

## ANPSA BRACHYCHITON & ALLIED GENERA STUDY GROUP

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Above is *B.* 'Dark Knight', which I suspected in my last newsletter of being a *bidwillii* Red Baron hybrid with *B. x excellens* 'Rosalind.' Or perhaps the bird or bee got pollen elsewhere. In Merv Hodge's garden he then knew of no *discolor* plants at the time, nor any of the all-red form of *B. garrawayae* which is one of the few brachys I know that has the same non-fading shade of red. However our mutual good friend from the other side of the same road, Ivan Reynolds, recently brought Merv a spray of flowers from his large *discolor* tree, which was apparently hidden among a bunch of other large trees & had evaded Merv's gaze for the last 3 decades or so. So that is one mystery probably solved, & 'Dark Knight' is a *B. x excellens*, although perhaps not a 'first generation' one, as its pods, though yellowish when fully ripe, are not quite as yellowy as the *excellens* that I know are definitely *discolor* x *bidwillii*, & the latter look cinnamon-coloured while still some time off being ripe. Ivan's tree is probably in the pedigree of 'Newbie' also, another *excellens*-type by its leaves & growth habit, but with large orange-red flowers. It has not flowered since being moved to Toowoomba as a small grafted plant, which fits in with that ancestry, as *excellens* are slower to flower than pure *bidwillii* crosses, as well as being larger plants, but reliable flowerers once they start.

**Progress of brachy book :** It has finally been written, & had its book launch during the Bendigo Brachychiton conference last October, which was very well run by Ian Evans & his Bendigo Native Plants Group Inc. There were over 200 participants, but Gordon Guymer was unable to give his planned introduction to the Brachychiton genus, &

instead sent a summary email to Ian on the first (Saturday) morning of the 2-day Symposium, & I asked Ian to let Des Boorman speak before me on what Des wished to cover, which was the Qld species that he had used in creating his own hybrids. I then rather scrappily covered the other 80% of the species & hybrids that I knew of. For those interested, it is all I hope fairly comprehensively covered in the book, which also covers uses of the species & cultivars in municipal & private gardens, bonsai & topiary, a young pleached avenue in the Brisbane CBD, flavoured flour from lightly roasted seeds, coffee substitute from somewhat more roasted beans, aboriginal uses, pollination by various agents, & distribution data for the species & probable natural hybrids. Information came to me from a number of sources as I was finishing the book, on new natural hybrids, such as Simone Rushby's sightings of one or more taxa akin to *B. tuberculatus*, & Des Boorman's *chinchillensis* x *australis* hybrid, which he had found some years before but not told me or the taxonomists.

There are still considerable uncertainties about possible new species waiting to be separated from among *B. propinqua*, *B. fitzgeraldianus* & even *B. viridiflorus*.

**Close planting** : In my new garden I have planted 50 or so brachys about a metre apart, much closer than normal for most species, but OK for small species like *megaphyllus* which is slow-growing outside the tropics anyway. I shall have to prune most of the others in due course, which at least will enable me to advise people who want to plant them in tubs & so on. I expect most will flower normally if pruned in autumn or winter.

**PBR brachys now on sale** : The range of PBR plants bred by Des Boorman from Lismore in NSW that are now on sale in many Masters (the hardware chain store of Woolworths) stores, have flowered in quite a few cases. The hybrids with *bidwillii*, which is most of them, have thrown towards that parent & not shown the potentially large flowers that I would have expected from *grandiflorus* & *carneus*. I have not seen any of the *bidwillii* x *velutinosus* hybrids in Masters or in gardens yet. Photos of Salmon Queen are attractive, & it is the first image given below. It is a selected (presumably from the wild) form of *B. x carneus* which only grows close to Coen on Cape York Peninsula, & is a natural hybrid between *B. garrawayae* & *B. grandiflorus*. Grafted plants of sp. Mt. White from Maurie Tucker flowered nicely this summer, but none of my *grandiflorus* followed their example. Probably the cool start to spring deterred them. These *B. carneus* had pale pink flowers on the first day that they were open, but much darker pink on the next day. From Garry Sankowsky I received material of his 'Coen Pink', which he thinks is a *B. x allochrous*, & Boorman thinks is a *carneus*. Garry sent Merv Hodge material of his 'Big Pink' some years ago, & Brent Vieritz & I have grafted plants from that, which I called a 'possible *muellerianus* hybrid' in earlier newsletters. It is also from near Coen, & is almost certainly a *B. x allochrous*. Both of these are growing well at Toowoomba, & Big Pink flowered last summer, but not the summer now ending. Both were still covered with green leaves in late July, & only defoliated in August. Markedly warmer than frosty Greenbank so far as actual temperature minima go, but the daytime maxima are lower, there are more cold days & dull days, & spells of fog are far more common, even if no rain actually gets in the gauge.

**Flowerings this year** : My plants of *B. albidus* started to flower in late July of 2014, were in peak flower in mid-November, & still had a few flowers on until early January. The one or two plants I sent to Ian Evans at Bendigo performed very well for him, &

were in full flower in October for the Seminar. So I am impressed by this species from more or less half to 2/3 up the north of Cape York, for its climatic tolerance & floriferous nature. This year it flowered better & longer than any *bidwillii*. The red form of *B. garrawayae* flowered well during November, in a pot, but a 3m plant in the ground missed entirely, as did several plants of the red-green form. This is also a Cape York species.

