

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS Inc.

EPACRIS STUDY GROUP

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

NEWSLETTER

No. 16

(ISSN 1038-6017)

October 2003

Greetings to all EPACRIS STUDY GROUP members. Gardening has certainly been challenging in recent times, with lower than usual rainfall in many regions during the past year. Fortunately there have now been some very welcome rains this spring. How have your *Epacris* coped - in the gardens and in containers ?

Following our recent study relating to the various selections of *Epacris impressa* which are currently being grown, several members have expressed interest in the flowering times of these selections, and the fact that it would appear that we can have forms of this *Epacris* in our gardens and producing flowers right throughout the year.

It therefore seemed that it would be a good idea for us to record just when each particular selection is in bloom, and a page for this purpose has been included in this Newsletter. I realise that it will take at least 12 months for this information to be gathered, but do give it a go. We will have a follow-up article in 12 - 18 months, and look forward to the results. Your findings or comments will be welcome at any stage.

As a thought-starter, in April of this year Max McDowall had in flower the following selections of *Epacris impressa*, which he brought to the A.P.S. Maroondah meeting: a white flowered form from Mt. Cole, a cerise-pink form from Kinglake, a deep pink form from Mt. Clay and *E. impressa* var. *grandiflora* deep pink, from the Grampians, with all these regions being in Victoria. Continuing into winter and early spring there are many more to record. It should be a very interesting exercise, even though only one species is involved at this stage.

Maybe 2003 is an unusual year weatherwise, but it will be interesting to note the flowering times, then perhaps make a comparison in 2004, etc.

Our Study Group membership year is from July to June, which doesn't fit exactly with our March and October Newsletters, but thanks to all who have already renewed for the current year - or further in advance. Many are taking advantage of being able to renew for 2-years at \$10.00, rather than sending \$5 each year, and have expressed appreciation of the date of membership now being included on each mailing label. Receipts will be posted if requested.

Sometimes you may find that there is a lapse of a few weeks before your cheque is presented for payment. We are fortunate to be able to use a Credit Union which does not have ongoing fees for simply holding our account, so instead of burdening them with repeated deposits of single \$5 cheques and the bookkeeping involved in each transaction, I do try to wait until we have at least \$20 before making a deposit. Undoubtedly other Study Groups who also have a low annual memberships experience a similar situation. A renewal form is enclosed with this Newsletter if you are currently unfinancial.

Well the ASGAP CONFERENCE in Launceston Tas, is now only a few months away. Further details are on page 3, and it will be great to meet up with several of our *Epacris* Study Group members there.

With greetings,
Gwen E.

NEWS AND NOTES

More on growing *Epacris impressa* from seed

Sincere thanks to Epacris Study Group member, **Margaret Guenzel**, who now lives at Ocean Grove Vic., for the following information which she learned from **Peg McAllister** of Mooroolbark. Peg is an excellent plantswoman, who for many years operated a nursery from her home in Box Hill Vic. She and her late husband Jack were foundation members of S.G.A.P. Maroondah in the early 1960s. Margaret has built on Peg's experience, and is now passing these details on for the benefit of us all.

'Towards the end of the flowering seasons for Epacris impressa, prune back all your plants and place the clippings in an open container. Theoretically, you should leave mature, immature, fertile and infertile seeds amongst all this debris. Expose the container to the full sun over the following summer (but don't let it get wet). At the end of the summer sift out the finer parts and sow out into a seed tray. Break up the left-over dry twigs and leaves and use this as mulch over the seed tray. Keep moist at all times. By the end of May you should have lots of seedlings. Peg had hundreds - I saw them with my own eyes.

I tried this method myself with a few variations. I put all my clippings in a large brownpaper bag in a dry place and forgot all about it. Early March I sowed the finer particles into a seed tray with commercial seed raising mixture. I put the remaining twigs and leaves through a blender, moistened it and used it as mulch. By the end of May I had 27, which I potted up at the 8-leaf stage. I lost most of them through damping off and neglect while I was in hospital.

I have no expertise in growing seedlings, having so far grown most things from cuttings. Somewhat with more experience could surely improve on these results. Especially people who want to grow for re-vegetation purposes.

