



Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants

ACACIA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER

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Contents	Page
From the Leader	1
Our Newsletter No. 100	2
Feature Plant - Acacia cognata	2
A Question re Staking	3
Aust Cultivars – What is a Cultivar	3
Letters from Members	4
A Few Wattle Blossom Fairies	7
Wattles and Bushfires	8
Wattle It Be – By Seed or Cuttings	8
Spring Extenders	10
Wattles and Women	10
Acacia ashbyae	11
Notes on Three Uses of Wattles:	
Ankylosing Spondylitis /A. myrtifolia	11
Wattle Bark for Tanning	11
Acacias in Floristry	11
Acacia farnesiana	12
Some Acacia reading – Muelleria	13
Wattle Grow	13
Welcome	13
Study Group Membership	13
Seed Bank	13

This is a good time to reflect on what has been achieved and where we want to go in the future. Please let me know your thoughts on this.

Still no good rain, not even in sight. My Acacia trees are strong and healthy, coping with ease, but the babies struggle to keep their heads up when we have a long run of 40 degree days. This extremely hot weather seems unusual for March especially when some trees are losing their leaves but without displaying beautiful autumn colours. Unfortunately, many don't know whether they are coming or going.

Our feature plant this month is the beautiful *Acacia cognata* and its spectacular cultivars. They are extremely versatile in the garden and one field that isn't used to the full is that of floristry. The foliage makes for beautiful arrangements (see picture on page 12). If they are in flower, that's a bonus!

Just a little reminder of the necessity of registering any new forms of plants that may come up for you – deliberate or accident. For example, new forms could be different colours, like the fabulous 'Scarlet Blaze'. If this happens get in contact with the right people immediately. (If you don't know whom to contact, let us know and we will get the details to you.)

We also need to be mindful of Plant Breeders Rights when propagating any of the cultivars that are on the market. Of course, there is no issue with plants that are propagated solely for the purpose of planting in one's own garden or sharing with friends. The problem begins if you wish to sell these without the proper Plant Breeders Rights, then you are breaking the law. Please be mindful of this and enjoy your propagating this season.

From The Leader

Dear Members,

Wow! This is our 100th newsletter, that is, since they began with the continuous numbering regardless of which leader.

Esther Brueggemeier

Our Newsletter No. 100 (and a request for help)

The Acacia Study Group was formed in 1961 and, except for some breaks, has operated since then. Although this Newsletter is shown as No. 100, it is effectively the 125th since the first 25 newsletters were unnumbered.

For the record, we have listed below the 9 Leaders of the Study Group in the 47 years since its formation.

Leader	Period of Leadership	Newsletters produced
Dr Allan C Keane	1961-1966	25 (unnumbered)
Robert Coveny	1968-1969	No. 1 – 4
Inez R Armitage	1971-1976	No. 5 – 23
John Arnold	1977	No. 24
Marion Simmons	1978-1991	No. 25 – 63
Bruce Clark	1991-1996	No. 64 – 78
Peter Reynolds	1998-1999	
Thais Eisen	2001- 2007	No 79 – 96
Esther Brueggemeier	2007 -	No 97 - 100

Unfortunately our Study Group archives only hold copies of Newsletters since No. 25 (ie the newsletters produced by Marion Simmons onwards). We would very much like to be able to include in the Archives copies of the earlier newsletters ie those produced by Allan Keane, Robert Coveny, Inez Armitage and John Arnold. If any member has copies of any of these early newsletters, we would be very happy to pay for the cost of copying them. Please advise Esther if you could help us.

Feature Plant – *Acacia cognata* (Bower Wattle, River Wattle)

Acacia cognata is by far my most favourite wattle. Besides its soft, gentle habit and luscious bright green foliage this species has a remarkable variety that has allowed plant breeders and developers to achieve some incredible results. Dotted with pale lemon yellow flowers from late winter to spring its popularity has grown and it is frequently cultivated in Victoria.

