



Acacia bruniooides

Australian Native Plants Society (Australia) Inc.

ACACIA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER

Group Leader and Newsletter Editor
Bill Aitchison
13 Conos Court, Donvale, Vic 3111
Phone (03) 98723583

Seed Bank Curator
Victoria Tanner

Email: acaciastudygroup@gmail.com

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Note: If you wish to view or download previous Study Group Newsletters, they are available on the Study Group website.

The address is:

<http://anpsa.org.au/acaciaSG>

From The Leader

Dear Members

I am sure that all Study Group members join me in congratulating **Maria Hitchcock** on being awarded an Order of Australia medal in the recent Queens Birthday Honours List. The award was given in recognition of Maria's service to conservation and the environment, and this covers a wide range of achievements. In relation to Wattles, the citation made specific mention of Maria's successful campaigns for wattle to be gazetted as the floral emblem of Australia in 1988 and for the gazettal of National Wattle Day in 1992. It also referred to her authorship of Wattle (1991) and A Celebration of Wattle (2012). Congratulations Maria on a well-deserved honour.

What do *Acacia enterocarpa* and *Acacia pataczekii* have in common? Firstly, they are both quite restricted in their natural distribution. *A. enterocarpa* occurs in South Australia and Victoria, and at least in Victoria it is quite rare being confined to a limited area north west of Nhill in the Wimmera. *A. pataczekii* is a Tasmanian endemic listed as rare. Secondly, there is evidence that for each of them, seed set in their natural populations can be limited. In Victoria, most plants of *A. enterocarpa* in the wild are now covered in a gall that attacks the flower buds and prevents seed set. With *A. pataczekii*, Marion Simmons reports in her book, Wattles of Tasmania, that in the wild the plant is commonly attacked by insects causing damage to both flowers and pods, consequently in some areas very few seeds develop. But in cultivation, it seems that seed set for both species is not impacted in the same way as in the wild – emphasising the importance of maintaining species such as these under cultivation. In this newsletter, there is an article on *Acacia pataczekii* that provides more information on this species.

As for all Study Groups, membership fees fall due on 1 July each year – so it is now that time of year. It would be greatly appreciated if you could attend to this payment. Details regarding membership fees and payment options are shown on page 8. Some members have paid some years in advance, and some have still not paid for the last twelve months – if you wish to check on what date you are currently paid up to, please let me know. And if you do not wish to renew your membership, could you please let me know so that I can amend our membership records. Our membership fees remain the same as last year.

Bill Aitchison

Welcome

Welcome to the following new member to the Study Group:

Sarah Caldwell, Mole Station, NSW
Lesley Hook, Camden, NSW
Gail Knight, Sutton, NSW
APS Melton and Bacchus Marsh Group, Vic

From Members and Readers

Graeme Serle has recently moved from his 300 acre property at Waaia, Victoria to a small block in the town of Numurkah, 25 km away. One of the favourite plants that he grew at Waaia was *Acacia wardellii*. He started growing this after being attracted to it from a photo that he saw.

At one stage, he had 3-4 specimens of it, although this had reduced to one plant by the time he moved. He believes that it does not like wet feet and this may have resulted in some of the losses.

But he believes it is “one of the best”, it grew to a height of 5-6m, an upright tree with silvery coloured bark and powdery silver branchlets. Graeme suggests that it is somewhat similar in appearance to *Acacia pycnantha* but with broader phyllodes.

He has planted another *A. wardellii* in his new garden in Numurkah.

Graeme notes that at Waaia, it set copious quantities of seed, and he collected some seed before his move to Numurkah, and he has donated some of this seed to our Study Group Seed Bank.

Acacia wardellii is reported in World Wide Wattle as being known only from south of Roma, SW of Chinchilla and the Thomby Range near Surat, in south eastern Queensland. It is listed as being Near Threatened under Queensland's Nature Conservation Act 1992.