By the way, Peg used her own growing medium made from compost from her own native garden and her local soil. The method may work well for other Epacris species.'

Many thanks Margaret for these ideas, which members may like to try.

Margaret concluded her note with a mention of another closely related Epacridaceae plant -

*'I have twice had good results with the rooting of *Astroloma pinifolius* red flowering form) cuttings, when I took the cuttings in March (Melbourne). I had a strike rate of up to 80%, but have had difficulties in establishing the plants in the garden. All except 3 just sit and do nothing. I got my first plant from David Shields about 15 years ago. It is a much nicer plant (more glaucous, lower and denser habit) than the Grampians form. It died this year in the drought, but one plant remains in my former garden and I have just planted one here in Ocean Grove in calcareous sand. It is alive but not doing anything. Any suggestions for moving them along a bit ?'*

Epacris impressa var. grandiflora to get a severe 'haircut'

Jeanette Closs of Kingston Tas. writes that her plant of the double-flowered form of *Epacris impressa* var. *grandiflora* has become somewhat straggly, and she plans to cut it back hard as soon as it finished flowering this year. I'm sure many of us have experienced similar situations. These plants usually respond very well to hard pruning, and we'd be pleased to hear how your plant looks after its cut-back Jeanette.

A handy tip for collecting of cuttings

This tip is not from one of our members, but one given by Nurseryman, **Ted Poynton**, at the Summer School for Home Gardeners 2003, held at Melbourne University.

Ted finds a small plastic bottle, of the kind frequently used for bottled water or soft drinks, extremely useful for transporting cuttings. Make sure the bottle is moist inside, then gently insert the cuttings through the top opening. Leave the cap off, and the cuttings will remain fresh until you return home - even if that is not until next day. This method also prevents crushing or bruising of the cuttings.

Upon returning home, remove the cuttings by cutting the base from the bottle.

Epacris available overseas

Our U.K. member, **Jeff Irons**, has recently sent a catalogue from The Old Walled Garden, Oxonhoath, Hadlow, Tonbridge, Kent, which includes quite a number of Australian plant species, including *Epacris longiflora* and *Epacris microphylla* each priced at £8.50. The Old Walled Garden has a web site - www.theoldwalledgarden.co.uk.

Thanks Jeff.

Some very detailed information on growing Australian plants in Europe is contained in the book written by Thomas Ross and Jeffrey Irons, entitled *AUSTRALIAN PLANTS, A Guide to their Cultivation in Europe*. It is available from Jeff, at 74 Brimstage Rd, Heswell, Wirral, L60 1XQ, England

A.S.G.A.P. Conference - Launceston Tas - January 9 - 16, 2004

The 2004 A.S.G.A.P. Conference, to be held in Launceston is now only a few months way.

The organising committee, led by Judy Whish-Wilson has been hard at work in pre-Conference organisation, and you can check further details on the website <http://ASGAP2004.trump.net.au>

If you don't have access to the internet, further information in regard to the Conference can be obtained from A.P.S. Tasmania, P.O. Box 75, Exeter Tas, 7275. The Conference will be held at the Sir Raymond Ferrall Centre, University of Tasmania, Launceston Campus

A session on *EPACRIS* is to be included as part of the Study Group Presentations on Wednesday Jan. 14th and there will be a Epacris Study Group Display Table. Dr. Ron Crowden will also be giving a separate presentation on 'TASMANIAN EPACRIDACEAE.', so *Epacris* should be well represented at the Conference, and hopefully other A.P.S. members will be encouraged to join the Study Group and further their interest in this great group of plants.

- o o o -

From the pen of our former Study Group Leader, Ron Crowden

The following item is reprinted from **Eucryphia**, The Newsletter of the Australian Plants Society, Tasmania, Volume 15, No.5, April 2003. It will undoubtedly be of interest and assistance to all *Epacris* enthusiasts -

Exserted anthers in *Epacris* species.

A prime cause of misidentification in some Tasmanian species of *Epacris* is a difficulty in interpretation of the character 'exserted anthers', which is a measure of the degree to which the anthers protrude above the plane of the corolla lobes. Of the 29 Tasmanian *Epacris* taxa, the anthers of 13 are considered to be exserted to some degree. This is in contrast to mainland species where only one has exserted anthers.