Acacia cognata, commonly known as the Bower wattle or sometimes River wattle, is a small to medium sized erect or pendulous tree that grows from 3 – 10 m high. Occurring naturally in south-eastern Australia on the coastal plains and foothills of the Great Divide from the Nowra district NSW, to near Orbost, Vic., it grows in moist gullies and on hillsides in lowland dry sclerophyll forest, also sandstone and granite-derived soils.

Being most closely related to *Acacia subporosa*, which has less pendulous branches and broader phyllodes, it has received its botanical name 'cognata' which is derived from cognate, being another word for related, kinship or connected by common origin.

The Bower wattle can tolerate rather heavy frost and drought once well established although it does prefer a little summer water. It is great for using as a screen or informal hedge and makes an excellent weeping willow substitute, of course without the problem of huge roots and cracked foundations. Unlike its second common name, 'river wattle', *Acacia cognata* doesn't like to stand in soggy soil for too long and should not be planted in a bog garden.



A. cognata, Photo by Esther Brueggemeier ©

The versatility of *Acacia cognata* can be seen in the many cultivars that have arrived on the market within only a few years. *Acacia cognata* 'River Cascade', 'Green Mist', 'Limelight', 'Bower Beauty', 'Mop Top', 'Copper Tips', 'Lime Magik', 'Waterfall', to mention just a few. The list is still growing as some cultivars are currently awaiting recognition from ACRA.

Acacia cognata varieties

The most beautiful forms of *Acacia cognata* varieties are the compact, dwarf and ornamental forms. They are particularly useful in the small home garden – a great contemporary look yet because of their lush appearance are both relaxing and refreshing.



A. cognata 'Bower Beauty', Photo by Esther Brueggemeier ©

They soften hard edges and most do well as container plants in entertainment areas. Visitors in my garden are constantly drawn to these beautiful shrubs and just want to stroke them again and again.

Acacia cognata 'River Cascade'

Bright green pendulous foliage with very dense growth, therefore, excellent hedging qualities. 75 cm – 1.5 m high.

Acacia cognata 'Green Mist'

Dark green pendulous foliage and quite bushy. Grows quite well in semi-shade. 80 cm – 1 m high.

Acacia cognata 'Limelight' and 'Bower Beauty'

'Limelight' - Bright lime green pendulous foliage and wonderfully compact. Loves full sun. Great for edging, en masse or containers. 50 cm high.

'Bower Beauty' – Foliage slightly broader and quite frost tolerant.



A. cognata 'Limelight', Photo by Esther Brueggemeier ©

Acacia cognata 'Mop Top'

Dark plum coloured pendulous foliage loves full sun but doesn't mind light shade. Low hedging, en masse or striking container plant. 60 cm – 90 cm high.

Acacia cognata 'Copper Tips'

Bright green pendulous foliage with deep copper red new growth. Excellent as small weeping tree or soft screen. 6 m – 8 m high.

Acacia cognata 'Lime Magik'

Bright lime green extremely pendulous foliage. Stunning feature plant or soft screen. 4 m – 5 m high.

Acacia cognata 'Waterfall'

Bright green cascading foliage. Excellent hanging over rock walls, beside waterfalls or tall containers. Full sun or light shade tolerating moderate frost. Hangs 2 m – 2.5 m long. A spectacular variety to hit the market soon.



A. cognata 'Waterfall', Photo by Bill Molyneux and Sue Forrester, Australfora ©

A Question re Staking

Esther recently received a question (from a non Study Group member) regarding *Acacia cognata* 'Copper Tips'. The question, and Esther's reply, are set out below:

“My wife planted two *Acacia cognata* 'Copper Tips' three months ago. One in the front lawn, the other in a rear garden bed. Both staked either side of the plants. They have each grown well, and always looked healthy. Today we removed the stakes to find both plants virtually falling to the ground.

Have we made them weak by staking them? And is there anything you would suggest that we do?

PS We live in the (Melbourne) bayside suburb of Frankston, with free draining sandy soil.”

Esther replied as follows:

“Thanks for your inquiry. No you haven't necessarily made them weak by staking them, depending on how they were

staked. 3 months is still a short time. Generally I stake mine from 6 months to a year.

