

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS Inc.

EPACRIS STUDY GROUP

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NEWSLETTER

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Greetings to all Epacris Study Group members,

Many thanks to all who have contributed towards this Spring 2005 Newsletter. Items for the Newsletter are always very welcome, whether large or small. They all contribute towards an interesting and informative journal.

There are several aspects on which we would appreciate your input. Frost tolerance of *Epacris* species was mentioned in our March 2005 Newsletter, 'Where to purchase plants of *Epacris*' is a topic we hope to cover in the near future and further details are on page 5 of this issue. For those with an interest in photography, we would love to hear your thoughts regarding the current trend towards digital imaging. Are you already using this technology or are you hoping that film and film processing will still be available for some time. Do you have any tips on digital photography of plants which may be of interest and assistance to other Study Group members?

While we are considering these and other issues, our recording of flowering times of *Epacris impressa* continues. An accumulation of information is being received, and many members are at the same time recording the flowering times of other *Epacris* species. Obviously only a little extra effort is required to do a complete check of the *Epacris* in flower in our gardens and nearby bushland on a regular basis. Please feel free to send in your record sheets at any time you wish.

We are delighted to be able to welcome two new members to our Study Group.

Chris Clarke lives in Thornbury Vic and is an active member of the Keilor Plains A.P.S. regional group. Chris has a particular interest in *Epacris* and we trust that he enjoys a long and worthwhile membership of the Study Group.

Barbara Rooks lives in Montrose Vic, and while welcoming Barbara as a member of the Epacris Study Group we are also able to thank her for the item on *Epacris impressa* on page 6, from a recent issue of the APS Maroondah Newsletter.

A warm welcome to you both.

Epacris Study Group memberships fall due in July each year, however many members have chosen to pay on a 2-yearly basis instead of sending \$5.00 each year. The date to which memberships are current appears on your address label on page 12 of the Newsletter. If you are currently unfinancial a membership renewal form is enclosed.

In general, 2005 has been a good year for gardening in many areas, with more rainfall than in recent years. We have also become wiser in regard to the use of water in our gardens, with plants benefiting from this action. As summer approaches once more it is appropriate to consider how we can help our *Epacris* plants to survive the warmer and drier months. The use of mulches and moisture-retaining products can be of assistance, as is the grouping together in the garden of plants with similar water requirements.

I trust the spring-summer of 2005/06 will bring you pleasure and enjoyment in the garden, and that your *Epacris* also thrive during this time.

Warm greetings,
Gwen E.

News & Notes from Members

Many thanks to **Trish Tratt** for the following note regarding gardening at Emerald Victoria. Emerald is about 35 km east of Melbourne in the Dandenong Ranges, in a region renowned for its lovely mountain views, rich mountain clay loam soils and a pleasant climate with somewhat chilly winters. *Epacris impressa* is one of the indigenous plants of this region.

Trish writes as follows - "When we lived at Metung Vic, attempts to keep *Epacris impressa* growing for more than one season were unsuccessful.

In 2002 we moved to Emerald and I followed advice in Nick Romanowski's article 'Damp Gardening' in AUSTRALIAN PLANTS, June 2001. Incidentally this is the same issue of *Australian Plants* referred to in Dawn and Lyn Barr's interesting article in our Newsletter No. 18.

This involved excavating an area to 50 cm deep, putting in a heavy plastic liner which was trimmed 10 cm below the soil's surface, thus preventing water-logging, adding some sandy soil, peat (purchased years ago but I will use coir in future), plus a little blood-and-bone, to the top 10 cm of our clay soil.

So far results have been very pleasing. *Epacris impressa* forms, *E. gunnii*, *E. paludosa* interplanted with herbs, eg. *Podolepis jaceoides*, *Brachyscome basaltica*, *Goodenia* species, *Thysanotus tuberosus* etc., have flourished and I am thrilled to see 10 tiny *Epacris impressa* seedlings appearing in the gravel mulch. A second, more recent area has been prepared and planted in the same way.

A couple of *Epacris impressa* and *E. longiflora* plants have been put in other parts of the garden, and although it is early days yet, they are thriving.

All my *Epacris* plants have been purchased, not propagated by me.

Trish Tratt

Note: An extract from the article by Nick Romanowski, to which Trish refers, is reprinted here on Page 3 or our Newsletter. Trish has also sent back her page recording the flowering times of *Epacris impressa* and other *Epacris* in her garden.

Thanks again Trish for your contribution to the *Epacris* Study Group and our Newsletter.