Consider first the shape of the corolla. In the lower part the petals are fused to form a tube, above which the unfused part of the petals form the 5 corolla lobes. At some point above the tube there is a geniculation, or 'knee joint', where the lobes bend and spread outwards, coming to lie in a flat plane almost at right angles to the orientation of the tube. In practice most people regard the segment of unfused lobes below the knee joint as part of the tube.

The most important factor determining anther exsertion is the length of the filament. In all *Epacris* species the filaments for most of their length are fused to the corolla, but a short segment becomes free at a point near the top of the tube. The anthers of the short-tube species are attached to this free filament at their mid-point or slightly above. If the length of the free filament is less than half the anther length, then the half of the anther above the junction point will not project beyond the tube (including the segment of lobes up to the 'knee joint'), or at best the tips will just reach the plane of the lobes. In this case the anthers are said to be enclosed or included (within the tube). When the filament length is between half and equal to the anther length, at least the top portion of the anthers will project beyond the plane of the lobes. The anthers then are said to be part-exserted. In those cases where the filament is greater than the length of the anther, then it can be expected that the whole of the anther will be exserted.

There is no problem with the long-tube species, such as *E. impressa*. The anthers of all these species are almost sessile (on very short filaments, and/or the anther attachment point is above the middle) and they are fully enclosed within the tube.

Whereas the above should allow for easy interpretation, it may be confounded by secondary factors, such as the actual position of the corolla lobe geniculation, and the age and stage of anthesis of the flowers. I know of at least one population of *E. tasmanica* (on the Lake Leake - Cranbrook Road) where the knee joint occurs higher up the lobes than normal, thus appearing to lengthen the tube and giving the impression that the anthers are enclosed, rather than part-exserted as is usual in this species.

In an over-mature flower, the opening anthers tend to 'flatten out' and in so doing, they can depress the lobes thus exposing more of the anther and giving the impression of a greater degree of exsertion. This is particularly noticeable in species with already 'part-exserted' anthers. Even wholly enclosed anthers can, in aged flowers, sometimes appear to be at least part-exserted. It is important, then, to make actual check observations of the filament and anther lengths. This is easily observable with a 10 x hand lens.

The above comments relate particularly to fresh specimens. In dried specimens, the flowers can become quite distorted and they may need to be reconstituted before a confident decision can be made. Reconstitution is achieved by removing a dried flower from the specimen plant and soaking it for a brief time (say 5 minutes) in water containing a few drops of detergent. The softened flower then is easily dissected and examined.

E. gunnii presents an unusual situation. In this species the anthers are tiny and much shorter than the filament length. However, they are projected inwards towards the centre of the tube throat, rather than upwards, and so they do not project above the plane of the lobes. They are generally considered to be included within the tube, though Curtis says they are 'at the throat'.

Ron Crowden

NEWS AND NOTES

Epacris in the Wallum & Coastal Heathland, Qld.

Barbara Henderson, Leader of the ASGAP Wallum & Coastal Heathland Study Group has kindly sent a small colour brochure, recently published to increase the awareness of plants native to this region, and in particular the Mudjimba Wallum Wildflower Rescue Garden. *Epacris obtusifolia* is one of the delightful plants depicted in the brochure.

Many other regions of Australia also have local brochures depicting their native plants, and we would be pleased to receive copies of any that include *Epacris* species.

An Epacris to bring Music to your Ears !

We frequently hear *Epacris* flowers referred to as bells, but in the Winter 2003 issue of the newsletter from Kuranga Native Plant Nursery at Ringwood Vic, the editor, Lindy Harris, has included an interesting snippet on the musical attributes of ***Epacris pulchella***. She writes as follows: -

'There is a particularly neat and slightly bizarre upright form with light green leaves that cluster tightly and flawlessly around the stems, giving a very neat and almost snake-like pattern and shape.