I would suggest you stake them again only try using three stakes at about 10 - 15cm away from the trunk. A soft tie (like stocking) around the stakes is enough. This is more of a gentle guide instead of a rigid stake.

Plants need the movement from the wind to help build healthy, strong roots. (It's like exercise for them). Yes, the plants will still lean over onto the soft tie quite a bit, but in time they will find their own "feet" and straighten on their own. When this is the case, the stakes can be removed.

Since your soil is free draining and sandy, the danger is more that strong wind will blow your wattles clean out of the ground. A simple way to avoid this would be by placing a few heavy rocks around the base of the tree. In time, these can also be removed.

I hope this has been helpful and please let me know how they are going later on down the track."

Australian Cultivars – What is a Cultivar?

by Esther Brueggemeier

So with all this talk about cultivars, well, what the heck are we talking about? That's a good question but it's not quite as complicated as it may seem.

There was a smart cookie named L. H. Bailey back in 1923 who coined the name "cultivar". This simply being a shortened name for **cultivated varieties**. The name stuck.

According to the Australian Cultivar Registration Authority, "... by cultivated plants is meant plants raised in cultivation which *differ sufficiently from their wild ancestors* or, if taken into cultivation from the wild, are worthy enough of distinction from wild populations for horticultural purposes to merit special names."

In other words, a plant is specifically chosen because of its excellent garden qualities, whether that be, among other things, its great form, foliage or flower. These plants are also of a high quality that must stand out as different enough from their wild parents.

Cultivars must be maintained by the use of cuttings to produce stable, repeatable forms.

Plants that can be included as cultivars are:

- Hybrids – deliberate or accidental.
 - A hybrid is the result of crossing two plant species.

- Natural mutations – from the wild or home garden.
 - A plant's genetic component can change to such a degree, for instance, that it produces a *complete* new colour.
 - A 'sport' – A natural process where a branch or *single* flower grows differently from the rest of the plant.
- Variants from wild species – including wild hybrids

Horticultural breeding of Australian plants has developed some fabulous new garden plants and continues to do so.

Letters from Members

Our thanks to two of our Queensland members, Russell Cumming and Jan Sked for sharing with us their current thoughts and things they are doing with acacias. Russell has recently rejoined the Study Group after a period of absence – a special welcome back to you Russell.

From Russell Cumming, Townsville, Qld

Hello Esther

I would love to join the Acacia Study Group....or rejoin after many years' absence actually.

I am really keen to get the seed list and get into growing lots of species. Currently I'm growing a few. The following have recently germinated; *A. laccata*, *retivenea*, *umbellata* and *wiseana*. I've recently planted *coriacea*, *decora*, *leptoloba*, *leptostachya* and *simsii*. I've got a mature *mountfordiae*, a naturally occurring *bidwillii* and a weedy *farnesiana* on my recently acquired one acre property just out of Townsville. I've also got what appear to be seedlings of *flavescens* coming up in imported granite deco, and the close Acacia relative, *Neptunia gracilis* all over the property.

I want to grow Acacias from across northern Australia.

I bit about me: I'm principle botanist with the Queensland Herbarium, Environmental Protection Agency. Coming up nine years with the Herbarium and 20 years with EPA in Townsville.

In the late 70s and early 80s I explored southwest WA particularly concentrating on Acacias. I collected thousands of specimens, lots of which are in the WA Herbarium. I found over 100 species that were unnamed at the time, a

few of which were first records. Bruce Maslin was kind enough to recognise this voluntary work by naming a new species after me - *Acacia cummingiana*.

My botanical interests broadened when I moved to north Queensland. I started collecting every sort of vascular plant and developed an excellent knowledge across the board, from ferns and grasses to rainforest trees. I have submitted thousands of specimens to the Queensland Herbarium. I also became interested in ecology, fire, weeds, land-clearing and so on.

Twenty years ago I became very concerned about big-picture environmental issues - population growth, peak oil, climate change and sustainability - and have spent a great deal of effort on these things ever since.

A few years ago I became a manic birdo and I have now accrued thousands of bird records from around the country. And most recently I've become a general fauna enthusiast!