Note: In our Study Group Newsletter No. 132 (March 2016), there was an article on Propagation of *Acacia wardellii*.

Ian Campbell (Sydney) has drawn our attention to an interesting article:

“Just happened to notice that in the June 2018 online edition of ‘Unbound’ the e-journal/newsletter of the National Library of Australia there is an article by Bernadette Hince, ‘The Making of a National Flower’ which draws attention of the development of the acacia as national flower, including the AJ Campbell roles etc. In the ‘links’ also note *in particular* the link to the essay by Libby Robin ‘Nationalising Nature: Wattle Days in Australia’, which includes various photos from the AJ Campbell collection at the NLA. <https://www.nla.gov.au/unbound/june-2018>”

In our previous newsletter No. 140, there was a query from **Victoria Tanner** regarding a thickening of the stem in an *Acacia enterocarpa* that she is growing. **Jan Hall (Yarrawonga, Vic)** advises that this is an example of fasciation. This is a condition that she often sees on some Grevilleas, also Acacias and she has had it on a small bullock. Jan cuts off the fasciated section but would be interested in any other information or thoughts of members. Jan's photo below shows the fasciation, not on an Acacia, but on the bullock – as she comments, it is weird.



Jan also responded to the reference to *Acacia hilliana* in our previous newsletter. She comments that she has seen it growing in northern Australia and wishes that she could grow it – but no.

Jan does have a plant of which she is unsure of the species. She has it growing in a large pot and it is about 1.5m high. She was concerned about frost, but in the tub, she can place it under the eaves facing north where she hopes it flowers this year. She has suggested that a couple of possibilities could be *Acacia dunnii* or *Acacia retivenia*. Can anyone

help in identifying it – see photo below.



Victoria Tanner recently spent some time in a caretaker role at Craven's Peak Reserve, which is a Bush Heritage property near Boulia in central west Queensland on the northern edge of the Simpson Desert.

Victoria advises that there are about 12 wattles on the flora list for the Reserve. The most common is *Acacia georginae* which forms woodlands with many suckering young, in parts. *A. cambagei* is also there, but closely resembles *A. georginae* and was difficult to distinguish. At the time Victoria was there, the property was still benefiting from recent rains and she saw quite a few brolgas, emus and other birds.

Victoria particularly admired an old *Acacia peuce* growing near the house, about 30m or so tall. There is also an old one in town (Boulia) which they call the Corroboree tree.

Acacia consobrina by Warren and Gloria Sheather

Acacia consobrina is another interesting wattle that appears in the Seed Bank List.

A. consobrina, the Watercourse Wattle, is a spreading shrub reaching a height of about one metre with a spread of at least two metres. The phyllodes are up to four centimetres long with a rounded apex and tapering base. There is a gland close to the phyllode base. Flowers are held in globular heads with 35-45 golden flowers in each cluster. Flowering extends from May to September. As the flowers fade cut off each branch behind the spent blooms. This will encourage dense new growth and bounteous blooming.

A. consobrina, because of its growth habit, would be ideal to plant so that it spills over a low wall or cascades down an embankment.

The Watercourse Wattle is a native of Western Australia and is found in south-west Western Australia where it is sometimes growing in places that retain moisture. This may account for the common name.