By running your fingers along the stems you produce a great sound - just the thing for anyone who regrets not learning to play an instrument - and practising will not disturb the neighbours. In addition this music making is an incredibly tactile experience for the fingers. If neighbours or partners spot you doing this, don't be embarrassed; explain what you are doing and get them to try it too. Someone will begin singing softly as you all quietly play a branch and before long you'll all be harmonising and, suddenly, it all becomes clear: it's Chorale Heath, not Coral Heath.

Er, hmm. Oh, yes, as well as its musical and tactile qualities this is a knockout in flower, producing flared soft pink flowers that are starry rather than the typically tubular epacris flowers.'

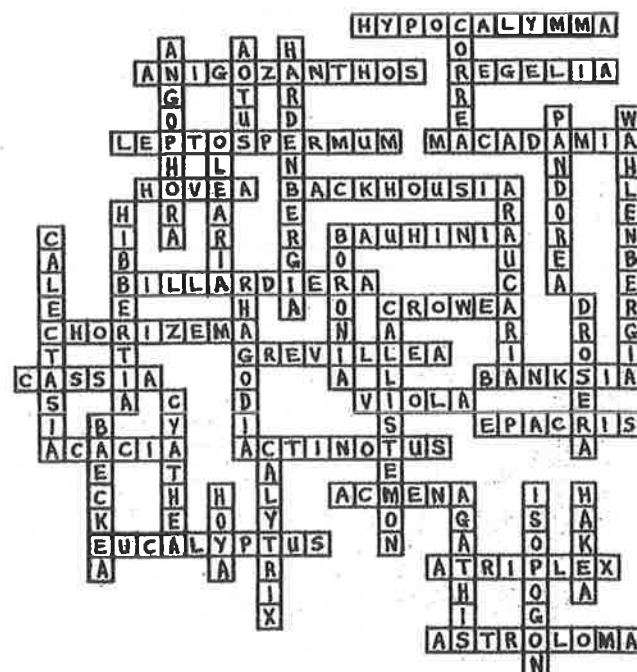
Regular readers of the Kuranga Newsletters are very familiar with Lindy's delightful enthusiasm for native plants combined with her sense of adventure and humour.

You do need to put your ear very close to the stem of the Coral Heath to appreciate its musical tones, and it is never likely to become an instrument of the orchestra, but it's another fun thing to do in the garden, and we all benefit greatly from approaching life with a smile.

For word enthusiasts !

In our last Newsletter we included a word puzzle beginning with the clue-letters EPACRIS. As promised, the solution is as follows, for any who were not able to fill in all the blanks.

We again thank the author of the puzzle, Gwen Pascoe for this item which appeared in the June 1985 S.G.A.P. Vic. Newsletter, edited by Ross Field.



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

Epacris hamiltonii Maiden & Betche

hamiltonii - Named after Arthur Andrew Hamilton, who discovered the plant in 1900.

Distribution - A rare and endangered species from near Blackheath in the Blue Mountains region of New South Wales

Common name - Hamilton's Heath



Illustration by Mary Maiden (70%)

Epacris hamiltonii is a dwarf, spreading to flattened shrub growing to about 1 m tall by 1.5 m across. The leaves are to about 1.4 cm long with a pointed tip and 3 or sometimes 5 veins on the underside. They have soft, silky hairs on both surfaces, and particularly on new growth.

Flowering is recorded as being in June- July and October with white flowers to about 1 cm long. They are on very short stalks from the leaf axils near the tips of the branchlets. The long style extends out beyond the floral tube, while the anthers are within the tube. The fruit is a small capsule about 2mm long.

Epacris hamiltonii Maiden & Betche

Epacris hamiltonii has a very limited natural distribution and is not well-known in cultivation. It was discovered in 1900 at the base of a ledge of rocks near Blackheath, NSW, growing closely against moist rocks. These first plants sited were in swampy ground, which sloped abruptly to a watercourse.

The EPACRIS STUDY GROUP has received no reports of this species being cultivated, but it has been the subject of research by Landcare and the National Parks and Wildlife Service at Blackheath, NSW, as an endangered species.

Epacris hamiltonii is closely allied to *E. calvertiana* and *E. paludosa*, but differs from both in its hairiness, which is not common in *Epacris* species. It can be distinguished from *E. calvertiana* by the shape of the flowers, and from *E. paludosa* by its long style.