Cheers

Russell Cumming

From Jan Sked, Lawnton, Qld

Dear Esther

I have enjoyed your two Newsletters, and am very pleased that the Acacia Study Group is to continue to be a viable Study Group. I have always had a great fondness for wattles. As a child they were the first plants I tried to grow. However, not understanding the ways of seed raising, I planted the seeds pods and all. When they didn't germinate, my mother, who had the traditional European-style garden, said "Don't worry, darling, they are only bush plants and won't grow in gardens". Well, I gave up on wattles, but continued to bring home all sorts of other "bush" plants, and eventually my mother set aside a part of the garden for me to grow them in. Almost 60 years on, my bush garden is still in existence on my parent's (now my brother's) property.

After I married and we built a home in suburban Lawnton, just north of Brisbane in the Pine Rivers Shire, my thoughts immediately turned to gardening and I still had that urge to grow a wattle. We had a local nursery that specialised mainly in roses and fruit trees, so I asked the proprietor if he could find a wattle for me to grow in the garden. In those days there were no native plants in any nurseries around this area, so I do not know where he obtained the plant, but a couple of weeks later he said he had a wattle for me. It turned out to be *Acacia podalyriifolia* (Queensland Silver Wattle) and gave us joy for a number of years. It is certainly one of the most beautiful wattles we have in this

area, but is not particularly long-lived. Just recently, some 30 years since it passed out of existence, I have noticed a young Silver Wattle seedling coming up in the garden.

After I joined the Society for Growing Australian Plants, about 1969-70, I discovered a whole group of people who were growing all sorts of native plants. This expanded my horizons and I began initially to plant callistemons, melaleucas, hakeas, banksias, eucalypts, etc., eventually moving on to rainforest plants, which are my greatest love. However, I still retained a small part of the garden for woodland species, and here I was able to plant a few acacias under the eucalypts.

Over the years I have planted the following acacias:

A. bakeri, *A. bancroftiorum*, *A. brachycarpa*, *A. complanata*, *A. falcata*, *A. farnesiana*, *A. fimbriata*, *A. hispidula*, *A. holosericea*, *A. hubbardiana*, *A. irrorata*, *A. leiocalyx*, *A. macradenia*, *A. penninervis*, *A. quadrimarginea*, *A. simsii*, *A. suaveolens*, and of course *A. podalyriifolia*.

I have also grown many other species and passed them on to friends and to local environmental groups and to schools. I had intended to plant all the acacia species that occur in south-eastern Qld. on my son's acreage property. However, he sold it before I had the chance to begin the project, so I have given up on that idea.

Last year I put together a PowerPoint presentation on wattles to grow in the Moreton Region of S.E. Queensland. I thought you might like to have a copy, so I have copied it onto the enclosed CD. I have also designed a number of brochures that my SGAP Pine Rivers Branch uses for handouts when we put on various displays. During July, August and September we usually feature wattles and wattle blossom fairies. The wattle blossom fairies were originally created as a children's colouring book. Later I coloured in the drawings on my computer and laminated them for display. I am enclosing a couple of the "Wattles are Wonderful" brochures for your interest.

We have a large number of wattles that occur naturally in the Moreton Region of S.E. Queensland. Just here in the Pine Rivers Shire I have identified some 25 species that can be found:

A. baeuerlenii, *A. bakeri*, *A. cincinnata*, *A. complanata*, *A. concurrens*, *A. disparrima* ssp. *disparrima*, *A. falcata*, *A. fimbriata*, *A. hispidula*, *A. hubbardiana*, *A. implexa*, *A. irrorata* ssp. *irrorata*, *A. juncifolia*, *A. leiocalyx*, *A. leuoclada* ssp. *argentifolia*, *A. longissima*, *A. maidenii*, *A. melanoxylon*, *A. myrtifolia*, *A. oshanesii*, *A. penninervis*, *A. podalyriifolia*, *A. suaveolens*, *A. ulicifolia*, *A. viscidula*.