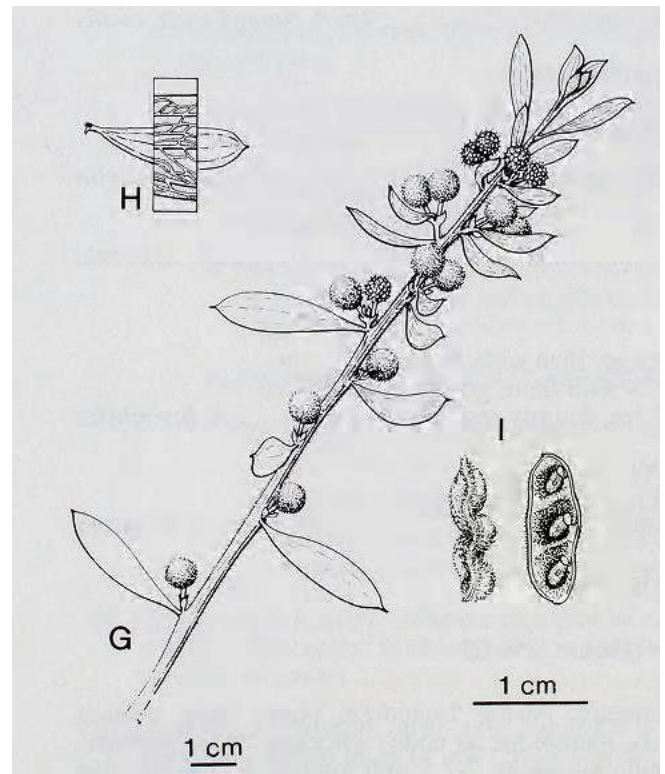
A. consobrina is classified as rare with limited distribution.

The type specimen was collected in 1964 and named in 1990. The species name means cousin and in this context means relatedness but distantly to *A. flavipila* and other species.

Propagate from seed that needs to be treated before sowing and probably from cuttings.

The illustration shows a flowering branch, an enlarged portion of phyllode and fruit from the original description in *Nuytsia*.

A. consobrina is one of a large number of small wattles that would be suitable for cultivation in shrinking suburban gardens. With a few exceptions, most wattles available commercially are either tall or shrub-sized species. How you overcome the paucity of species available to the gardening public is a vexing problem.



Acacia ingramii

by Warren and Gloria Sheather

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

Acacia ingramii is one of the 80+ species that occur on the Northern Tablelands of NSW.

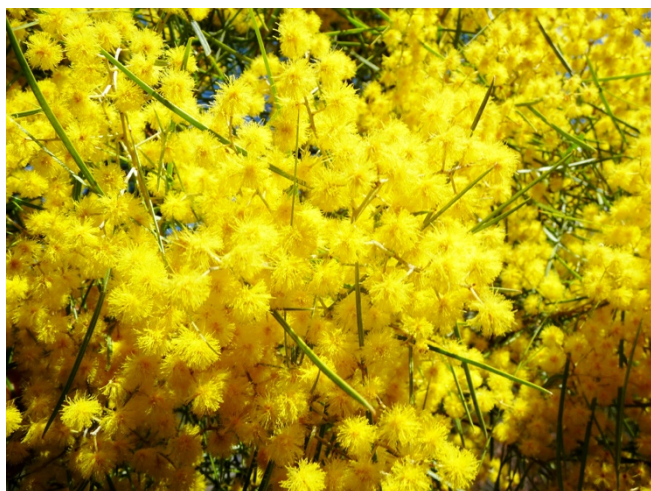
A. ingramii is a tall, dense shrub or small tree that may reach a height of seven metres. Phyllodes are linear, up to 100 millimetres long with a small hook on the end. Phyllodes sometimes have two glands, one near the base and one near the middle. Bright yellow flowers are held in globular clusters and cover plants in spring. Blooms are followed by linear pods.

A. ingramii has limited distribution and is found in northern NSW in the gorge country, east of Armidale and also Guy Fawkes River National Park. In spring the eastern gorges glow with colour as numerous *A. ingramii* burst into bloom.

A. ingramii is a hardy, long lived species that would be a colourful addition to tall hedges, shelterbelts and windbreaks.

The species is named in honour of Keith Ingram (1912-2002) who collected the type specimen from Wollomombi Falls, east of Armidale. The species was named in 1978.

Propagate from seed that requires soaking in boiling water before sowing.