Faye Candy gardens in Berwick Victoria, which is relatively close to the Emerald garden of Trish Tratt. Faye has also sent the page on which she has recorded the flowering times of *Epacris impressa* in her garden, and the comparisons are very interesting.

Even the comparisons within Faye's garden are of considerable interest. In addition to selections with red, pink and pale pink flowers Faye is growing several white-flowered forms. A tall-growing form in the back garden begins flowering in April-May and reaches a peak in June/July while there are two other white-flowered forms in the same area of the garden, one peaking in June and tapering off in July, and the other beginning in June and peaking in July.

Faye wrote in June, after good rains had been received following the very long, dry summer and autumn period. She had just been out into the garden to see how *E. impressa* is flowering this year and reports as follows - "Some of last year's plants have died, some seem to be slower in flowering this year. We had such a long warm autumn; but this doesn't seem to have induced earlier flowering which would have seemed logical. How many years of taking notes on flowering times is needed to show a definite picture? I am growing several other species of *Epacris* and I have started keeping flowering times of these plants".

Thanks also to **Jeanette Closs** of **Kingston Tas.** who has also sent in the record sheet re flower times of *Epacris impressa* forms in her garden. Jeanette has also sent in two other items which are on Page 4.

Max McDowall is an enthusiastic grower of *Epacris* as well as being an active member of several other ASGAP Study Groups. At the July meeting of the Maroondah Vic. region he brought along for the display table a superb 40cm pot of *Epacris purpurascens* in full flower. The plant was almost 1 m tall, with numerous branches, most ending with spikes to 15 cm long bearing masses of lovely pink flowers. I counted at least 60 such branches, and regret that I did not have a camera with me to capture the spectacular display. It is certainly captured in the memories of those who attended the meeting. Max indicated that he would be giving the plant a good prune following flowering, so that hopefully there will be an equally spectacular display next year. Congratulations Max and thanks for sharing your plant with other APS members.

The following is an extract from the article by **Nick Romanowski** which was included in *Australian Plants*, Volume 21, No. 167, June 2001, and referred to on Page 2 of this Newsletter.

Further information on the topic can be found in several books by Nick, including *Water Garden Plants and Animals*, published by University of NSW Press. RRP. \$37.95

" Damp Gardening - Don't drain that boggy spot, plant it by Nick Romanowski

The simplest treatment for a boggy place in the garden is planting it. This reduces erosion and nutrient runoff which affect wetlands and creeks downstream. It generally increases the attractiveness of the garden to a wide range of animals from birds to insects and frogs. It is also a lot easier, cheaper and more attractive than digging in pipes. The most serious objection I have heard to planting wet places is that few plants tolerate such conditions but that is far from true.

Constructing a bog garden

Not all gardeners are lucky enough to have a naturally boggy area available for planting but it is neither hard nor expensive to create one, even if you do not want to put in a pond as well.

The preparation involved in making a bog garden is nowhere near as much work as that involved in making a pond. With a little care in construction, even inexpensive materials, such as black plastic sheeting, can be used to create a feature that will last for decades, or even a lifetime. The water-retaining parts of bog garden liners should be completely buried, away from the ultraviolet light which rapidly destroys all but the most expensive pond liners, and a rock or tile border will be enough to protect as well as hide their exposed edges.

For most bog plants a soil depth of 15 cm is perfectly adequate for vigorous growth. If you are not around to keep up the water supply through most of the warmer months make it 30 - 40 cm deep, so that there is a long-lasting, deep reservoir of water in the lowest part of the liner. Line the underside of the liner with a thick blanket of wet newspaper to protect it. Waterlogged soils are completely sodden, so any hole pressed into them will fill with water within a short time. As water displaces air in the soil, cutting off the oxygen supply, plants that survive waterlogged conditions must be able to pump oxygen down to the roots from the leaves above. They must also tolerate flooding, even for weeks at a time and be able to tolerate some drying out. They will not necessarily thrive in merely wet conditions.

A permanently wet but not waterlogged garden

Some books recommend puncturing the newly placed liner so that the pond will not be 'too boggy' but this defeats the point of using it in the first place and will cost dearly in watering during summer. If you want to grow some plants which cannot tolerate being waterlogged for long periods, raise parts of the soil up 5 - 10 cm above the highest level of the liner. To grow mainly plants which will not tolerate being waterlogged, dig the whole liner in about 10 cm deeper than for a waterlogged bed, and trim it 10 cm below the soil's surface. This will create a 10cm zone of soil which will never be waterlogged, yet gives the plants the deep underlying water-table that most water-loving species need for best growth and flowering.

