van Riet's** *Acacia craspedocarpa*. In early January, she reported that a carpet of seed pods was under the plant, and that her resident brush tail possum (which sleeps on a hammock of *Cissus antarctica* under the carport) was feeding on the fallen seeds.

\*\*\*\*\*

In our December Newsletter **Victoria Tanner** asked for help in identifying an Acacia with large phyllodes.

**Warren and Gloria Sheather** offered some suggestions of Acacias with large phyllodes.

*A. falcata*  
*A. falciformis*  
*A. penninervis*  
*A. saligna*

Victoria has now advised that she believes her plant may be *Acacia saligna*.

\*\*\*\*\*

We do welcome feedback from members as to their results with seed sourced from the Study Group Saeed Bank.

**Sandra McKenzie (Moonta, SA)** advises that she had no germination from seeds of *Acacia lasiocarpa* ssp. *sedifolia*. At about the same time, however, she did some cuttings of *A. lasiocarpa* and these were very successful.

**Phil Price (Jamison, ACT)** advises that his *Acacia sporadica* seeds did not germinate, despite swelling OK after hot water treatment/scarification, so he has repeated the sowing with scarified seed with some being sown into coarse sand (in case this species is like *A. gunnii* and hates nutrients).

**Alan Gibb (Bobinawarrah, Vic)** is familiar with *A. sporadica*, and he advises that he has also found it difficult, with only about 50% germination. Alan scarifies his seeds with a knife. He doesn't believe that the germination mix matters very much, and the mix he used for them would have been heavier than some mixes. Alan noted that in the wild, *A. sporadica* propagates from underground suckers. He has also noted that the controlled burns that they do don't kill it and there is some regrowth. Alan also noted that it propagates OK from cuttings.

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**Sandra McKenzie (Moonta, SA)** advises that the APS Northern Yorke Peninsula Group is holding a Native Plant Sale at Kadina, on Saturday 6 May. Details appear on Page 8 of this Newsletter. There are sure to be lots of Acacias for sale as well as many other great plants – so if you are near Kadina at that time, I am sure it would be worth a visit to the Sale.

## Wattle Flowers Every Month

In our last Newsletter, it was noted that **Barbara Bell's** aim is to have a wattle in flower in her garden every month.

**Warren and Gloria Sheather** have listed some species that they grow so that they have wattles in flower every month. They are all surviving and thriving in their garden on the Northern Tablelands of NSW.

*Acacia calamifolia*: Tall shrub similar in appearance to *A. subulata*. This wattle will flower for many months outside the normal spring flowering period.

*A. deanei*: Deane's Wattle is a small tree with bipinnate foliage that will flower throughout summer with sporadic flowering at other times.

*A. diphylla*: A medium, shapely tree with large, leathery phyllodes and in late spring produces rod-shaped clusters of bright yellow flowers. This wattle flowers when most spring-flowering species have finished flowering.

*A. implexa*: Hickory Wattle small tree with curved phyllodes and pale yellow flowers that are carried in December and January with sporadic flowering at other times. The Hickory Wattle has regenerated in large numbers since sheep were removed over 20 years ago from our property.

*A. irrorata*: A Black Wattle similar in appearance to *A. mearnsii* growing into a spreading tree with bipinnate foliage and flowering in summer and sometimes in autumn.

*A. iteaphylla*: Flinders Range Wattle. This species is usually a tall shrub sometimes with pendulous growth habit. *A. iteaphylla* has long narrow phyllodes and masses of globular flowers from early autumn until early spring. This is one of our favourite wattles that flowers profusely through the cooler months.

*A. mearnsii*: See note about *A. irrorata*. Another Black Wattle with bipinnate foliage and flowering at same time as *A. irrorata*.

*A. subulata*: See note about *A. calamifolia*. This is another tall shrub that flowers for most of the year except in spring.

On the same subject, I recently picked up a brochure produced by the Yarra Ranges Council. The Council manages the Karwarra Australian Plant Garden in the Dandenong Ranges east of Melbourne. The brochure was headed "A Year of Wattles in the Garden", and listed a "month by month selection of some of the smaller, reliable members of the wattle family".

Species listed were:

January: *A. uncinata*, *A. provincialis*

February: *A. longissima*, *A. linifolia*

March: *A. conferta*

April: *A. suaveolens*, *A. genistifolia*

May: *A. flexifolia*, *A. podalyriifolia*

June: *A. terminalis*, *A. aculeatissima*, *A. beckleri*

July: *A. boormanio*, *A. myrtifolia*, *A. verticillata*

August: *A. acinacea*, *A. imbricata*, *A. aphylla*

September: *A. drummondii*, *A. stricta*, *A. pravissima*

October: *A. alata*, *A. cognata*

November: *A. glaucoptera*, *A. buxifolia*

December: *A. mitchellii*, *A. implexa*

# Acacia stricta

by Warren and Gloria Sheather, Yarrowyck, NSW

*This is part of a continuing series of articles on wattles of the Northern Tablelands of NSW.*

*Acacia stricta* is another wattle that occurs on the Northern Tablelands of NSW.