Acacia ingramii

Photo W & G Sheather

Acacia pataczekii

by Bill Aitchison

Chris Clarke (Thornbury, Vic) was recently overseas, in the UK and Europe. Whilst in London, he visited the Royal

Botanic Gardens, Kew, where he took note of a number of Australian plants, including an *Acacia pataczekii* in flower (see Chris's photo). The photo was taken on 7 April 2018. Chris notes that the plant was outside the glasshouse where there are several Australian plants at the entrance - near a Snow Gum (*Eucalyptus gregsoniana*).

A search of the Kew database ePIC (<http://epic.kew.org/index.htm>) records that Kew has two living specimens of *A. pataczekii*. Both of these were planted in 1991, so the plant photographed by Chris would be 27 years old.

In her book, *Wattles of Tasmania*, Marion Simmons notes that *Acacia pataczekii* is a Tasmanian endemic listed as rare, restricted mainly to dry sclerophyll forests of the northern sections of the north-east highlands between 525 and 1060m altitude. It is a shrub or small tree (1) 3-6 m tall, with blue-green foliage and smooth grey bark.



Acacia pataczekii at Kew

Photo C Clarke

On receipt of the photo from Chris, I contacted **Judy Clark**, who lives in Hastings in East Sussex and is a UK member of our Study Group. Coincidentally, Judy advised that she was in the process of putting together a piece on *A. pataczekii* for the next issue of *Pentachondra* (the Newsletter of the Australasian Plant Society in the UK). Judy has kindly provided some notes on growing this plant in the UK and Europe:

In relation to a plant in her own garden, Judy writes: “My plant is still small and has grown very slowly, though moving it has probably not helped. It survived the worst winter I’ve ever experienced with this garden. (We had two very cold spells in March, minimum -4.6°C and 60 hours where the temperature didn’t get above zero. Two weeks later it was snow again, not quite so cold but with easterly gales, which in my garden did most of the damage.)”

In relation to a plant in a garden in East Kent, Judy refers to a report from **Jeremy Spon** in *Pentachondra* (November 2016). Jeremy (who is Treasurer of the Australasian Plant Society) wrote as follows:

“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 hold of a plant it is definitely worth growing.”

(A photo of the friend’s plant, referred to by Jeremy, appears below. Judy has more recently reported that the plant was badly scorched by the wind in the most recent winter, and is not so far showing any signs of regrowing. Judy understands that in the wild, *A. pataczekii* suckers, and she wonders whether maybe this plant will. In her garden, she has seen *Acacia melanoxylon* produce a sucker (after pollarding) and she believes that the two species are related).



Acacia pataczekii

Photo: Jeremy Spon

Judy also noted a 1992 report in *Pentachondra* by **Brian Halliwell** (one of the founder members of the APS in the UK, now deceased but worked at Kew). Brian wrote in 1992 as follows:

“There is every indication that in Great Britain this is the hardiest species of *Acacia*.”

In 1992, **Brian Halliwell** also described the history of the plant at Kew, as follows (the tree referred to has presumably died since 1992):

“In 1974 flowering material was collected by Margaret Cowan of the Launceston Museum and sent to England for painting by Margaret Stones. This painting was included in Volume VI (no. 245) of the *Endemic Flora of Tasmania* which had been commissioned by Lord Talbot de Malahide. After painting, the branch became a Kew herbarium specimen. To complete the botanical illustration seed pods arrived in 1975 which were subsequently incorporated with the botanical specimen. Miss Stones extracted one seed which she gave to the horticultural staff at Kew. It was sown, germinated and in 1980 a mature seedling was planted outside at the foot of a south facing wall. Following establishment, it was to survive unscathed by the bitterly cold winters of the early nineteen eighties which totally killed a neighbouring tree of *A. dealbata*.”

The first flowers appeared in 1985 and there has, in successive years, been regular flowering in ever increasing profusion. In April or May, the mass of bloom almost totally obscures branches and leaves. Three stems originally selected for training are now trunk-like, some 150 mm in diameter and 6m in height. In most years seed is set but as it finally ripens and disperses quickly collecting can cause problems. Because good seed is difficult to find in the wild, the Tasmanian Forestry Service has requested samples from the Kew tree.”

