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NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the Waratah and Flannel Flower Study Group.

Waratahs and Flannel Flowers are iconic Australian native plants yet few Australian gardeners are able to grow them successfully in their gardens. So far some work has been done with commercial production of both genera but a gap remains with the home gardener. Many people have tried growing both with little or no success. There are a number of new *Telopea* hybrids, such as the Shady Lady series, becoming available through the trade and these are selling well.

It is still difficult to source Flannel Flower plants apart from a few specialist nurseries. While there are several commercial growers doing interesting work with *Actinotus*, no one to my knowledge is supplying the larger mainstream nurseries. I am hoping with this Study Group to share our experiences and knowledge and to develop strategies which will allow the average native plant gardener to have some success with either or both genera.

Thank you to the members who have contributed to this newsletter. I hope you will all find the coming journey interesting and rewarding as a member of the group. I am no expert on either group of plants and will be learning along with you. I hope to co-ordinate all the information that comes in and make it available to the Australian Plants Society through various journals and wider in the community through gardening magazines and through contact with gardening media personalities. I am also trying to strike a balance between commercial growing and private gardening of both genera. I would appreciate your articles and photographs, emails, links, news stories, etc. and will endeavour to create an interesting and collaborative newsletter.

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**The Waratah and Flannel Flower Study Group is affiliated with the
Australian Native Plants Society (Australia) - ANPSA**

Newsletters are sent out in May and November (electronic only).

Membership is restricted to individuals (including partners) and not groups.

Membership \$10.00 per year to be paid by cheque or Direct Debit upon receipt of invoice.

Deadline for November newsletter contributions - October 14



Telopea 'Emperor's Torch'

Photo: M. Hitchcock

About the Leader:

I am a Life Member of the Australian Plants Society and live on a small hobby farm on the outskirts of Armidale NSW with my husband Don. I was Leader of the Correa Study Group from 1991 to 2007 and hold the GPCAA registered Correa Collection in my garden which is also registered with BGANZ as a private botanic garden. I am author of 'Correas - Australian Plants for Waterwise Gardens' (Rosenberg 2010), 'Wattle' (AGPS 1991) and co-author of 'Australian Plants for the Northern Tablelands of NSW' (1982). I have contributed widely to native plant journals over many years and am currently President of the Armidale & District APS Group. I was responsible for gazettal of our National Floral Emblem *Acacia pycnantha* (1988) and gazettal of National Wattle Day (1992).

About the members:

Margaret Lee is Editor of the South Australian APS Journal. She lives in the Adelaide hills and is successfully growing about 50 Waratah plants. See Margaret's article in this newsletter.

John and Barbara Nevin live on the western outskirts of Armidale NSW. They have an extensive native garden and are experimenting with Waratahs, mostly the 'Shady Lady' series. They have been growing Flannel Flowers which self sow freely in their garden.

Anthony & Annabelle O'Halloran are the owners of Bilby Blooms Nursery at Binnaway near Coonabarabaran NSW.

Warren & Gloria Sheather live about 20kms W of Armidale NSW on a small property which is devoted to growing a huge range of native plants. Warren presents the native plant program on ABC New England Radio on alternate Saturday mornings. He and Gloria are regular contributors to 'Native Plants for NSW' and other journals.

Sue and Bruce Winfield own and manage a retail plant nursery at Laharum in the Grampians, called Aussie Flower People & Winnel Ausnative Flora. They have an extensive background in Australian native flowers, in particular *Thryptomene calycina*, an endemic flower from the Grampians.

Harry Kibbler lives at Verges Creek, E of Kempsey NSW. Harry is part of a group of commercial growers that trialled growing flannel flower

under cover 6 years ago. The RIRDC project was run by Dr. Ross Worrall from NSW DPI. (now retired). Harry also planted the hybrid *Telopea* 'Corroboree' two years ago. The success of this cultivar has prompted him to plant other cultivars ie. 'Mirrigan', 'Wirrimbirra White' and 'Golden Glow' (yellow). He has established a connection with the Waratah Industry Network (WIN), a group of professional growers situated around the southern highlands.

Dot Camp lives on the Central Coast of NSW. She is establishing a new garden and has planted a *T. speciosissima* in a natural bush area of her garden but feels it needs a 'hit' of something. She also has a very healthy looking *T.* 'Braidwood Brilliant' which she thought she would plant on a sandy loam or crushed granite mound.