Most of the Jasper Belle clones flowered well during November, but the same clones at my brother's property just north of Brisbane flowered uniformly for 3 months or more, which I put down to the frost-free climate & the trees being 3 or 4 years older. I suspect the age factor counts most, as Jasper Belle & Jasper Lode plants I had supplied 8-10 years ago to friends in the Lockyer Valley flowered very well also, & that area suffered quite a few mild frosts, as well as a long dry spell & some very hot weather. Jasper Lode flowered from April 4th to late January in the valley. The Jasper Belle group have the largest flowers of any group of hybrids I have grown, except 'Big Pink', but are slow to get going, & do not usually impress for the first 3 years or so, & then get better every year.

'Argyle Pearl' flowered from late November to mid-January, & a pod set on a red *bidwillii* is nearly ripe. Only a few of the hybrid seedlings from Argyle Pearl onto *bidwillii* 'Red Baron' flowered at Brent Vieritz's place this summer, with pink flowers of unremarkable size. The next generation should be of interest, as the colour genes segregate out. One seedling had leaves with yellow-green variegation. My ungrafted plant of tangerine *B. megaphyllus*, p.98 of my book, rotted off in February after heavy rain. It was 15 or so years old, & still under 2 m tall, with virtually no side branches, just the contorted stem typical of the species. It flowered in May & June.

Rosalind, Will Scarlet & Dark Knight both flowered in early November, were a blaze of colour during mid-November to mid-December, & ceased flowering before Christmas. All, especially Will Scarlet, would normally flower for an extra couple of months. *B. bidwillii* x *B. carneus* 'BV1' flowered from 2-7-'14 to 9-1-'15, with a peak in mid-December. Like *carneus*, the flowers were pale the first day they were open. Their size was similar to a good *bidwillii*.

Most *bidwillii*s, Belladonna, *spectabilis*, & *bidwillii* Cania Gorge, Cormy, Robin & Little Ripper flowered well but briefly.

**Subscriptions** : Due to having been slack in producing newsletters for the year just past, I shall note all subs for the year 2013-2014 as paid. For the current year, it remains at \$5. Members are entitled to a concessional price on the brachy book, namely \$25 for the first book & \$30 each for up to 3 more, & I will bear the postage for up to 4 books. Above 4 books the postage costs rise. Please let me know how many you might like at your early convenience. Anyone providing pictures for the book was sent a copy in October, but I have not heard if they got to the addressees in all cases. So if you missed out, let me know. I had a hectic time late last year as I lost my brother in October & my mother-in-law on New Year's Day, & Annabel & I have had to do quite a bit of arranging things, involving travel & so on.

**Welcome to new members :** A warm if belated welcome to Ian & Joan Dunn of Plenty In Victoria (they attended the Bendigo seminar weekend), Michael Elgey from the National Herbarium of NSW at Sydney, Graham Coombs of Nambour in Qld (whom I have sold a few rare ferns to in the past, both for himself & for the Maroochy Botanic Gardens), & Oren Zeevi from the Negev desert in Israel, & anyone else that I may have overlooked.

Oren has a 40 ha wholesale nursery, supplying quite a few brachys, including 2 PBR varieties, namely 'Mini-acer', an *acerifolius* type, & 'Julie', a *roseus* form. His website, [www.botanimg](http://www.botanimg), gives flowering periods of May for Mini-acer & April-May for Julie, & cites 3 tree sizes for each, depending on the chosen rootstock. They look fine, but I would not expect either to survive a PBR trial in Australia, as they look to me to fit in the natural range of *roseus* & flame tree respectively.

The next 4 images are of these plants, from Oren's brochure, the first being of 'Mini-acer', & the next 3 being of 'Julie'.



**Assorted photos. (1) *B.* 'Bellarosa'.** This plant, pictured in my last newsletter, is still of uncertain parentage. I was given a sturdy grafted young plant at Bendigo by Humphris Nursery. It has not yet flowered here, but the leaves look clearly *B. x excellens*.

(2) The image below is of *B. discolor* female flowers on a tree at Hay in south-western NSW, taken by Ivan Reynolds or a friend of his. The pink colour is darker than usual.



(3) The next two pictures were both taken recently by Simone Rushby in the East Kimberleys, near the N.T. border. The first is of a double flower, either of *B. tuberculatus* or of the natural hybrid that grows nearby, probably the latter. The second image is of the hybrid, as the flowers have the tepals (coloured sepals) joined almost to the tips, similar to the hybrid flowers on page 127 of the book. The leaves in both images match those of *tuberculatus*. The flowers of true *tuberculatus* that I have seen are always speckled. Simone's shots of the hybrid show clear (& darker) colours only. If we can only get either entity to cross with something like *bidwillii* that is hardy in most climates, & flowers while young, there are some potentially great hybrids to be obtained. Simone is trying to get leaves (for DNA samples) & seeds for me, but the weather in the East Kimberleys just gets wetter & wetter, as tropical WA gets ever more cyclones. Would you like me to send you some *bidwillii* plants by mail, Simone, (fairly easy to send them bare-rooted, in sterile wood shavings or something similar that keeps your state quarantine authorities happy), & you could then cross-pollinate them when the weather permits ?





(4) The next image is of a clump of male *tuberculatus* flowers on the tree trunk, taken by Attila Kapitany a few years ago.