*Acacia stricta*, the Straight or Hop Wattle, is an erect shrub reaching a height of 3 metres. Phyllodes are 5-15 centimetres long, about 2 centimetres wide, with a prominent central vein and a gland near the base. They are olive-green to grey-green in colour.

Flower heads are globular, 0.5 centimetres wide, pale yellow to yellow and appear in spring. Two flower heads are carried at the base of each phyllode.

Pods are more or less straight, raised over the seeds, 4-10 cm long, 2-5 millimetres wide and papery in texture.



*Acacia stricta* is a widespread species in eastern Australia from south-east Queensland through New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania to South Australia. The Hop Wattle is

also found on the Bass Strait islands between the mainland and Tasmania.

*Acacia stricta* could be cultivated in native shrubberies. The species has proved to be hardy and free flowering.

Propagate from seed and probably cuttings.

*Acacia stricta* was first known as *Mimosa stricta* and described and illustrated (see image) in Volume 1 of the *Botanists Repository* published in the UK in 1797. At this time the species was named *Mimosa stricta* and known as the Harsh-leaved Upright Mimosa. Specimens were grown in greenhouses and propagated from seed and cuttings. By 1817 the species was known as *A. stricta*.

*A. stricta* is one of about 10 wattle species that have become environmental weeds in South Africa.

It is interesting to note that the first edition of the 10 volumes of the *Botanists Repository* sold at Christies for \$14,650 but thanks to the magic of the internet all 10 volumes may be viewed on line.

## Grampians Field Trip 5-7 August 2017

By Bill Aitchison

We are grateful to **Neil and Wendy Marriott** for leading our Study Group field trip to the Grampians on the weekend of 5, 6 and 7 August 2016.

On Friday night, our enthusiastic group of 19 Study Group members met at Neil and Wendy's place at Panrock Ridge for a BBQ and a meet and greet. Neil talked about the planned schedule for the weekend and about some of the Acacias that we hoped to see.



Some of the Field Trip Participants

Photo C Clarke

He handed out a list of Grampians Acacias, 41 taxa in total, with information as to where we may hope to see each one.

He also provided a list of Endemic Plants of the Grampians, totalling 54 taxa. Interestingly, no Acacias are endemic to the Grampians. A copy of an article in Australian Plants (Vol 11, No. 91, June 1982) was also provided to participants. This article, headed Wattles of the Grampians, was written by Fred Rogers, and described 20 Acacias that occur naturally in the Grampians.

On the Saturday morning, we again met at Neil and Wendy's, and our day started with a walk around Wendy's Wattle Walk, as well as the general Panrock Ridge Gardens and bush. Wendy has been developing a significant collection of wattles on the property. Some of the species admired were *A. applanata* (a great plant), *A. restiacea* (spectacular in flower), *A. guinetii*, *A. pycnantha* (occurs naturally on the property), *A. verniciflua* (an uncommon prostrate form), *A. aphylla* (it self-seeds throughout the garden), *A. leptospermoides*, *A. aspera* (a Morrl Morrl form from NE of the Grampians), *A. consobrina*, *A. beckleri*, *A. declinata* 'Pallinup Gold', *A. genistifolia* (had been flowering since March), *A. coriacea*, *A. daviesii* (a rare plant with highly aromatic foliage, donated by Alan Gibb) and *A. mitchellii* (probably needs the right biota in the soil to be successful).

Another wattle admired at Panrock Ridge was one referred to as *A. sp. Mt Typo*. This is an unnamed species that comes from Mt Typo in NE Victoria, and which has affinities with *A. buxifolia*.

Following morning tea, we then headed west along the Western Highway towards Dadswells Bridge and stopped along the side of the Highway to look at *A. sp. aff. farinosa*. This is a beautiful prostrate shrub that is rare in the wild – apart from the plants that we saw on the edge of the Western Highway, there are only two other known populations, in a couple of reserves along Glenorchy Road, north of Dadswells Bridge. Each location where it is found is a swampy sedge rich grassy woodland subject to inundation in winter.



*Acacia sp. aff. farinosa* at Dadswells Bridge Photo C Clarke

The population that we saw, on the edge of the main Highway between Melbourne and Adelaide, may come

under threat if a proposed new Highway follows the existing route, although one might hope that an alternative route may be chosen, given that there is National Park on both sides of the existing road. Currently, this Acacia is an undescribed species, but undoubtedly it warrants recognition as a new species (or possibly a new subspecies of *A. farinosa*). It is important that it be described so that it can obtain threatened species status.

From Dadswells Bridge we drove towards Mt Zero for our lunch stop and a walk. We then took the road towards Halls Gap, with various stops along the way. Acacias seen in this section of the Grampians included *A. myrtifolia* (with sickle shaped phyllodes), *A. stricta* (a dwarf form growing on rocks at Mt Zero and Flat Rock), *A. ulicifolia* (uncommon but quite widespread in the Grampians), *A. mitchellii* (setting seed), *A. provincialis* and *A. brownii* (still in bud but would look lovely when in flower, grows easily from cuttings).

On Saturday night, our whole group met for dinner at the Diamond House Restaurant in Stawell.