Dr Graeme Downe lives at Endeavour Hills Vic. and owns Bushglow Waratah. He has grown Waratahs and done breeding work for 25 years. He has produced or been involved with 5 varieties which have been commercialized: 'Shade of Pale', 'Fire 'n Ice', 'Golden Globe', 'Bridal Gown' and 'Champagne'. He has also grown flannel flowers, both tall & compact forms in very small numbers from seed & cuttings. He finds them difficult to establish for the long term. Graeme has also tried seed of *Actinotus superbus* with no success. He grew *Actinotus minor* for a while but has now lost it.

Arthur Rutter lives at East Kurrajong, is recently retired and keen to spend some time growing and researching native plants.

Growing Waratahs in the Adelaide Hills

Text by Margaret Lee

In 1996 I planted six "Shady Lady" Waratahs at Piccadilly in the Adelaide Hills. Next year I planted more of these and a number of plants from Yellow Rock Nursery – "Fire & Brimstone", "Brimstone Blush", "Cardinal" and "Corroboree". In September 2003 seven "Fire & Brimstone" and seven "Olympic Flame" were added. Following the Launceston conference one Tasmanian *Telopea truncata* was also added, which has been slow to establish. A few newer "Shady Lady" pink, white and yellow have recently been planted and there are over 50 plants in all.

The soil is a thin layer of grey podsol over clay loam, over quite heavy, slightly acid clay, over deep sandstone on the eastern side of Mt. Lofty. However it is quite well-drained and receives about 600mm of mainly winter rain. A drip system has been installed and a limited amount of bore water is applied occasionally during long dry spells in summer to keep the plants alive. The hill is quite steep and slopes to the south-east, which assists with drainage.

The plantation is backed by dry sclerophyll *Eucalyptus obliqua* forest which shields it from wind and from the northern and western sun and increases humidity. The plants only receive sun for a few hours in the morning. This has the added advantage of inducing them to produce long stems which are popular with the florists. I give them a small handful of blood and bone in autumn and another in spring.

All plants have done extremely well, there have been no losses. Some of the first plants are becoming woody and less productive, so I experimented by cutting one back very hard last autumn and removing all the old wood. It is now producing healthy new growth. One of the local members, Tom Loffler, grows Waratahs at Waikerie, on the Murray. It is very hot there and he protects them with a white shadecloth structure and uses a drip system, through which he fertilizes also.



Telopea truncata <http://www.olelantana.com>.

Do you all have a copy of

'Australian Plants'

Vol 25 No 201 Dec. 2009

This is an excellent reference
on waratahs.

Do you also have

**'The Waratah'
2nd Ed.**

Paul Nixon
Kangaroo Press 1997

*What other references would be useful?
Please let me know and I will include
them in the next newsletter*

*Please send any interesting articles that you
would like to share with the other members.*

*Your own experiences are always of great
interest to others.*

Please don't hesitate to email me at any time.

Maria

Checklist of *Telopea* species and varieties

Species:

- Telopea aspera* - Gibraltar Range NSW
- Telopea mongaensis* - Braidwood Waratah - NSW
- Telopea oreades* - Gippsland Waratah - Vic.
- Telopea speciosissima* - NSW Waratah
- Telopea truncata* - Tasmanian Waratah

Pink Cultivars:

- T. speciosissima* 'Brimstone Pink'
- T. speciosissima* 'Pink Passion'
- T. speciosissima* 'Shade of Pale'
- T. speciosissima* x 'Champagne'
- T. speciosissima* x *truncata* 'Digger'
- T. speciosissima* x *truncata* 'Mallee Boy'

Red Cultivars:

- T. speciosissima* 'Ballerina'
- T. speciosissima* 'Brimstone Blush'
- T. speciosissima* 'Brimstone Early'
- T. speciosissima* 'Cardinal'
- T. speciosissima* 'Corroboree'
- T. speciosissima* 'Emperor's Torch'
- T. speciosissima* 'Fire and Brimstone'
- T. speciosissima* 'Fire 'n Ice'
- T. speciosissima* 'Gembrook'
- T. speciosissima* 'Green Bracts'
- T. speciosissima* 'Mirragon'
- T. speciosissima* 'Olympic Flame'
- T. speciosissima* 'Red Centre'
- T. speciosissima* x 'Songlines'
- T. speciosissima* 'Stringers Late'
- T. speciosissima* x 'Sunflare'
- T. speciosissima* x *mongaensis* 'Braidwood Brilliant'
- T. speciosissima* x *oreades* 'Shady Lady Crimson'
- T. speciosissima* x *oreades* 'Shady Lady Pink'
- T. speciosissima* x *oreades* 'Shady Lady Red'
- T. mongaensis* x *speciosissima* 'Canberry Gem'
- T. speciosissima* x *truncata* 'Sugar Plum'

White Cultivars:

- T. oreades* 'Errindundra White'
- T. speciosissima* 'Wirrimbirra White'

- T. speciosissima* x *oreades* 'Shady Lady White'
- T. speciosissima* x 'Bridal Gown'
- T. speciosissima* x *truncata* 'Snow Maiden'

Yellow/Cream Cultivars:

- T. speciosissima* x *oreades* 'Shady Lady Yellow'
- T. speciosissima* x 'Golden Glow'
- T. speciosissima* x 'Golden Globe' (G. Downe)
- T. speciosissima* x *truncata* 'Georgie Girl'

Plants in blue were not described in the Waratah issue of 'Australian Plants'. Some are described on websites. Can you help with descriptions of these for the next newsletter.

Checklist of *Actinotus* species and varieties

- Actinotus forsythii* Blue Mts, NSW
- Actinotus gibbonsii* NSW
- Actinotus belianthi* NSW, Qld (Flannel Flower)
- Actinotus leucocephalus* WA
- Actinotus minor* NSW, Qld
- Actinotus moorei* Tas
- Actinotus superbus* WA
- Actinotus swartzii* MacDonnell Ranges

Ref: Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants, Vol 2, Elliot and Jones, Lothian 1982

Wikipedia also lists

- Actinotus bellidioides*
- Actinotus glomeratus*
- Actinotus humilis*
- Actinotus omnifertilis*
- Actinotus paddisonii* Bourke NSW
- Actinotus rhomboideus*
- Actinotus suffocatus*

Cultivars:

- Actinotus belianthi* 'Starbright'
- Actinotus belianthi* 'Federation Stars'TM
- Actinotus belianthi* 'Parkes Star'

Can you add to this list? Do you have any information on growing any of these species or varieties? Maria



Growing Flannel Flowers all Year Round

**\$25.00 for the book purchased online or
can be downloaded as a pdf (667.3 KB)
from the RIRDC website**

Flannel Flower Research

59 pages Code: 10-065

Published: 27 May 2010

Author(s): Dr Ross Worrall, Len Tesoriero

ISBN: 978-1-74254-038-2

There is a well-established domestic and export market for cut flannel flowers (*Actinotus helianthi*) with out-of-season flowers command a significant premium. Demand already exceeds supply, which will be exacerbated in the future with proposed actions to severely reduce bush picking. To date, *Actinotus* sp. has proven unreliable in cultivation as it is difficult to propagate and has a short flowering season limited to spring and early summer. In response, the Flannel Flower Forum has identified the major constraints limiting cultivation – in particular the lack of suitable varieties, cultural information, propagation and the effect of root diseases. Overcoming these production constraints will provide business and employment opportunities for regional Australia.

<https://rirdc.infoservices.com.au/items/10-065>



Research in Progress -

Wildflowers and Native Plants 2002-2003

Free

25 pages

Code: 03-067

Published: 7 Jul 2003

Author(s):

ISBN: 0-642-58634-9

<https://rirdc.infoservices.com.au/items/03-067>

Only available for viewing or free download.

Go to the RIRDC website

[Download PDF](#) 442.8 KB

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Project UNC-I6A
Delaying Postharvest Senescence of Cut
Flowers
Using Nitric Oxide
Prof. Ron Wills, Dr Michael Bowyer
(02) 4348 4140 The University of Newcastle

Commercial production of *Telopea speciosissima* (Waratah)

NSW waratah is one crop that has returned to favour partly based on NSW patriotic fervour. With strong prices on the domestic market for large-headed varieties, growers have planted tens of thousands of waratahs, often with little thought to trends in future varietal demand. Although **large-headed varieties** command higher prices at the Sydney Flower Market, it appears that returns for export are lower, particularly after considering the freight costs.