This is also a way to replicate a heathland situation as enjoyed by many plants including *Epacris*. It is important to allow such plants a drier phase during warmer weather, with only an occasional soaking to keep the buried liner from drying out completely. Waterlogged and wet soils in spring are cold and relatively oxygen rich, while warm waterlogged soils are anaerobic and can be toxic to plant roots. Not all *Epacris* species will tolerate being seasonally waterlogged and none will thrive if their soils remain wet through the whole year. Even within species there are variations. Deep pink and crimson forms of *Epacris impressa* are common on high and well-drained sections of our property. Downhill, white and pale pink forms predominate on poorly drained soils.

Alpine areas are seasonally waterlogged followed by periods of normal weather which may be locally very hot and dry. These conditions can be artificially created but the plants you can grow could be restricted by the local weather. These plants have evolved in cool conditions and temperatures above 25°C with soil temperatures well below 20°C may be necessary.

Soils and fertiliser

Despite the diversity of habitats from which water's-edge plants come, most prefer similar soils on the acid side, with little or no lime and reasonably rich in organic matter. Most garden soils are suitable as long as they are not largely infertile sand or pure clay though the more water-tolerant *Epacris impressa* species will usually thrive in a mixture of 25% peat and 75% sandy soil. If necessary improve the soil using your favourite method.

It is not necessary to improve all the soil used within a liner; only the top 10cm are particularly important for good growth as deeper layers are mainly a water reservoir. Use a sterilised soil for the surface layer or destroy most potential weeds by hand.....

A quick flick through my files suggests that there are at least 500 Australian plants that are adapted to seasonal flooding. It is surprising how many will grow if they have the water they need in their season."

Nick Romanowski.

News & Notes from Members

Thanks to **Jeanette Closs** of **Kingston Tas.** for the following two items which I'm sure will be of interest to Study Group members.

Propagation of Epacris cuttings

Jeanette is currently propagating Epacridaceae plants by placing the cuttings into an OASIS slab. She is using the Oasis as an alternative to regular cutting mix and says that she seems to be able to strike the more difficult plants by this method. The Oasis protects the tiny fine roots and Jeanette plans to continue the method with more members of the Epacridaceae family.

Many will be familiar with 'Oasis' as the green foam-like material commonly used by florists. It is placed in the bottom of vases and other containers and absorbs a considerable quantity of water. Stems can then be pushed into the 'Oasis' and flowers will remain fresh for a long period.

You may not be quite as familiar with the 'Growing Media' blocks, also produced by Oasis. These are coffee-coloured, open-celled water absorbing foam blocks, specially designed for optimal callus and root formation. The blocks are partially separated into cubes of about 3cm square which can be easily separated as the individual cuttings form roots. They are designed to provide the necessary balance of air and water for good root production. If you are unable to find a local source for this product you could contact Smithers-Oasis (Australia) at 9 Ridgeway Road, Elizabeth West, SA. 5113

A similarly designed product is available in Rockwell Plant Cubes, produced by Growth Technology Ltd, who have their Australian head-office in Fremantle, WA.

Jeanette has also kindly provided information regarding the recently established Regional Botanic Garden at Buckland Tas, where they are planning to include a small **Epacris** garden. It is an exciting project with major support provided by members of the Australian Plant Society.

The TASMANIAN BUSHLAND GARDEN

and plans to feature all the Tasmanian Epacris species in one garden bed

This recently developed bushland reserve, native flora garden and roadside stopping place in South-East Tasmania is a 21 ha block of dry sclerophyll woodland beside the Tasman Highway near Buckland, approx. 50 km north-east of Hobart.

In a leaflet prepared by Keith Corbett he states that the development of a large display garden for native plants at the Tasmanian Bushland Garden has provided an opportunity to grow and showcase some of the rare, vulnerable and endangered plants of Tasmania. A list of 60 or so *possible* plants for the Garden was prepared from the Tasmanian Government's Web-based list, bearing in mind the site conditions and an overall preference for East Coast plants.

The Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens have also become involved in the collection and propagation of rare, vulnerable and endangered Tasmanian plants and provided a list of plants which they could make available in pots for planting at the Tasmanian Bushland Garden.

These included such rarities as *Epacris stuartii*, which only grows at Southport Bluff, and also *Epacris barbata*. Will Fletcher's Plants of Tasmania Nursery at Ridgeway was able to supply quite a few more rare species, including *Epacris exserta*, *E. acuminata* and *E. grandis*. After some initial planning and laying out the plants were planted out in two special beds, by working bee volunteers.