Arthur Andrew Hamilton

Arthur Andrew Hamilton, after whom this species was named, discovered the plant in 1900. There are some references which state that it was named after the botanist Alexander Hamilton, but this is incorrect.

Arthur Andrew Hamilton was a gardener in Centennial Park then joined the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney in 1911 as a botanical assistant. He worked there for many years with the botanist, J. H. Maiden.

The original description lists this *Epacris* as *Epacris hamiltoni*, but the accepted spelling for the species now ends with two i's, as in *hamiltonii*.

Maiden & Betche

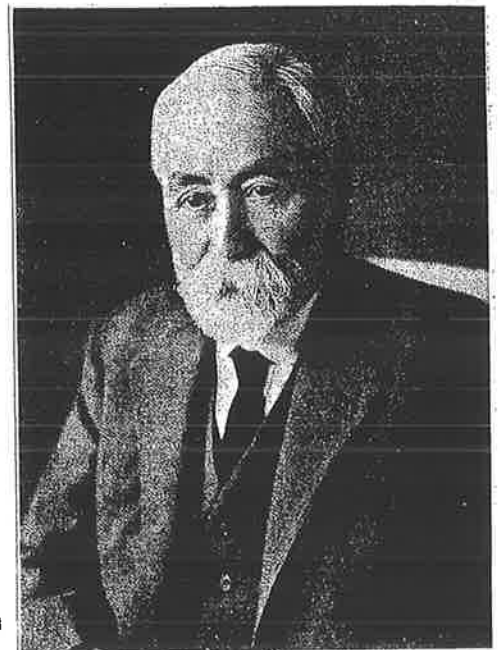
Joseph Henry Maiden I.S.O., F.L.S., F.R.S. was born in England in 1859 and studied science at the University of London. He was unable to complete his course due to poor health and a long sea-voyage was recommended. He arrived in New South Wales in 1880. He was appointed first Curator of the Technological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

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

J. H. Maiden retired in 1924 and died during the following year.

Ernest Betche was born in Germany in 1851.

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



J. H. Maiden
from *Botanists of the Eucalypts*,
by N. Hall, Pub. CSIRO Melb. 1978

Space for additional notes on *Epacris hamiltonii*

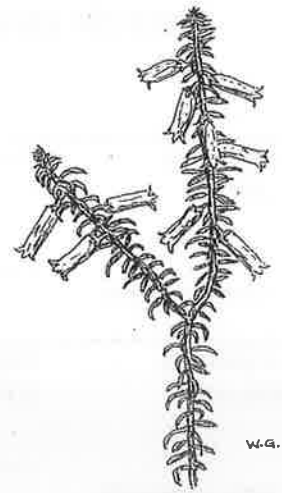
Epacris impressa selections -
and their flowering times

This page is provided to assist in the recording of flowering times of the various selections of *Epacris impressa* currently being grown.

It is suggested that a solid line be used to indicate good flowering, and a dotted line when plants are coming into flower, finishing flowering, or just producing odd blooms.

A second copy of this recording page is included for you to return to the Study Group.

You can therefore make your own notes on one copy while keeping aside the second page to be sent in for our Study Group records.



Epacris impressa
Common Heath

Illustration by Bill Gunn

<i>E. impressa</i> Selection	Flower colour	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Any extra comments

<i>E. impressa</i> Selection	Flower colour	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Any extra comments

<i>E. impressa</i> Selection	Flower colour	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Any extra comments

<i>E. impressa</i> Selection	Flower colour	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Any extra comments

<i>E. impressa</i> Selection	Flower colour	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Any extra comments

<i>E. impressa</i> Selection	Flower colour	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Any extra comments

Epacris impressa selections - and their flowering timesContinued -

<i>E. impressa</i> Selection	Flower colour	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Any extra comments

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<i>E. impressa</i> Selection	Flower colour	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Any extra comments

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<i>E. impressa</i> Selection	Flower colour	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Any extra comments

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<i>E. impressa</i> Selection	Flower colour	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Any extra comments

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<i>E. impressa</i> Selection	Flower colour	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Any extra comments

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<i>E. impressa</i> Selection	Flower colour	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Any extra comments