On the **export market**, waratahs are **hindered by**:

- their relatively short season of availability
- a relatively high freight cost per stem
- competition from other southern hemisphere producers.

In contrast, **smaller headed waratahs** such as the green-bracted variety, which often have higher yields per plant, are **providing better returns**.

The **best returns** on both the domestic and export markets, however, have been achieved with **quality** (no bract browning) and **white forms**.

In recent years there has been a trend away from seedlings to selected varieties. Varieties with proven market appeal are now more widely available and are being grown commercially. However, there is a clear need for good flower grading on-farm and improved quality in order to receive premium prices. **Bract browning** re-

mains a serious problem, affecting marketability on both domestic and export markets.

Key references

Martyn, A et al. 2002, 'Effect of shade cloth, irrigation frequency and calcium sprays on bract browning in waratahs (*Telopea* spp.)', in Proceedings 6th Australian Wildflower Conference, 30 May–1 June 2002, Warwick Farm, Sydney. Copies available from NSW Department of Primary Industries.

Tranter D 1998, 'Protea, leucodendron and waratah', in *The New Rural Industries — A Handbook for Farmers and Investors*, RIRDC, Canberra.

Worrall R 1997, *Growing waratahs commercially*, Agnote DPI-193, 2nd edition, NSW Department of Primary Industries (then NSW Agriculture).

The Waratah Industry Network

The Waratah Industry Network (WIN) is a forum for waratah growers and users, breeders, propagators and researchers to collectively solve major production and marketing constraints concerning the waratah. WIN is an autonomous group, linked to the Australian Native Flower Growers and Promoters Inc. To find out more about WIN, please contact:

Australian Native Flower Growers and Promoters
PO Box 4327
East Gosford NSW 2250
Website: www.anfgpa.com

I couldn't access this website. Maria

The information in this document forms part of the publication [Growing Australian native flowers commercially](#). It can be accessed on the following link

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/horticulture/floriculture/australian-south-african/growing-commercially>

Waratahs: A few facts

by Jeff Howes with permission
 First printed in *Native Plants* - April 2004

I have been unable, not for want of trying, to grow a waratah (*Telopea speciosissima*) both in the ground and in pots, let alone get one to flower. However, I have not given up hope and this has led me to read a great book: *The Waratah*, by Paul Nixon that was printed by Kangaroo Press in 1997. It is full of valuable information on how to successfully grow them and get them to flower. The following are a few facts from the book (in no particular order), that I found interesting:

- The best soils to grow them is deep, free draining and with a North, North East or North West aspect to ensure maximum sun.
- They usually grow 1-3 m high and if in deep fertile soil free of competition, they will grow to five metres.
- They normally flower at the spring equinox.
- Once flowers have started to open, the bushes should be well watered as stress at this time will cause added bract burn.
- They are frost hardy to -12 C.
- The primary cultivation requirement is similar to the requirements of citrus, namely a well drained site.
- When planting one sure method of achieving positive drainage is to place the plant on the ground or above ground surface - do not dig a hole but mound up around the plant to form a bed.
- They respond to very high levels of nutrition - especially Blood and Bone and farm animal manure (not fresh poultry manure). The ideal NPK ratio of fertilisers are: N of 15-20%, P of 2-5% and K of 5-10%.
- Apply fertiliser to correspond with leaf growth - Spring and Autumn.
- Pests - too many to list, but the main pest is the borer that attacks the ripening bud. Lookout for sawdust at the base of the bud for sign of

activity. Use carbaryl or Endosulphon (I am sure Confidor will work JH).

- Pruning juvenile waratahs is desirable to make plants divide and encourage basal growth.
- On page 43 of the book there is an excellent model ‘ ... that works’ for growing from seed to flower.
- In the wild, they flower best after bush fires as they are free from root competition for a few years at least. Lack of root competition in the home garden is recommended.
- Flower buds develop early in the year, so it is in bud for 7 to 8 months.
- Vase life of flowers is 10 to 14 days. To get an extra week pour a cup of water over the flower each day.
- Fresh seed germinates readily. The seed deteriorates fairly rapidly unless stored at low temperature and low humidity and not in a plastic bag.