Because there are so many rare *Epacris* species in Tasmania (about 13 of the 27 species, 20 of which are endemic in this 'moveable feast' of a genus), it was decided to dedicate a smallish (7m X 2m) bed just to *Epacris*. Additional species which hopefully can be added to the Garden include *Epacris franklinii*, *E. graniticola*, *E. virgata* 'Kettering', *E. apsleyensis*, *E. glabella* and *E. limbata*. Anyone with plants of these species is invited to contact Keith or other members of the Tasmanian Bushland Garden Inc.. For the sake of interest and completeness a number of non-rare species have been added, including *E. gunnii*, *E. paludosa*, *E. marginata* and *E. impressa*, so that people will be able to see almost the full range of Tasmania's *Epacris* in one bed.

Keith adds that it is interesting to note that of all the local species, *E. impressa*, the most common of all, is the only one with coloured flowers. All the rest are white.

The aim is that the presence of a major collection of Tasmania's rare, vulnerable and endangered plants - almost certainly the largest in the state - will be an added attraction for visitors to the Tasmanian Bushland Garden.

It will certainly be of major interest to EPACRIS STUDY GROUP members,

The Tasmanian Bushland Garden Inc is a group which has been formed under the umbrella of the Australian Plant Society, Tasmania Inc. Donations to the Tasmanian Bushland Garden Public Fund are Tax Deductable, and can be sent to the Treasurer at 12 Calder Crescent, Blackmans Bay 7052.

On the recording of flowering times

In response to Faye Candy's query as to 'How many years of taking notes on flowering times is needed to show a definite picture'. I am hoping to be able to provide an initial report on our recordings, in our March 2006 Newsletter.

I don't know about you, but I have certainly found it interesting to specifically look at the *Epacris* in the garden, in tubs and in the bush, and to make a point of jotting down what is in flower each month.

It is not anticipated for a moment that any sort of final analysis will be available from our initial report, but it will then provide a further starting point, to which we can add further observations along the lines of - "I've got a pink-flowered form that starts blooming much earlier than those recorded to date", or maybe even "The flowering time for the deep pink form in my garden is entirely different to the forms being grown by other members - or in different regions."

Anyway, all observations will be very gratefully received, on the flowering times of *Epacris impressa*, and also of other species if you have been extending your note-taking further.

Going Digital !!

Thanks to **Jeff Irons** our member in **England** for his response to the item with the above title which was included in our March 2005 Newsletter. Jeff points out that earlier this year he read a piece in an English journal stating that digital cameras are useless for serious plant photography. The author believed that a single lens reflex camera is essential. He does not mind whether it uses roll film or digital capture, but will not accept the gadget that we think of as a digital camera. The writer went on to say that it is possible to get 'reasonable' pictures with a digital camera and suggested focussing on a plant label that is moved progressively closer to the plant. When the label reaches the plant you lock the camera's focus, remove the label, then take the picture.

In our Study Group Newsletter item I did not mention how I happened to be the recipient of a digital camera but it is possibly now appropriate to do so.

Some years ago we were fortunate to be given a Nikon Coolpix 950 digital camera and late last year Rodger used this camera and received second prize in an Australia-wide photographic competition organised by the Horticultural Media Association and sponsored and judged by Ted's Camera Stores. The subject of the photograph was a very close-up shot of a native hibiscus flowerbud and no information was required by the judges as to the equipment and methods used in taking the image.

With the prize of a voucher from Ted's Camera Store we went along and I received a new Nikon Coolpix 4300 model. It is much more compact than the Nikon we had previously been given, and with many of the technical advances of recent years.

We certainly agree with the English writer in his praise of SLR cameras, and Rodger now uses a SLR digital but I firmly believe that standard digital cameras are also a fantastic tool - even for 'serious plant photography'.

Having said this, I have yet to master the intricacies of my Nikon. There seem to be an extraordinary number of options available. Sure I have taken many shots which for various reasons have been deleted, but this is one of the great opportunities the camera provides, without every poor shot being a costly error.

What are your thoughts on this topic ?

Have you any tips on digital photo taking - like the one with the use of a plant label?

We'd love to hear from you.

Where to purchase plants of *Epacris*

Our Study Group recently received an email from New South Wales, enquiring as to where *Epacris* could be obtained, particularly any 'double-flowered' species. With the aid of personal contacts and the latest issue of the book AUSSIE PLANT FINDER, by Margaret Hibbert published by Florilegium, Glebe NSW, we were able to provide advice regarding nurseries stocking a range of *Epacris* species.