Sunday morning, began with a visit to a property previously owned for many years by APS members Ian and Jill Mitchell. The property was sold following Ian's death in 2014, but we were fortunate that the new owner gave us permission to inspect the property. Ian and Jill had purchased the land in the Black Range in about 1977, and over the years they planted many species, including a wide range of Acacias, many of which are still surviving. Identification of some of these wattles presented a challenge, but some of the species noted were *A. glandulicarpa*, *A. euthycarpa*, *A. lasiocalyx*, *A. argyrophylla*, *A. cheelii*, *A. deanei*, *A. cardiophylla* and *A. havilandiorum*.

Jan Hall noted that identification of *A. havilandiorum* can often be confirmed by its distinctive phyllodes, which break and do not bend.



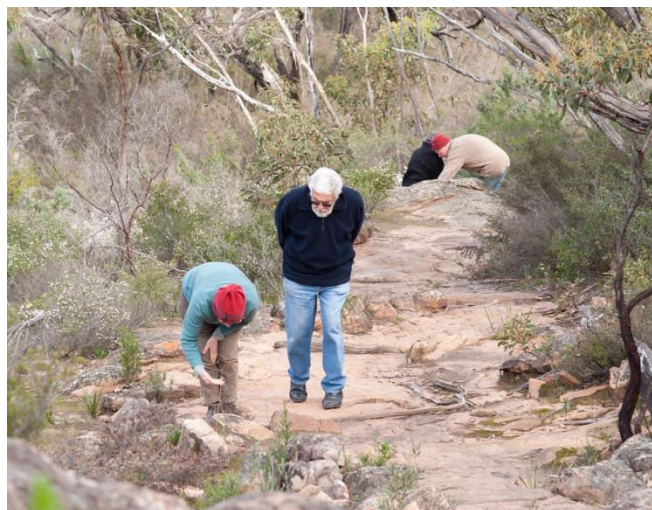
*Acacia oxycedrus*, Redman Rd

Photo C Clarke

We then headed to Pomonal, for a visit to Phillip Vaughan's Nursery – where much enthusiasm and eager buyers created some difficulty in getting our Group assembled ready for departure for the next stop. Near Pomonal, we then had a roadside stop to look at an isolated population of what is possibly an unnamed species. The plants we saw were similar in some respects to *A. provincialis* (for example, autumn flowering), but they had very broad blue grey phyllodes, whereas all of the *A. provincialis* occurring in the Grampians National Park have long narrow bright green phyllodes. The plants we saw at Pomonal were growing along Mt William Creek in a riparian habitat, whereas elsewhere in the Grampians, *A. provincialis* grows up on hillsides – with quite different soils and quite a different looking plant. No research has been done on the taxonomy of this particular plant.

We then set out to explore the eastern side of the Grampians, driving along Redman Road (with frequent stops) in the direction of Mt William. Wattles noted along Redman Road were *A. verniciflua*, *A. mucronata* (noting its umbrageous shape), *A. paradoxa*, *A. melanoxyton*, *A. provincialis*, *A. oxycedrus* and a natural hybrid of *A. oxycedrus* x *A. mucronata* (this would make a great garden plant).

On the road to Mt William, we recorded *A. obliquinervia* and *A. verticillata*. At the Camp Ground on Grampians Road (at the western end of Redman Road) we saw one of the finest specimens of *A. dealbata* that one could hope to see, looking quite brilliant in full bloom. *A. dealbata* is not common in the Grampians, but suckers after bush fire.



Botanising in The Grampians

Photo C Clarke

The weekend finished with a visit to the site of the planned Wildlife Art Museum of Australia (WAMA), with an opportunity to inspect the existing bushland on the property. WAMA is a project to create an Art Museum within an Australian botanical landscape, and will be one of Victoria's great botanical gardens. It will feature Grampians flora in one section of the Garden, local indigenous flora in a

covenanted section, and a lot of rare and endangered flora and iconic flora of Australia in a third section around the gallery, coffee shop and restaurant.

Our thanks to Neil and Wendy Marriott for organizing and guiding such a successful weekend.

Participants were: Neil and Wendy Marriott, Bill Aitchison (Donvale, Vic), Lib and Chris Bartholomeusz (Moonta Bay, SA), Sandra and Don McKenzie (Moonta, SA), John and Barbara Nevin (Armidale, NSW), Chris Clarke (Thornbury, Vic), Jan Hall (Yarrowonga, Vic), Helen and John van Riet (Wangaratta, Vic), Glenda and Bernie Datson (Baranduda, Vic), Maria and Don Hitchcock (Armidale, NSW), Max and Regina McDowall (Bulleen, Vic).

## Favourite Acacias

In 1987, the APS Foothills Group (in eastern Melbourne) asked their members to nominate their favourite Acacias, and the responses received were included in their Group's newsletter. One of the contributors at that time was **Barbara Buchanan**.