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<i>E. impressa</i> Selection	Flower colour	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Any extra comments

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<i>E. impressa</i> Selection	Flower colour	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Any extra comments

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EPACRIS STUDY GROUP MEMBERS to June 2003

Dawn & Lyn Barr,	Swan Reach Vic. 3903
Dick Burns,	Penguin Tas. 7316
Dr. Elizabeth Brown,	National Herbarium of NSW
Faye Candy,	Berwick Vic. 3806
Dr. Ron Crowden,	Kettering Tas 7155
Betty Denton,	Eltham Vic. 3095
Simone Disney,	Leichhardt NSW 2040
Helen Dunn,	Hawthorn Vic. 3122
Gwen Elliot,	Heathmont Vic 3135
Pat Emms,	Loch Vic. 3945
Will Fletcher,	Ridgeway Tas, 7054
Wayne Griggs,	Sandy Bay Tas 7006
Margaret Guenzel,	Ocean Grove Vic. 3226
Bill Gunn,	Ocean Grove Vic. 3226
Sandra Hammond,	Eagle Point Vic. 3878
Peter Haynes,	North, Knoxfield Vic. 3180
Jennie Lawrence,	Burnie Tas 7320
David Lightfoot,	Hawthorn 3122
Pat Macdonald,	Langwarrin, Vic, 3910
Dr. Max McDowall,	Bulleen, Vic 3105
Bob O'Neill,	Wandin Nth, Vic, 3139
Malcolm Reed,	Epping NSW 2121
Anne & David Rees,	Mirboo North Vic. 3871
Jill Roberts,	Leith Tas 7315
Karen Russell,	Blackburn Vic. 3130
Allen Russell,	Enfield SA 5085
Kris Schaffer,	South Hobart Tas, 7004
Marion Simmons,	Legana Tas. 7277
St. Kilda Indigenous Nursery,	Port Melbourne, Vic 3207
Darren Vandenberg,	Preston, Vic. 3072
Prof. George Wade,	Kingston Tas, 7050
Jo Walker,	Wamboin, NSW 2620
Phil Watson,	Mt. Rumney Tas 7170
Philip Wilson,	Woodend Vic. 3442

OVERSEAS

Jeff Irons,	Heswell, England
Mary Sue Ittner,	Gualala, California USA

*Epacris breviflora*Illustration by
John Armstrong

Epacris Study Group Newsletters are also sent to the ASGAP Study Group Co-ordinator, State Secretaries and State Newsletter Editors of each State member body of the Australian Plants Society, as well as to Botanic Gardens and Universities where research on *Epacris* is currently being undertaken.

Several regional groups of the Australian Plant Society are also affiliated with the Study Group and receive each Newsletter as issued.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT for year ended 30.6.2003

<u>Balance as per Statement 1.7.2002</u>		\$ 624.01
<u>Receipts</u>	Memberships and donations	\$ 190.00
	Maroondah Credit Union interest received	\$ 11.74
		<u>\$ 825.75</u>
<u>Expenses</u>	Newsletter printing -	\$ 130.50
	Postage, including Newsletters	\$ 70.00
	Prints & duplicates from Slides	\$ 56.00
	Govt. charges on Credit Union account	\$ 1.50
		<u>\$ 258.00</u>
<u>Balance as at 30.6.2003</u>		<u>\$ 567.75</u>

Note: Several members have taken up the option of renewing their membership for 2-years. This resulted in an increased income last year, and a decrease in the above Financial Year.

Epacris Study Group - Membership information.

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

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

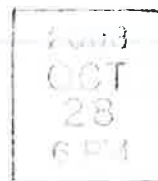
You can join the EPACRIS STUDY GROUP for just \$5.00 for 1 year or \$10 for 2 years renewable in June. Overseas subscriptions - \$10 Aust. p.a.

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

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

Please make cheques payable to The Epacris Study Group.

Sender: Association of
Societies for Growing Australian Plants
EPACRIS STUDY GROUP
P.O. Box 655, Heathmont Vic. 3135



Jan Sked
ASGAP Study Group Liaison Officer,
P.O. Box 41,
LAWNTON Qld. 4501