I note that in Marion Simmons book, she notes that in the wild the plant is commonly attacked by insects causing damage to both flowers and pods, consequently in some areas very few seeds develop. This is consistent with Brian Halliwell’s reference to the request from the Tasmanian Forestry Commission to Kew for seed from the Kew tree).

Acacias at RBG Kew

In preparing the above notes on *Acacia pataczekii*, I thought it would be of interest to extract from the Kew database a list of Australian Acacias currently in the Kew Gardens.

This produced a list of 17 species, as follows:

alata, *baileyana*, *cardiophylla*, *cultriformis*, *dealbata*, *deanei*, *decora*, *glandulicarpa*, *irrorata* ssp *velutinella*, *mearnsii*, *melanoxylon*, *pataczekii*, *pravissima*, *pulchella*, *retinodes*, *riceana*, *vestita*

Acacia paradoxa

by **Bill Aitchison**

I recently received a query regarding *Acacia paradoxa*. The question related to where one might find the bushy 2m-4m high hedge form. The enquirer is creating a native

biodiversity habitat garden (in central Victoria). He already has small birds nesting in Hakeas from WA and would like to provide them with extra nesting sites and to provide the kangaroos and wallabies with shelter. He would also like to create windbreaks and screens in difficult spots under Red Gums.

When making enquiries at native seed providers and native plant nurseries regarding *Acacia paradoxa*, the main response that he has received has been that “we only have low scraggly forms”.

He has therefore asked the question as to where he would be most likely to find the “bushy 2m-4m high hedge form” that he is looking for.

This species is described in Flora of Australia as being a “straggly to compact intricate shrub or tree, normally 2-4m high”. It is not clear to me, however, how the “straggly” and the “compact” forms are represented across the geographical range of this species. For example, are there areas where the straggly forms are dominant, and other areas where compact forms are dominant? If so, in what areas do each of these forms exist? Or do straggly and compact forms often coexist with each other? Perhaps there are some Study Group members who can throw some light upon this question?

The enquirer noted that *A. paradoxa* had in the past been declared as a noxious weed in parts of Victoria, and he wondered whether this may have resulted in bushy forms being wiped out completely.

Footnote 1:

In a more recent communication, the enquirer advised that he had found a source for seed of a taller, bushy form (with provenance about 85 km from where he lives). He was advised that one reason that *A. paradoxa* has been wiped out in some areas is because farmers have found that rabbits like their cover.

He also commented as follows: “The best versions I've seen have been on the Fleurieu Peninsula in S.A. where they can be found growing up to 4m x 3m (my conservative unmeasured estimate) on a range of soils from sand to loam over clay, in very dense habit (no weeping long branches). Here they fit the common names descriptions of 'Hedge Wattle' (self-explanatory) and 'Kangaroo Thorn' (because the kangaroos use them for shelter from the sun, wind and rain. Often they are so dense that dry ground can be found underneath the canopy, when everywhere else is damp from rain. And they provide protection from humans, I should add. This makes me wonder if it would be possible to find where such common names originated? - because that would give some lead to their natural habit and location. If a common name originated from the Goldfields of Victoria, then I suspect that would be proof enough indeed, that such forms originally grew here.”

He also noted that in the past, he had purchased *A. paradoxa* plants from nurseries east of Melbourne, and found that they produced long singular weeping branches and would have needed pruning to form into more bushiness.

Footnote 2:

On 31 August 1901, an article in The Australasian (Melbourne) headed Wattle Blossom stated the following (*A. armata* was the name previously applied to *A. paradoxa*):

“Some of our acacias are highly prized in Europe. Thousands of *A. armata* (the common hedge wattle), *A. verticillata*, and others are sold in pots at 1/- to 2/- each. In the south of France many kinds are grown for their blossoms, which are distributed all over Europe in immense quantities.”