<http://gardening.aussielandscaping.com.au/australian-plants/new-waratah-varieties.shtml>

How to grow *Actinotus helianthi* easily

by Margaret Guenzel with permission

First published in Growing Australian, June 2004

I started to sow seeds in October 2003, then each month until March 04 using seed that was: fresh/ 1 yr old/ refrigerated 2 yrs old. I soaked the seeds using my Wettasoil method and placed the punnets in my plastic greenhouse where they got watered regularly: 3 x 3mins per 24 hrs in hot weather, 3 x 1min per 24 hrs in cooler weather

Results:

October seeding: nothing
 Dec/Jan/Feb seeding: good results from fresh and 1 yr old seed.

All seedlings emerged 28-35 days after sowing and in large numbers. 2yr old seed failed to germinate.

March: Fresh seeds up after 45-50 days but very spindly. 1yr old seed: nothing. 2yr old seed: nothing

Conclusions:

1. August/September are too early to sow (in southern Vic) because the conditions for germination are not yet right and the seeds with continued watering rot away. The right conditions are a combination of warm weather and long daylight hours. Late October to late February have these conditions. This would be different for other areas.
2. In March warm weather is still around but days are getting shorter hence the spindly seedlings.
3. December and January are optimal for another reason. The young seedlings are very slow (once potted up) to develop for the next 4-5 weeks, which means seedlings from the end of February/March don't get as much time to develop before the cold weather sets in and don't survive the winter as well.

Seed viability:

To solve the riddle of how long seeds stay viable I have extracted the embryos of fresh/1yr old/ refrigerated 2yr old seed and put them under the microscope.

Fresh seed: Seedling tissue is cream with some green (chlorophyll) still present, pores are relatively large.

1yr old seed: Embryonic tissue is cream coloured, pores are half the size of fresh seed.

2yr old refrigerated seed: This tissue looked grey and dead.

2yr old unrefrigerated seed: No visual difference between 1yr old and 2yr old tissue. However the testa of

the 2yr old seed had become much tougher, more leathery and the seedling tissue felt firmer, like the tissue of a pine nut.

I have since found out that the seeds of other members of the Apiacea family have short viability (e.g. carrots and parsnips and Trachymene). This would explain the poor viability of older seed.

Summary:

DO...

1. Use fresh or 1yr old seed for best results.
2. Sow seeds from late October to late February.
3. Soak seeds in 1 drop of liquid Wettasoil to 250mls of tepid water for 1 hour. Rinse the seeds in a strainer before sowing.
4. Sow in seed raising mix in punnets or margarine tubs for extra depth. Cover with a handful of quartz chips to prevent seeds rotting.
5. Pot up cotyledon (2 seedleaves) stage with great care.
6. Water by immersion of pots in a weak solution of Seasol (or similar) once a fortnight.
7. Water with great care (preferably by hand) until seedlings are 3cm tall.
8. Keep seedlings in a protected spot in mottled or semi-shade.

DON'T...

- a. bother with seeds of unknown age
- b. separate seedlings that are too close together when you pot up, pot on the clump and separate later by cutting through the rootball with a sharp knife.
- c. overwater seedlings or they will rot
- d. use seed harvested before December - they seem to be infertile
- e. refrigerate seeds

I don't know how pollination works in *A. helianthi*. maybe the pollinator is not around in early spring. I have not seen insects other than hoppers on my potted plant near my window. Maybe it is pollinated in the night by moths? I have also been told to keep collecting seed of the miniature forms because after 3 generations the dwarf gene becomes dominant.

Margaret lives in Ocean Grove Victoria. Her climatic conditions would be completely different to people living in Queensland or the north coast of NSW. It would be great to have members conduct seed raising trials in different months and in different areas so we can put the results together.


I would also like to start a seedbank. Maria

Margaret Lee sent me this poster. I am sending a copy of the jpg with the newsletter.