Undoubtedly this is an aspect which could be of interest also to many of our members, so we will endeavour to include details regarding the availability of as many species as possible in either our March or October Newsletters in 2006.

We would therefore welcome any nursery lists or other information as to where *Epacris* can be purchased in Australia. Several nurseries have a mail order service and can supply plants within Australia, where permitted by quarantine regulations. To send plants overseas involves washing all soil and potting mix from the root systems, and unfortunately *Epacris* with their very fine roots have been found to respond adversely to this treatment.

We look forward to hearing from you on the availability of *Epacris*, so that this information can be passed on to Study Group members through the Newsletter.

Epacris impressa makes headlines !

Epacris impressa has recently hit the headlines in a number of different areas.

'Scientist Warns on State Emblem Lost to Freeway'

This was the heading of a prominent item in the Melbourne AGE Newspaper of Monday August 1st, accompanied by a colour photograph of 'Pink heath, Victoria's floral emblem'.

Concern was expressed regarding tracts of native vegetation being destroyed to make way for the EastLink Tollway (also known as the Scoresby Freeway) linking the suburbs of Mitcham and Frankston even though in one area the freeway is actually proceeding via a tunnel to protect the rich native flora. The article also highlighted difficulties associated with the propagation, cultivation and re-establishment of *Epacris impressa* in revegetation projects and the work being done by Dr. Cassandra McLean of Melbourne University in helping to find a solution to these problems.

The article went on to state -

'Dr. McLean has isolated a soil fungus that helps the plant to grow and had been developing a 'fungus tea bag' that, planted alongside the heath, allows cuttings to flourish and replantings to succeed. But her project has run out of money. She says she is frustrated because she is close to solving the problem and needs about \$10 000 to continue.

Last year she put a proposal to VicRoads to create a supply of cuttings using the fungus tea bags, which could be used to revegetate the freeway area, but was turned down. . . .

A spokesman for VicRoads said it was not responsible for funding environmental work near the tollway. A spokesman for the Thiess John Holland consortium building the road said it had a strong commitment to funding revegetation projects but had no plans to back Dr. McLean's project.'

Local Newspapers in the eastern and south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne also picked up this story with their own articles, and an item also appeared in the magazine, Australian Horticulture.

PLANT OF THE MONTH - 'Little Treasures'

The Maroondah region of A.P.S. has just started a new regular Newsletter feature which will highlight a series of plants under the general heading of 'Little Treasures' and it was great to see *Epacris* featuring as 'first cab off the rank'. The following is the article from the September 2005 Newsletter, with kind permission of the writer, Barbara Rooks and the Newsletter's Editorial Committee.

Epacris impressa

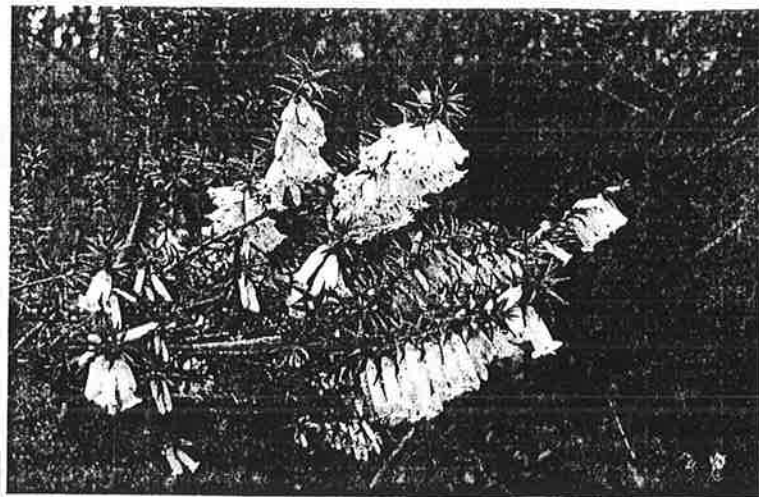
by Barbara Rooks

Walking around the garden at this time of the year is a great delight, with so many plants coming into flower, but it is easy for me to decide my favourite "little treasure"— *Epacris impressa*. It has emerged from between other plants, and spikes of white, pale pink, deep pink and red greet me as I walk around.

There is probably a sentimental element in my choice. As a young girl (a long, long time ago), my sister and I rode our bikes for hours around the outskirts of Ararat where *E. impressa* and masses of other wildflowers grew in profusion, and heath was always a family favourite.