Interestingly, in their 1997 book Australian Plants: A Guide to Their Cultivation in Europe, Ross and Irons commented on *A. paradoxa* as follows:

“Some forms, especially a compact one common in Europe, with slightly weeping branches, are much more attractive than others. The compact clone flowers at an early age.”



Acacia paradoxa – a photo taken by Geoff Lay at Lysterfield Lake east of Melbourne, shows a weeping form.

Endangered Species

In May, the Assistant Minister for the Environment Melissa Price announced the inclusion of 41 species on to the threatened species under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Two Acacia species were included in this list being *Acacia meiantha* and *Acacia wilsonii*. These species are now listed as being Endangered.

In a search of our past newsletters, I was unable to find any mention of either of these species in any newsletter. So, it is perhaps appropriate now to rectify these past omissions!

Acacia wilsonii

Acacia wilsonii is a prostrate shrub normally 0.2-0.3m high with horizontal branches bearing terete erect phyllodes which are sessile, continuous on the branchlets and up to 13cm long. It has globular golden yellow flower heads with stalks about 1cm long.

It has a restricted distribution between Eneabba and Badgingarra (a distance of about 50km), north of Perth. In 2016, it was believed that there were 266 mature individual plants, spread over five severely fragmented subpopulations. A decline in the number of mature individuals is projected due to destruction or degradation of roadside vegetation at four of the subpopulations and a lack of recruitment at the other. Other threats include drought as a result of climate change, rabbits and altered fire regimes.

The species was originally described by Cowan and Maslin in 1999 (in *Nuytsia*). In describing the species, they referred to it as a rare but very distinctive species that grows in white or grey sand in heath. They noted that flowering had been recorded from September to November. It was named for Paul G Wilson who was the collector of the type material.

Acacia meiantha

Acacia meiantha is endemic to NSW, with three disjunct populations occurring on the Central Tablelands, one at Clarence covering 1ha between Lithgow and Bell, one in the Mullions Range about 20km northwest of Orange, and an Aarons Pass population about 18km northwest of Ilford.

It is allied to *A. linifolia* and *A. boormanii* but can be distinguished by its non-weeping upper branchlets and phyllodes lacking a visible midvein.

It is an erect or straggling shrub 1-2.4m high. It has crowded phyllodes, straight to slightly curved, 2-5cm long and 0.4-1.2mm wide. It has yellow to dark yellow globular flower heads, 4-8 flowered, on axillary racemes.

The species appears to rarely produce seed, but reproduces by underground runners.

It is subject to a number of threats, including roadside activities, weed infestation, habitat destruction associated with land clearing and uncontrolled vehicle access, possible expansion of pine forestry plantations and road maintenance and widening.

The species was originally described by Tindale and Hershovich in 1992 (in *Australian Systematic Botany*). The species name means less flowers, a reference to the few (4-8) flowered heads.



Acacia meiantha

Photo Danielle Langlois ANBG 21/9/2005
(commons.wikimedia.org)

Acacias in the news

The purple flowering wattle, *Acacia purpureopetala*, received some media publicity in May, following the discovery of hundreds of the plants growing in a small area around an old tailings dam. The discovery was made on an abandoned mine site by workers at the Target Gully remediation site, near Irvinebank in far north Queensland.

This Acacia is critically endangered, and it had previously been estimated that only 500 plants remained in the wild, so the recent discovery is very good news.

Seed Bank

A list of species in our Seed Bank appeared in our Study Group Newsletter No. 139 (December 2017).

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 Victoria). It also helps enormously if you are able to clean, sort and label the seed correctly. Also, we would like to have provenance information for all seed in the seed bank – so if you donate any seed, could you also provide any information you have in relation to provenance.

Our thanks to Fred Mazzaferri, Graeme Serle and Merele Webb for recent donations of seed.

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 \$4 in relation to each order, to cover the cost of a padded post bag and postage. The \$4 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 (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 2018/19 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).