Barbara grew up in Perth but then moved to Melbourne. She then left Melbourne and lived in Myrrhee in north eastern Victoria for many years, before more recently shifting to Benalla. The article that she wrote in 1987 (by which time she was living in Myrrhee) was headed "The Acacias in My Life" and is reproduced below:

"One of my early childhood memories, which now seems like a glimpse of an enchanted garden in a fairytale, is of a valley we used to wind through on horseback in the sand hills behind the beach. This valley was always greener and lusher than most of the Sandhill country and in spring was covered with a gold and blue purple sea framed in the dark green of the gums. The saddle was an ideal vantage point to look down on and over the colourful carpet of wattle and hovea, reaching a little over the horses' knees. I did try to find out what wattle and hovea, in an age when common names were the rule. I have forgotten the names, and the plants themselves have long vanished under Perth's suburban sprawl leaving only the record in my memory. When I first started planting natives I tried mixing purple and gold, and I still hope to recreate that spring magic someday, somehow, but having to substitute species that are available and suited to Victoria means that so far that enchanted glade has eluded me.

One of my first native plantings was of 8 or so wattles designed to provide continuous wattle bloom. At that stage the full list of 12, one for each month, was just not available. Alas, we moved on before they flowered, leaving me with a niggling regret, but I have never repeated the exercise as other considerations controlled my plantings. I

had started to think about form, shape, texture and whole garden design.

Since those days I have had several wattles of the moment. *A. acinacea* gave me much pleasure during many years dominated by other than garden interests. It lightened the late winter on the top of a dry shady bank, spreading slowly but never outgrowing its welcome, always neat with a satisfying rich green, and then giving its marvellous golden display.

*A. cardiophylla* with its intense flower colour and dainty foliage was a passing phase. However, it became very straggly – too much shade I suspect, and was axed. I am trying it again now with a similar leaved, lower growing *A. browniana* underneath. This should flower between July and October and its taller neighbor carry on from October to January, but I expect them to be at least a month later for me.

Then there was *A. iteaphylla* for the weaker perfume of the pale golden balls, the elegant pendulous form of many plants, but especially for the foliage, graceful blue grey phyllodes, set off with seasonal flushes of pink and red tips. I used to collect seed from attractive plants growing over fences around Canterbury, but alas, because of its frost sensitivity not many plants have survived at Myrhee (in the North East). My Canterbury walks were often directed to Maranoa Gardens and it was there that I first met both *A. boormanii* and *A. cognata*. The former again attracted me by its blue grey foliage, and the spectacular quantity and quality of blossom was an unexpected bonus at Myrhee. However, this bush has now grown straggly, although there are plentiful suckers with fresh new growth and I feel it probably just needs proper management (regular pruning) to maintain its initial impact. With *A. cognata* it was also the foliage; long bright, yellow green; almost needles on slender weeping branches that caught my eye. In this plant, we have our own weeping willow effect, but one that will not wreck the drainage, can be accommodated on a suburban block and fairly inconspicuous flowers, but the attractiveness of form and foliage make this quite irrelevant as a specimen plant or as a background it earns a place in any garden.

*Acacia redolens*. My current favourite acacia is one which I have not even seen in flower yet. I met it last autumn just north of Ravensthorpe (WA) where it formed a silvery cover over the ground, up to two feet high and very wide spreading. It does come in taller forms as well. The silvery colour is due to a powdery coating on the leaves which rubs off easily between the fingers and then, oh, the heavenly spicy vanilla fragrance that envelopes one. *Acacia redolens* is known as a “soap wattle” and I am waiting patiently - no, impatiently but with resignation, until the seed I have is transformed into plants big enough to harvest, and I can bathe with a sprig which provides both soap and scent.

Where we were shown it, *A. redolens* was growing in an old mine area in a stiff clay in the valley of a salt creek. Many of the creeks and rivers of the district were salt when first seen by white men and the local flora, including my wattle, have developed a salt tolerance. As my wattle is palatable to sheep it has a future in the reclamation and utilization of salted land. Nindethana Seeds exported about 500 kg of seed to New Mexico alone last year, presumably for such applications.

For the best of my knowledge of *A. redolens* I have to rely on Vol 2 of you-know-what (Elliot & Jones). The flowers are globular, yellow and appear in spring. It will grow in anything from light to heavy soil with good or poor drainage, is frost and drought tolerant and takes dappled shade through to full sun. One can hardly ask more of a plant, yet it gives that perfume as well.”

Barbara has recently (30 years later) provided some thoughts in hindsight, and has commented on what she would nominate now as her favourite Acacias. She notes that when she grew up in Perth, she was lucky enough to have family picnics in the bush in winter on Sundays, even drives to pick armfuls of wildflowers from the roadsides, blue leschenaultia, yellow verticordia, black or red and green kangaroo paws among many others. By the time she left Perth such practices were being proscribed and she barely understood why, there seemed to be such an abundance of them. Luckily, she notes that there were more far sighted people trying to preserve what was even then (late 1930s – early 1940s) a tourist attraction and an irreplaceable resource. But the taste of the WA flora did sow the seeds of her lifelong interest. It also gave her the impression that all wattles were small shrubs, an idea rudely shattered in Victoria.