I now live in Montrose, close to the Mt Dandenong Ranges, and walking in the bush is rewarded by lots of white *Epacris impressa*, and this local form is certainly the most vigorous heath in the garden. However the pinks and reds are also thriving for me.

I have them growing in all parts



Epacris impressa white form

of the garden, with some more shady than others. I keep the roots cool with mulching. Some receive more water than others, but it's hard to say which ones are growing best. The pinks and reds seem to do better with a little water, but the white ones do well anywhere.

Epacris reclinata is also growing well, but *E. longiflora*

doesn't seem to like me very much. I am talking gently to *Epacris myrtifolia* to encourage it along.

I took cuttings of *E. impressa* last December and had some success with them, so I am looking forward to more propagation this year to keep filling gaps in the garden with a wonderful favourite little treasure.

A.S.G.A.P. Inc.

EPACRIS STUDY GROUP

Special Profile Page

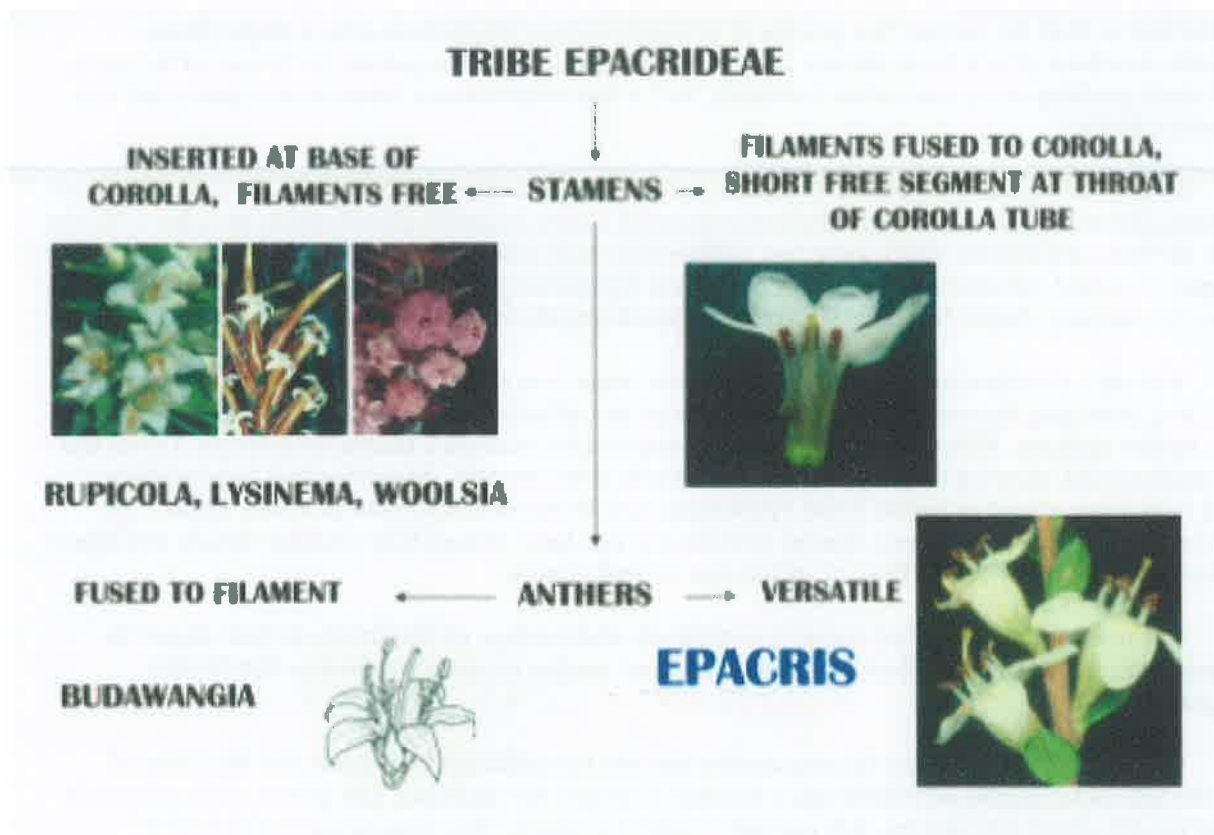
In our last Newsletter we included a SPECIAL PROFILE PAGE on the family EPACRIDACEAE, which formed part the presentation by Dr. Ron Crowden, founding leader of the EPACRIS STUDY GROUP, at the A.S.G.A.P. Conference in Tasmania 2004.