GROWING

Product: Waratah 'Songlines'


STAGES OF OPENING




Stage 1
Immature stage,
unacceptable to markets




Stage 2
Prime stage for export and
domestic markets - 0-5% of
florets open (equivalent to no
more than 1 ring of florets open)




Stage 3
Acceptable stage for domestic
markets - 6-25% of florets
open (equivalent to 2 rings of
florets open)



Stage 4
Latest stage for domestic
markets - 26-50% of florets
open (equivalent to 3 or more
rings of florets open)



Stage 5
Overmature stage - 51-75%
of florets open: unacceptable by
many markets




Stage 6
Overmature stage - 76-100%
of florets open: unacceptable
by most markets

The stages shown apply to the product at market entry. The climate, season, mode and duration of transport must be considered because the flowers will continue to open during transport. You must consult with your target market to ensure the flowers arrive there at the desired stage.


COMMON DEFECTS

Common defects to be avoided at market entry:


- Bract browning
- Overmature blooms
- Shoot grow through
- Deformed or off type blooms
- Blooms damaged by insects, e.g. bud borer
- Poor quality foliage due to insect or mechanical damage or poor crop nutrition




Deformed bloom
- do not harvest




Shoot grow through




Thick stem, no bracts and
shoot grow through
- do not harvest




Curved stem
- do not harvest




Leaf damage
- mechanical injury




Overmature (wilting)
- do not market




Bract browning (note that
this is more prominent in
white varieties)




Scale insects
- disinfest before harvest




Bud borer - discard



Leaf miner insect damage



Insect chewed bracts and
poor quality foliage
- do not market



Nutrient deficiency
spilling leaf quality
- discard

Sample specification for Waratahs: These pages of the specification brochure show stages of maturity and common defects to be avoided at market entry. The format is repeated in each brochure.

Margaret Guenzel's dwarf Flannel Flower

PAGE 9

Hydroponic Flannel Flowers – The Lana Mitchell Story

by David Crawford

From APS East Hills Group Newsletter
May-June 2010



Hydroponic flannel flower production



Lana Mitchell with some of her plants

Lana Mitchell's efforts in raising awareness of the native flower industry, and in building her own enterprise, were recognised when she won the 2010 NSW Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) Rural Women's Award. The Gundaroo mother of two established a hydroponic native flower nursery five years ago, and now hopes her promotional efforts will help expand the Australian cut-flower industry. Returning from overseas Lana looked for a business opportunity, she was drawn to the horticulture industry and found demand lay in native flowers. Without any formal training, but with enthusiasm and drive she has built an innovative business and is actively involved in pro-

moting her industry. RIRDC had undertaken research on wildflowers and Lana used this to help map out her operation. Strong performance in field trials led her to a variety of flannel flowers (*Actinotus helianthi*) known as "white romance", which, she says, can withstand cold, and are easy to grow.

With two unheated greenhouses totalling 720 square metres and 1500 plants, the then 36-year-old started her business in 2005. The greenhouses helped protect the plants from harsh winters but Lana also wanted to try something new for the industry - hydroponics. Nobody had grown flannel flowers hydroponically, there were no books or trial results to guide the way. "I had to work it out and in the process I killed thousands of plants," she said. "I had a hard year. I just kept going back to people who grew flannel flowers and those who used hydroponics. I put it all together until I got a beautiful crop in 2006." Her persistence was based on the knowledge that hydroponics would provide everything a plant needs. "You can get superb growth," she said. Now about 4500 plants are being lovingly cultivated, with room for another 3000 or 4000.

Lana Mitchell is actively involved in the industry as: a grower, a board member of Wildflowers Australia, a member of RIRDC's Wildflowers and Native Plants Advisory Committee, a member of the New Rural Industries Australia Interim Management Committee and Editor of the "Australian Flower Industry" magazine, the quarterly trade magazine for the cut-flower industry in Australia, with a readership of over 3000.

Lana has instigated and implemented a number of projects to build the industry, including:

- a project to ensure Australian wildflowers are included on the TAFE floristry curriculums;
- a yearly national floristry competition to all Australian TAFEs and professional floristry schools; as well as
- a campaign to educate florists and consumers nationally on the availability and use of wildflowers
- organising national conferences and getting new people into the business of growing wildflowers commercially.

Lana's business is called Backcreek Country Enterprises and specialises in the propagation and cultivation of the Australian native Flannel flower (*Actinotus helianthi*) for the cut-flower industry both in Australia and abroad.