I guess our favourite local wattle would have to be *A. complanata*, which is relatively long-lived and can be found in the drier areas of the Shire. It responds well to regular

pruning, and flowers on and off all year round. I also have a fondness for *A. falcata* and *A. penninervis*, which both colonise any disturbed local areas very quickly. In the garden I don't know if they are particularly long-lived. I lost my first *A. penninervis* at four years of age when I cut it back hard because it was growing over the driveway. The second one self-seeded where the first one had been; so I still had to contend with its spreading over the driveway and adjacent footpath. However, I learned my lesson and now keep it in control with judicious and much gentler pruning. Recently a third one self-seeded on the footpath where I had once had a callistemon growing. I will have to keep it in control also to allow passing foot traffic unimpeded passage. *A. penninervis* seems to flower on and off all year round. It doesn't set a lot of seed at any one time, but the flowers are attractive and the foliage interesting.

A. holosericea, which is not a local wattle, as it comes from north Queensland and northern Australia, is another favourite. It has delightful large silvery velvety phyllodes and spikes of bright yellow blossoms. It grows very quickly and flowers within a year. Unfortunately, in my garden these plants only last about 3 to 4 years. However, as they grow and flower so quickly, it is simple to replace them.

A. macradenia is one of the most beautiful and easily grown wattles around here. Sadly it is now being looked on as an environmental weed in this area, as it does not occur naturally in the Moreton Region. It certainly does self-seed if planted near natural bushland, but in the garden it is just a joy to behold.

A. hubbardiana is a great little shrub for the birds, as its prickly foliage gives protection for the smaller ones. It is not very common here in the Pine Rivers Shire, but is found in the Glasshouse Mountains further north, and its range extends through the coastal areas from Brisbane to about Bundaberg. I have found it growing in wet road drains, in the sandy clay soils of our Wallum country, and also on the rocky slopes of the Glasshouse Mountains.

A. fimbriata, which we call Brisbane Wattle, is very common in the Pine Rivers Shire and it has been used extensively for revegetation and restoration of disturbed sites. It seems to be particularly popular with developers. This was the second wattle species I planted in my garden.

A. bancroftiorum (Bancroft's Wattle) is an interesting shrub that grows to 3 to 5 metres. I collected seed from this species on a trip to Blackdown Tableland, in central Queensland west of Rockhampton, many years ago. Its large phyllodes and bright yellow flowers make it an attractive specimen. In young plants the phyllodes can be huge!

Years ago, David Hockings (our native plant guru here in Qld.) told me of an interesting wattle that was to be found on sandstone in the Helidon Hills, west of Ipswich in S.E. Qld. It was *A. baeuerlenii*. This wattle is a slender upright

shrub with long narrow greyish-green phyllodes that are downy when young. It has very large creamy-white flower heads about 1cm across. It is apparently restricted to a few small areas in the Moreton Region of S.E. Qld. and in northern NSW, growing usually on sandstone. Some years later I found it growing in the Mt. Mee State Forest on the western edge of the Pine Rivers Shire. The heathland areas of the Mt. Mee State Forest have been relatively unexplored and untouched with practically no weed invasion. Many interesting and uncommon plants have been found here, and I am sure there are many more to be discovered. Botanists have only recently begun to explore this area.

Back in the early 1970s, my amateur botanising uncovered a large tree growing along a creek in an area of remnant bushland where the bellbirds sing all day long. This tree was *A. bakeri*, one of the few wattles that grow in rainforest. There are only four specimens in the whole creek remnant and they are very sparse to flower or set seed. Eventually, one tree produced seed and I was able to germinate them. I noticed that seed was not readily dispelled from the pods, but tended to be retained on the tree for quite some time. In a wet season the seeds were sometimes found to be germinating in the wet pods. Although this is a large tree in nature, in the garden I have found it slow growing and only reaching about 6 metres in 30 years. It is quite an attractive tree with cherry red new growing tips. Some years later, the Pine Rivers Shire Council named that particular area of bushland the Jan Sked Bushland Reserve. And the bellbirds are still holding court there despite the fact that the area is now surrounded by housing developments.

The foregoing rambling is just a selection of the wattles that will grow in my section of the country.

Keep up the good work and I look forward to the next Study Group Newsletter.