The pictorial page showed the division of EPACRIDACEAE into the TRIBES of ARCHERIEAE, COSMELIEAE, EPACRIDEAE, OLIGORRHENEAE, PRIONOTEAE, RICHEAE and STYPHELIEAE.

Below we now have the next page in Ron's presentation, covering the tribe EPACRIDEAE and showing where EPACRIS fits in, together with the related genera of

BUDWANGIA
LYSINEMA
RUPICOLA
WOOLLSIA.

and



Ron has kindly now also prepared a page for this edition of our Newsletter, giving an overview of the CLASSIFICATION OF EPACRIDS, which appears on the reverse of this special PROFILE PAGE.

Our sincere thanks are again expressed to Dr. Ron Crowden, for supplying these pages for inclusion in our Study Group Newsletters.

CLASSIFICATION OF EPACRIDIS

Prepared by Dr. Ron Crowden, 2005

Through the two centuries that it has been known the family Epacridaceae has presented classification difficulties for taxonomists and a succession of different classification arrangements has been proposed. Robert Brown in 1810 provided the first important classification, recognising the Order Epacrideae, containing 134 described species divided into two sections (Styphelieae, with 96 species in 24 genera and Epacrideae, 38 species in 10 genera). These two sections were distinguished by features of the ovary and the fruit.

In Styphelieae the style is attenuate from the ovary, each ovary compartment or locule bears a single pendulous ovule and the fruit is an indehiscent drupe.

In Epacrideae the style is set in a depression at the top of the ovary, each locule bears numerous ovules on an axile placenta and the fruit is a dehiscent capsule.

As additional species were discovered they were readily accommodated into one or other of Brown's two sections, but the subsectional taxonomy became increasingly complex. A number of new genera were erected, there was quite a deal of movement of species between genera and there were differences of opinion regarding intergeneric relationships.

Ferdinand von Mueller (Government Botanist, Victoria) in 1867 presented a very different classification in that he merged ten genera of Brown's section Styphelieae into a single genus *Styphelia*. Bentham (*Flora Australiensis* 1869) disputed von Mueller's system, in favour of Brown's, as did most contemporary Australian botanists, but a few international taxonomists preferred von Mueller's scheme.

In 1967, by placing a greater emphasis on anatomical and vegetative characters than on fruit and ovary characters as had Brown, Watson presented a very different classification structure for the family. In Watson's scheme there were two subfamilies, Richioideae (containing the genera *Richea*, *Dracophyllum* and *Sphenatoma*) and Epacridoideae (containing the other genera divided amongst 6 Tribes - Cosmelieae, Oligarrheneae, Wittsteineae, Needhamielleae, Epacrideae and Styphelieae).

Watson's classification presented a dramatic departure from the long accepted scheme of Brown and Bentham, however it recognised many of the affinities and relationships remarked upon by the earlier authors. Although it has now been superseded Watson's theme of multiple Tribes has been retained and adopted in the more recent classification models. *Prionotes* and *Lebetanthus* (Chile) have been placed in a new Tribe Prionoteae and *Archeria* is also now in a new Tribe Archerieae. The Victorian endemic species *Wittsteinia* has been moved into another family and there has been a good deal of reshuffling of other species and genera.

The most widely accepted current version of relationships in the family is that shown in Newsletter No. 19, with more than 500 now described species in some 37 genera distributed amongst six Tribes.

Current work in progress in preparation for the Epacridaceae treatment for the Flora of Australia will undoubtedly introduce some further changes. For example, one genus, *Leucopogon* is very large with about 230 species, but current research suggests that *Leucopogon* may best be considered as a number of smaller groups, anticipating a future splitting of the genus. I think that *Epacris* is fairly "safe", though it is possible that *Rupicola* and *Budwangia* may be reunited with it.

Much of the research into the Epacridaceae in recent years has involved DNA analysis. This has been particularly successful in establishing and confirming relationships at the family and tribal levels. One significant outcome has been to emphasise the closeness of the Epacridaceae to the Ericaceae and to endorse the view, long held by a number of taxonomists that the two families should be combined. The National Herbarium of NSW has already adopted this idea and epacrids are now filed there as the Sub-family Epacridoidea in the Family Ericaceae. I expect there will be a gradual and universal acceptance of this reclassification. However, for us Field Botanists this should not cause any great alarm, because it will not in any way have an effect on the levels of genus and species which is where we all have our interest. In field work eye-ball taxonomy will always reign supreme.