As to what favourite wattles Barbara would nominate now, she writes as follows:

“With a very much reduced area for planting and a drier warmer climate than at Myrhee it would have to be back to the one of the stunning small WA wattles, just don't ask me which. I do have a prostrate *A. cardiophylla* ready to plant in a tall pot, I would like to fit in another *A. chinchillensis* from Queensland which gave much pleasure at Myrhee, but for the opportunity to have a variety of form and foliage in the one species I must settle on *A. cognata* again. In fact, as I have only just become aware, I already have 3 forms, Lime Magik, Little Cog, and a grafted weeping standard, Waterfall. This latter does suffer from 'bare knees' on top and knobbly knees at that but it is a trouble free green exclamation mark that visitors admire. We have few upright narrow plants to break up our rounded shrubberies and I am finding grafted standards one way to create the effect. I still have to place the newly acquired Little Cog, but am thinking somewhere to set off Waterfall. Lime Magik is well established and getting a stronger trunk. I love the way it flops all around, a fatter yellow pillar against more sombre grey greens. Given time and space it maybe could

create the Bower of its common name, such as we had at Myrree, a green cubby house for children.”

## Acacias in The News

There was an interesting report in the Ballarat Courier (30 December 2016). Roger Thomas noted that many of their local wattles have produced less seed than usual this year. He commented that very noticeable was the blackwood, which is normally covered in seed every summer, but this year there was very little to be seen.

Similarly, both the golden wattle and the hedge wattle have also produced less seed than usual. It is suggested that the relative scarcity of seed is probably due to the wet spring, when rain and dull weather resulted in poor pollination at flowering time.

Another wattle that was also affected was the common and weedy Cootamundra wattle.

In our own garden here, we had noticed the same thing with our *Acacia acinacea* – we have a considerable number of these wattles that usually produce large amounts of seed, but this year there was only a very small amount of seed.

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In February, the Reserve Bank announced that the wattle to be featured on the new \$10 bank note will be *Acacia victoriae*. This new note will come into circulation in September this year. I think this is an appropriate choice of species for a bank note. For example, it is widely distributed across the mainland states, it is the main *Acacia* species used in the bush food industry, and it has also been the subject of research for potential use in treatment of some cancers.

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A recent article in the Tasmanian newspaper The Examiner (2 April 2017) noted that there are more than 200 endemic flowering plant species found in Tasmania. It mentioned two endemic *Acacia* species, being *A. pataczekii* (Wally’s wattle, this being restricted to high country in the North East, at Tower Hill and Roses Tier), and *A. axillaris* (described as being “a bushy, densely-branched shrub that grows to four metres and is restricted to flats and valleys of the Elizabeth, St Pauls and Clyde rivers”).

Two other Tasmanian endemic *Acacias* (not mentioned in the article) are *A. riceana* and *A. derwentiana*.

It is probably opportune here to remind Study Group members that the next biennial ANPSA Conference is being held in Tasmania next January (see [apstas.org.au](http://apstas.org.au) for more information).

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# NATIVE PLANT SALE

Sat 6<sup>th</sup> May

10am – 3pm

Kadina

Showgrounds

**Plants suitable for local conditions – incl. drought tolerant, limestone tolerant, coastal, windbreaks etc.**

Various other garden products and refreshments available for purchase

Native plant display.

**FREE ENTRY**



# Acacias in the UK and The Netherlands

The December 2016 issue of Pentachondra (the Newsletter of the Australasian Plant Society in the UK) included a number of articles relating to Acacias. The following are some extracts from this Newsletter.

## Report from East Kent – by Jeremy Spon

As growers of Australasian plants (at least those of us without heated greenhouses) we are more at the mercy of the weather than most gardeners. The variable conditions of the last few years have provided various tests for the plants I grow, and not just the winter temperatures. Here in East Kent, we are no more than 15 miles from the sea to the north, east and south, so if we avoid an influx of cold air from the continent winters can be surprisingly benign. The lowest absolute minimum recorded in the last three years was  $-4.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and in the last two winters we have had surprisingly few nights with even a slight frost. However, in the winter of 2011-12, we had a low of  $-10.8^{\circ}\text{C}$  and a run of 10 days when the daytime temperature barely rose above freezing. So, winter cold can see off many of the more tender Australasians even when they are provided with shelter and excellent drainage. However, losing plants in hard winters is the price we all pay for our love of Australasian plants, and it is a choice between giving up and growing only things which are bone-hardy, or replanting and keeping fingers crossed for a run of milder winters such as those we have had recently.

A threat that is less often written about, however, is drought. East Kent, along with Essex, has one of the lowest average rainfalls in the UK, and with amounts distributed very unevenly through the year, it is not unusual to have long spells, of more than a month, with little or no rain at all. This year was particularly bad, with our weather station only recording 27.2mm between the beginning of July and the middle of September. It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that all plants from Australia are very drought resistant, but my own experience confirms that this is by no means the case. So, what has done well over the last few years, and what has struggled?

I have written before about trying to grow acacias outdoors, and the frankly limited success I have had. However, as indicated above, recent winters have been kinder, and this has allowed some of the acacias I have planted to come through the winters undamaged, and in some cases to flower profusely – a real bonus in the early spring.

I have not, unfortunately, managed to acquire a mature plant of what is almost certainly the best acacia for growing outdoors in the UK, *A. pataczekii*, but a friend has a large plant of this in his garden a few miles away, and this is a magnificent sight in March and April, with attractive blue-

green foliage, dense growth habit, and masses of pale cream coloured flowers. This plant sets viable seed, although I have found it tricky to germinate, and the one seedling I have is looking very sickly. But if you can get a hold of a plant it is definitely worth growing.

