

Association of **S**ocieties for **G**rowing **A**ustralian **P**lants Inc.

## RHAMNACEAE STUDY GROUP

**NEWSLETTER** NUMBER 4

SEPTEMBER 1997

Hello again, members. This will be a short Newsletter, as I haven't heard from any of you for over a year now.. Hope you are still trying out new species of the Rhamnaceae. Do drop me a line if you come up with anything interesting.

### Field Trips:

During spring last year, Naomi Bell, Barbara Daly (Canberra SGAP members) and I spent a few days looking at **Pomaderris** between Cann River and the Orbost area in Victoria. Joe Stephens, a Study Group member who works in the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources kindly spent a day showing us areas of **Pomaderris**. We tried to get photographs and herbarium specimens of everything we saw - I'm just mounting the specimens to get some of them identified. There were several large populations growing along the Princes Highway in this area, some interspersed with wattles - a picture of many shades of yellow and gold, really worth a look if you're travelling in this area during spring. While we were travelling back home along the Cann River Valley Road, we turned off on the Beehive Falls Road to have lunch and were rewarded by a vast area of **Pomaderris** turning the roadside to gold.

Also in spring, we had a SGAP trip to Merriwa, NSW. Not a lot of Rhamnaceae found in this area, but we did see **P. lanigera** and found a species I hadn't yet seen - **Cryptandra buxifolia**.

Last month, another SGAP trip found us in the Ledknapper Spinifex east of Enngonia, up towards the Queensland border. Here we saw one of the larger tree species of the Rhamnaceae, **Ventilago viminalis**.

Our SGAP Wednesday Walkers group is still finding populations of **Pomaderris** or **Cryptandra** on just about all our walks, and a few months ago we found a huge area of **Pomaderris pallida** (fast becoming less rare than previously considered!) in one of the Canberra Nature Parks.

### Propagation:

Stephen Panter (Canberra SGAP member) passed on to me a propagation method he had come across for **Discaria pubescens**.

- Soak seed in 70% methylated spirits for 1 minute, then in boiled water.
- Place seed in a sterilized jar on moist cotton wool.
- Refrigerate at 4°C for 30 days.
- Place out on sterile coarse river sand.

This resulted in a good germination, and these plants were potted up at the second true leaf stage.

In "Ecology of *Discaria* (Rhamnaceae) in Victoria" (Proc. R. Soc. Vic. 99(3): 99-108 K. F. M. Hall and R. F. Parsons published results of several treatments of *Discaria* seed.

- Soaking in 1M hydrochloric acid for 24 hrs resulted in less germination than in the control.
- Germination of fresh seed was increased by nicking the seed-coat.
- The best germination was obtained with un-nicked seed stratified at 5°C for 30 days (lowland provenance seed).
- High altitude provenance seed responded better to 60 or 90 days of stratification at 5°C.

As Stephen had given me some seed as well as the germinated seedlings, I thought I'd give them a try with the hot water treatment - pouring boiling water onto the seed, then leaving them in the water for a day or two before placing them on a 1:1 mixture of perlite and sand and lightly covering with sand. This gave a reasonable germination (and is a lot easier than nicking *Discaria* seed!).

Last December, I collected some *Cryptandra propinqua* seed and treated it with boiling water. This resulted in very good germination, although it was some weeks before the first seedlings came up. Several *Pomaderris* species collected at about the same time also did well with this treatment.

#### Collection of seed:

When I first started collecting *Cryptandra* and *Pomaderris* seed, I collected what looked like almost ripe seed capsules. Some of these failed to open and the seed I did obtain didn't do very well. Now I collect the seed from the plant after the capsules have begun to open. If you place your hand under a bunch of ripe and opening seed capsules and bring your other hand down sharply on the bunch, any fully ripe seed will end up in your hand. *Pomaderris* seed capsules turn blackish just before they rupture. Locally our Rhamnaceae species ripen their seed usually within a few days of Christmas.

#### Descriptions of some plants found on field trips:

*Discaria pubescens* (Australian Anchor Plant): A rigid, densely-branched shrub 0.5 to 2m high. Branchlets opposite and carrying rigid spines up to 50mm long. Spines and stems are green. Leaves ovate or almost oblong up to about 15mm long and finely toothed. Leaves are sometimes absent on older stems. Spring flowers are creamy white in clusters of up to 50 flowers at the base of the spines. Seed capsule disc-like. Has underground stems around base of plant which can be the source of regeneration after damage. The ones I have seen have been in rocky areas, either in steep woodland or beside creeks. Under trees, they

have been up to 2 m tall. One small population beside a local SGAP member's creek had been savagely attacked, manually and chemically, by a previous owner who thought it was a weed. When I saw the plants, they were throwing up new canes from the root-stock. They are now growing steadily and are either seeding or suckering, as there are small plants coming up around them at last report. **Discaria pubescens** is attractive in flower and probably useful for nesting birds. It's not much to look at when not flowering but is worth giving a try if only because it is considered to be endangered due to land clearance. Distribution: Northern, Central and Southern Tablelands and Northwest Slopes of NSW, also Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania.

**Ventilago viminalis** (Supple Jack): A tree to about 10m high. Has dark, furrowed bark and either a single trunk or several smaller intertwined trunks (this occurs because juvenile **Ventilago** begin life as climbing or intertwining vines). The wood is dark and hard and could probably be suitable for wood-work. Leaves are alternate, glabrous and dark green - lanceolate to 12 cm long and 20 mm wide. Flowers in spring, bearing greenish racemes clustered at nodes. Fruit is a one-seeded globular nut at the base of a pale yellowish-green almost oblong wing (wings usually held downwards). It usually occurs as scattered individual trees amongst mulga, white cypress and bumble box on red sands to heavy clay floodplain soils. It is palatable to stock and is lopped for feed during drought. Will send up suckers if roots are disturbed or damaged. Gum exuding from this species is said to be edible. Occurs mostly north of Nyngan on the Northwest Slopes and Plains of NSW, also in Queensland, NT and SA.

**Cryptandra buxifolia**: Spreading, suckering shrub 15-60 cm high. Leaves elliptical to about 25 mm long and 10 mm wide. Margins recurved, acute apex to leaf, dark glossy green above, whitish and tomentose below. Linear dark brown stipules at base of leaves to about 3mm long. Flowers winter to spring. Terminal clusters of flowers are surrounded by dark brown bracts when in bud. These fall as flowers open to expose creamy-white flowers. Grows in open forest on sandstone. We saw it growing in the Goulburn River area near Merriwa on a moist shaded bank near water. Not common - Upper Hunter Valley, Howes Valley, Bathurst and Goulburn areas. An attractive little plant easily grown from cuttings.

**Finances:**

Balance September 96		181.54
Subscriptions	141.00	
Interest	1.31	
FID Tax		0.03
Envelopes		4.00
Balance September 97		319.82

Good luck with your growing and if you have any information on any Rhamnaceae species you are growing or have seen in your travels, drop me a line.

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