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

Epacris virgata Hook. f.

virgata = twiggy

Distribution - Tasmania

Common name - Tamar Heath

Epacris virgata is a somewhat erect shrub of between 50 cm and 2 m tall, with a width of about 50 cm to 1 m.

It has ovate-lanceolate or ovate-elliptical leaves to about 1 cm long, with a short softly pointed tip.

White flowers to almost 1cm across are from leaf axils along the branches. The anthers are exerted, extending beyond the spreading lobes of the corolla tube.

Flower-bearing branches be 30cm or more in length, producing a very showy display. They provide excellent cut-flower material and plants respond very well to pruning, during or immediately after flowering.

Flowering is mainly during July - September.

Natural Distribution -

Epacris virgata has two main disjunct centres of distribution.

In the north it is found in the Dazzler Ranges and near the Tamar River, which has resulted in the common name of Tamar Heath.

Plants are also found in over a wide area south of Hobart, Kingston, Margate, Kettering, south of Orford and on the Tasman and Forestier Peninsulas.

The southern populations tend to have longer more pointed leaves than plants from the north, and are sometimes confused with *E. tasmanica* when not in flower.



Illustration © Bill Gunn

Photograph © Rodger Elliot



Epacris virgata leaf & flower X 3.2

© Trevor Blake

from *Encyclopaedia of Australian
 Plants Suitable for Cultivation*
 Volume 4 - Lothian Books, Melbourne

Epacris virgata Hook. f.

Cultivation

Epacris virgata is often found on shallow, poorly drained soils. In cultivation it does well in a range of soils including clay loams, but prefers soils which remain moist for most of the year. Plants are tolerant of moderate frosts. They respond well to annual pruning (see previous page), which is recommended for the development of bushy growth and ongoing vigour.

Epacris virgata can be grown very successfully in containers.

Propagation

Epacris virgata is commonly propagated from cuttings of barely firm young growth, which strike readily. Seed can also be used if available.

Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker

Epacris virgata was named by Sir Joseph Hooker, O.M., C.B., K.C.S.I., M.D., F.L.S., F.R.S. He was born in England in 1817 and died in 1911.

Joseph Hooker was the son of Sir William Jackson Hooker (1785-1865), who was also a botanist and both father and son were regarded as the greatest British botanists of their time.

Sir William Hooker was the first Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew and the plants he described bear the author citation of 'Hook.'

Joseph Hooker worked as Assistant Director at Kew and subsequently became Director following the death of his father. The plants named by Joseph Hooker bear the citation of 'Hook. f.' with the 'f.' meaning 'son of' to distinguish his work from that of his father. The work of this father-and-son combination was extensive, with the naming and describing of around 200 different Australian plant species.

Sir Joseph Hooker died at the age of 95, and was described as '*one of the most remarkable men who ever devoted his life to the advancement of Science*'.

Sir Joseph Hooker also named *Epacris corymbiflora*, *Epacris gunnii* and *Epacris petrophila*.

This space is for additional comments relating to *Epacris virgata*

EPACRIS STUDY GROUP MEMBERS to June 2005

Australian Members

Tricia Allen,	McCrae Vic. 3938
Dawn & Lyn Barr,	Swan Reach Vic. 3903
Winifred Bennett,	Greensborough Vic. 3088
Dr. Elizabeth Brown,	National Herbarium of NSW
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Overseas Members

Jeff Irons,	Heswall, Wirral, England
Mary Sue Ittner,	Gualala, California USA
Anthony Parry,	Würenlingen, Switzerland

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.

Epacris Study Group FINANCIAL STATEMENT for year ended 30.6.2005

<u>Credit Union S5 Club Account -</u>	Balance at 1/7/2004	\$435.65	
Interest Received		\$ 11.78	
Balance as at 30.6.05		\$447.43	\$ 447.43
<u>Credit Union S1 Access Account -</u>	Balance at 1/7/2004	\$267.77	
<u>Receipts</u>	Memberships, donations,	\$235.00	
	Credit Union interest	\$ 0.44	
		\$ 503.21	
<u>Expenses</u>	Newsletter printing -	\$ 261.00	
	Postage, including Newsletters	\$ 97.85	
	Govt. charges on Credit Union account	\$ 2.00	
		\$ 360.85	
Balance as at 30.6.2005		\$ 142.36	\$ 142.36
<u>COMBINED STUDY GROUP BALANCE - as at 30.6.2005</u>			<u>\$ 589.79</u>

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:

EPACRIS STUDY GROUP

P.O. Box 655, Heathmont Vic. 3135