Much easier to buy, but less hardy, are the two staples of *A. baileyana* 'Purpurea' and *A. dealbata*. Both of these can make large trees in frost-free climates; I saw a memorable specimen of the latter in the wonderful Cornish garden of Lamorran, with a trunk larger than I could get my arms around, and the former makes impressive specimens at Ventnor Botanic Garden on the Isle of Wight. Both are easy to grow from seed, although I am not sure how true to form *A. baileyana* 'Purpurea' would be; seed is sold by various suppliers, but particularly good clones would need to be propagated by cuttings. They have both grown well for me, although *A. baileyana* seems less drought resistant, and *A. dealbata* has not flowered profusely, possibly due to being in too much shade.

The best species for flowers has undoubtedly been *A. paradoxa*, bought from a local garden centre in its end of season sale as *A. armata*, an old synonym (which given the thorny nature of this plant actually seems rather more appropriate). This has grown quite large over the last few years, and in addition to flowering well in early spring has set quite a bit of viable seed this year.

*A. frigescens* is a species the late Jeff Irons thought might do well in British gardens, and a seedling I grew from APS seed did indeed survive some pretty low temperatures, but it was never very vigorous or ornamental, and I suspect lack of summer rainfall may be part of the problem. Certainly, as young plants, the acacias I have grown seem to need a steady supply of water, rapidly showing their distress by dropping leaves and suffering die-back if they become too dry at the root. On our shallow soil, over free-draining chalk, this can be a real problem in late summer, quite apart from the risk of the soil becoming too alkaline. Now that it is well established, *A. dealbata* seems more resilient, but I had to water *A. paradoxa* regularly, and I think lack of water did for *A. frigescens*.

One last species to mention is *A. boormanii*. This grew well for me until the two hard winters of 2010-11 and 2011-12, when it was killed but I now have it again, and it has the potential to be a beautiful thing, with a willowy habit and very narrow phyllodes. I grew it from seed on both occasions, and in general I have found acacias not too difficult to propagate in this way.

## Acacias in The Netherlands – by Maurits de Vries

Living in the north east of the Netherlands it looks impossible to grow acacias outside in our cold climate, but being a plant pioneer I have tried some species over the past few years. A few of them are still standing.

My first Acacia was a pot bound *A. pataczekii*. When I wanted to plant it I had some serious problems removing it from the pot because it was so heavily pot bound. It was a poor specimen with a height of 10cm and it died in its first winter, so that wasn't a good start.

A few years ago, I tried to grow *A. pataczekii* again from seeds I ordered from Wildseed Tasmania. John Purse told me when he saw some pictures of my plant that it is actually a hybrid, possibly with *A. dealbata*. I had two seedlings, the one that was planted in an unprotected spot died in a very mild winter but the other one is now 3m in height and still standing. It is planted in front of our house where it is protected from the freezing cold wind. Two years ago, I received seeds from the true species and I have one little seedling, but strangely enough it doesn't grow well and I think the root system has been damaged because I didn't protect the little plant in winter. It was in a cold greenhouse.

I guess that *A. pataczekii* is one of the cold hardiest species but unfortunately I haven't been able to test a good specimen in a real winter yet.

*Acacia rubida* - In 2014 I was at Pieter Zwijnenburg nursery in Boskoop and Pieter showed me his *Acacia rubida*. I'm not sure but I think he grows it from cuttings. I planted *A. rubida* in front of our warehouse (south side) where it is protected from the freezing wind and has its own microclimate. It is planted in humus rich sands with very good drainage. Now in October 2016 it is about 7m in height and it's really thriving here. It bloomed for the first time in the spring of 2015 and in spring 2016 it had flowers everywhere and was really impressive. In midsummer, it can be 30 to 35°C (maybe higher?) in front of the warehouse wall and I think *A. rubida* really likes the reflected heat. It has survived at least -16°C unprotected and I think if it is cut to the ground it will resprout from the base.

I think that acacias grown in Rootmaker pots do better and grow faster than similar plants grown in normal pots. I saw *A. rubida* in my friend's garden. It was a very thin specimen and it wasn't growing well.

*Acacia obliquinervia* - I grew this cold hardy acacia from seed in 2011. The first year I grew it in Rootmaker pots. I planted *A. obliquinervia* I guess in 2013 in front of our warehouse. It didn't grow fast and at the end of every summer it looked poor, I had no idea why. Then I noticed in late spring or early summer that most of the leaves had a lot of purple on them. Two years ago, I wondered if *A. obliquinervia* doesn't like reflected heat and the hot temperatures in summer, so I moved it to another spot. It is now planted on the west side of the warehouse (morning sun and late afternoon sun) and in 2016 I noticed it's really thriving. I haven't seen any more purple coloured leaves and now for the first time it is full of flower heads. I did protect it during its first winter with horticultural fleece and

it seems that this will do the trick. I notice that many Australian plants in my garden can handle cold temperatures but have problems with the freezing wind. *A. obliquinervia* is now more than 2m in height and I don't protect it anymore.

### *Wattles in Hastings – by Judy Clark*

My relatively small garden is on the south coast of England and generally gets little frost. This means that I can contemplate growing outside species that those who live in areas with colder winters are less likely to be able to grow successfully. But wattles can be grown in containers, something that can make it easier to protect plants from winter cold, and also to provide wattles with another condition that they really do need: protection from strong cold winds. I say this from bitter experience of shredded foliage and dead branches.

The first wattle that I ever tried, *Acacia melanoxylon* (blackwood), has proved perfectly hardy (it was unscathed by the series of colder winters from 2008-09 to 2011-12) but it did grow pretty tall pretty speedily. When I did the research, I should have done before I planted it, I learned that in its native habitat it can reach 30m and even taller. But I was reluctant to take it out so, as an experiment I tried pollarding it at a height of about 2m. This has worked well as a means of keeping it under control and I do it every two years or so, but I suspect it restricts flowering; all I get is occasional sprays of creamy flower heads in spring. This is really not a wattle for a small garden.

Usually shorter, but with the potential to grow to just as tall, is *A. dealbata* (silver wattle). This plant I bought a couple of years ago and ended up placing it in a rather difficult spot. It's not yet flowered and maybe won't flower much because of the lack of direct sun, but I do like the ferny foliage. However, not only smaller – rarely growing to more than 3m at higher altitudes of northern Victoria and southern New South Wales – but also hardier, is the subspecies *subalpina*. I don't grow it but Liesbeth Uitjewaal reported that this species survived -15°C in her Netherlands garden while Jeff Irons reported that a plant of the same provenance was fine until the winter of 2010-11 when it succumbed to two nights at -12°C in his Wirral garden.

Ovens wattle (*Acacia pravissima*) hails from roughly similar locations to silver wattle but does not get nearly as tall. It ought to do well in my garden and I suspect, it would do so, had I not planted it in a place where strong winds almost invariably made it look terribly tattered by the end of winter. The wind not only affected its flowering but also its shape as (unlike some other species) it didn't put out new shoots from the stem. Every year it looked sadder and this year I took it out. But I still grow *A. pravissima*. I obtained a prostrate form 'Bushwalk Baby', from Lower Keneggy Nursery in Cornwall. It hasn't had a winter yet but as I write (November 2016) there are tiny buds on it and fingers

crossed there will be bright yellow sprays of flowers next spring. It will presumably tolerate a similar temperature range to the tree form but shouldn't get to more than half a metre in height.

*Acacia baileyana* (Cootamundra Wattle), both the usual form with blue-green leaves and the purple leaved cultivar 'Purpurea', grow well for me, at least so far. The former was planted out in 2011, the latter in 2012, so neither has yet had to endure much in the way of winter cold. The usual form I grew from seed without any trouble but although I got purple leaved seedlings when I sowed seed labelled 'Purpurea' none of the plants thrived. I'm not sure why but in the end, I purchased a small plant from Ventnor Botanic Garden on the Isle of Wight, and it has been fantastic.

These two plants also illustrate the importance of protection from cold winds. Most years the plant in the front garden, the blue-green leaved form, gets hit by a strong south-westerly or two. It does resprout from the stem and so recovers quite quickly but rarely flowers well. In contrast, the purple-leaved form is planted in the back garden in a really sheltered spot. Now it's got taller, the very top most branchlets can get a bit hammered (this November's south easterly storm was a bit of a shock) but otherwise it's not suffered any damage. I did, however, nearly lose it in the dry spring of two years ago by failing to notice until almost too late that it needed watering.

Cootamundra wattle can reach 10m but mine are kept to a couple of metres by pruning the tops where the wind hasn't done it for me. However, *A. baileyana* also comes in a prostrate form. I have two small seedlings from seed sown this year, hopefully they too will flourish.

The native habitat of *A. mucronata* is forests and woodlands. I think my plant is subspecies *mucronata* from Tasmania, where it is known as the caterpillar wattle, but the species is also found in Victoria and New South Wales. My plant, which went out in 2011, and has suffered nothing more than a bit of wind damage to the very top. It first flowered in 2014 and now does so regularly. It has pale cream flowers in spring and it doesn't mind having to cuddle up to its neighbours. Last year I pruned it after flowering to try and restrict its height.

*A. myrtifolia* (myrtle wattle) is a species recommended by Jeff Irons. It occurs in many parts of temperate Australia, being found in woodland, forest, scrub and heath in all states except the Northern Territory. This suggests that seed provenance could be important in determining how well it does in the UK. As my plant is only four years old its hardiness has not yet been tested but Australian sources describe this species as frost hardy to -7°C and it is recommended for cold climate areas. Although -7°C sounds promising it must be remembered that this refers to a land where even heavy frosts tend to burn off during the day and prolonged continuous low temperatures are not usual. From

seed, it flowered in its third year for me – pale yellow flowers – and thus far shows prostrate tendencies, being no more than about 50cm high. It is said to tolerate lime.

My gold-dust wattle, *A. acinacea*, came from seed collected in my sister's garden in Melbourne. My records tell me that I collected the seed in December 2001 but I didn't sow it until 2007. I kept the plant in a pot for years. It grew slowly, barely flowered, and never looked very good, probably because I'm not good at container growing. Every year, I lugged it into a frost-free greenhouse for the winter, and then lugged it out again in the spring. When I did finally look it up I discovered it ought to be hardier than I had thought.

In 2014 it went out in the garden. It rewarded me with glorious golden flowers in April 2015 (within its usual flowering period) but flowering started again in late November, presumably because it got confused by a very warm autumn. Then, even though I thought it was in a fairly sheltered spot, it got caught by cold winds this spring and lost almost all its leaves. It looked dead; indeed, there's a lesson there as I nearly took it out. Instead I pruned the really dead branches and it slowly recovered as the weather warmed up. As I write, it is again packed with flower buds. This species is widespread in south eastern Australia so seed provenance may be important in influencing how well plants do in Britain.

The other four species that I grow outside have not flowered yet. Two of them, *A. pataczekii* (Wally's wattle) and *A. siculiformis* (dagger wattle), I do expect to be hardy, not only in my garden but in colder parts of the UK. Wally's wattle is a Tasmanian endemic of restricted distribution in the north east of the state, where it grows at an altitude of about 1400m. It is listed as threatened under the Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Act 1995. My plant is slow growing, still only 50cm or so, but whether this is because it needs a less shaded position or because it just grows slowly I do not know. My dagger wattle came from Jeff Irons' garden so I assume he had plants that survived winters on the Wirral. It is found at higher altitudes in south eastern Australia and is very prickly!

I am less sanguine about what the other two will take. *A. retinodes* (*A. provincialis*), known among other names as wirilda, only went in this year from Treseders. It is reported to take -7°C in Australia but somewhat ominously is not listed in my book of plants for cool climate areas, unlike *A. pycnantha*. However, *A. pycnantha* is suggested by Ross and Irons to be less frost hardy than *A. retinodes* (*A. provincialis*). Provenance again? *A. pycnantha* is found over much of Victoria and west into South Australia. My plant was grown from seed from the Grampians region of western Victoria, a provenance which might be expected to provide (relatively more) hardy plants, and planted out in 2015. This year it has begun to grow away nicely.

To finish, here are some species that I don't grow but I

would like to try, if I could find somewhere to put them. *A. gummii* is a small shrub that grows on the slopes of the Great Divide in eastern Australia; the similar sized *A. guinetii* is a heathland species from south-west Western Australia, and the somewhat larger *A. williamsonii* is found in the colder parts of central Victoria. These three, along with *A. myrtifolia* and *A. acinacea* (and others) are recommended by Neil Marriott as small wattles suitable for gardens in Victoria.

Two Tasmanian endemics are *A. riceana* (arching wattle) and its close relative *A. axillaris* (midlands wattle). The former, which comes from wetter areas in the south of the island, I have seen at Bedgebury in Kent where it must endure tougher conditions than it would were it in my garden; the latter, also a riparian species, is much smaller and listed as rare under the Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Act 1995.

Finally, there are three species I saw in gardens on a recent trip to Armidale in New South Wales. *A. buxifolia* (box-leaf wattle), *A. amoena* (boomerang wattle) and *A. decora*, which has many common names, but its scientific one says a lot about it. Armidale is located at an elevation of around 1000m on the New England Tablelands of the Great Divide. So, despite its latitude, this region gets cold winters, with minimums as low as -10°C, frosty mornings, and even occasional snowfalls. Summers are cool (for New South Wales) with temperatures rarely exceeding 32°C.

## Seed Bank

**There has been a change to the maximum number of seed requests per order from 18 to 10 different acacia seed requests up to 3 times per year (special circumstances may be considered).**

An up to date list of species held in our Seed Bank was included in our December 2016 Newsletter.

Although we do purchase some seed from commercial sources, we also rely upon donations of seed. If you are able to help with any seed donations they would be very welcome (we would ask you to post any donations to Bill Aitchison, who will forward them on to our Seed Bank Curator, Victoria Tanner).

Our thanks to the following members for recent donations of seed: Judy Barker, Alan Gibb, Neil and Wendy Marriott, Sandra McKenzie, John Nevin, Don Perrin, Victoria Tanner, Helen van Riet, Merele Webb

The procedure for requesting seed from our Study Group Seed Bank is as follows. Study Group members are entitled to lodge up to 3 orders per member per year, with 10 packets maximum in each order (negotiable). There is a charge of \$3 in relation to each order, to cover the cost of a

padded post bag and postage. The \$3 may be paid in stamps or by direct credit to our Group's bank account. Some members include an additional payment with their annual subscriptions to cover the Seed Bank charge.

Requests for seed may be lodged in either of the following ways:

1. By email to our Study Group email address, [acaciastudygroup@gmail.com](mailto:acaciastudygroup@gmail.com) (emails to this address go directly to both Victoria and Bill Aitchison). If you make a request by email, you will also need to make the necessary payment by one of the above methods. If you are paying by stamps, these should be mailed to Bill Aitchison, 13 Conos Court, Donvale, Vic 3111
2. By mail (enclosing stamps if required). These requests should be posted to Bill Aitchison (address as in the previous paragraph). Bill will then advise Victoria of the request.

We would like to maintain some data on your results in propagating seed from the Seed Bank. We would therefore ask if you could provide a report on your results, recording information on species, number of seeds sown, number germinated and days after sowing.

## Study Group Membership

Acacia Study Group membership for 2016/17 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:

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](mailto:acaciastudygroup@gmail.com))