Regards
Jan Sked

Note: As noted by Jan in her letter, she has provided copies of her PowerPoint presentation on wattles to grow in the Moreton Region of S.E. Queensland, and of the "Wattles are Wonderful" brochure. If any Study Group member would like a copy of either of these, please advise Esther – they could be easily adapted for use in other areas of Australia, by using your own local area wattles rather than those of south east Queensland.

Some of Jan's wattle blossom fairies appear on the next page!

A FEW WATTLE BLOSSOM FAIRIES



Acacia complanata



Acacia macradenia



Acacia holosericea



Acacia julifera



Acacia suaveolens

Wattles and Bushfires

by Alan Gray, Hobart, Tasmania

Following the reference to wattles and bushfires in our previous newsletter, Alan Gray has written as follows:

I was interested in the little note regarding the flammability (or otherwise) of Acacias. I just thought I'd pass on the following as an addition to the story. We live on a 7ha. bush block c. 30km south of Hobart, in a pretty fire-prone locality and the risk of wildfires is always uppermost in our minds during summer, particularly as we lost our first home in the '67 disaster!

I was a member of the local volunteer fire brigade for some years and have seen quite a few bad fires during that time and as a botanist I was interested and careful to note and record the flammability characteristics of the bush in which we were working. A number of species of plants are clearly very hazardous, the top of the list being Eucalyptus (MYRTACEAE in general!). But some seemed to be useful fire "stoppers" and thus suitable options for planting or retention (at a safe perimeter) nearer residences etc.

Some of the naturally occurring Tasmanian wattles fall well within this category, some do not, e.g. *A verniciflua*. However, whereas I do not doubt that *A. mearnsii* is a relatively low to non-flammable species, *A. dealbata* is also a safe option, but that is not the only reason I planted a band (copse) of this species c. 30m away and to the NW of our house. During one rather nasty wildfire, some years ago, I observed a group of silver wattles right in the path of the fire which was being fanned by a stiff northerly wind. Embers and flaming bark 'arrows' were flying along in front of the fire but were being effectively stopped or impeded by the fairly dense wattle canopies, and falling to the ground → the crowns were not igniting but were acting as efficient ember stoppers!

"Touch wood" my silver wattle barrier has not yet been put to the test but they remain a delightful silvery grove of tall wattles that are a sheer delight in spring, and, I hope, a barrier of some effect should "that day" blow up.

Of the rather paltry list of wattles with which Tassie has been blessed, I would also recommend *A. melanoxylon*, *A. mucronata* (sens. lat.) and *A. terminalis*, as well as *A. mearnsii* for their fire retardant properties, among other reasons.

Wattle It Be? By Seed or Cuttings?

by Tracey Perrott, Cannons Creek, Vic

Propagation of Australian wattles is traditionally done from seed, which is perfect for growing a huge range of *Acacia* species. Unfortunately seed propagation is not effective for selected cultivar forms, as seed from these plants is not always produced, and will rarely grow true to the parent. The prostrate selection of *Acacia baileyana* is a great example of this, as some years it will set quite large amounts of seed, yet the resultant seedlings are usually upright and quite variable. This is where propagation needs to be by asexual means, such as cuttings, to maintain good selections with desirable flower and foliage colour, or growth habit.

Growing Acacias by cuttings is not hugely difficult if you have good material, and there are many species and forms that can be grown fairly easily in this way. There are basic growing conditions that will make the job easier, although some experimentation will be needed to find the best method that works for you. Selection of cutting type, rooting hormone, hygiene, and date of taking cuttings, are other factors that may influence success or failure.

The main limiting factor is provision of ideal cutting material. By far the most consistent results are achieved from using container grown stock. This material tends to be less stressed, contains higher levels of plant nutrients and sugars; and is therefore able to sustain itself as a cutting much longer. By using healthy vigorous material, the cutting will have an extended life-span to survive until it is able to root and sustain itself. *Acacia* 'Austraflora Cascade' will strike reasonably well from cuttings off fresh young pots, yet cuttings from garden grown plants may have a very high failure rate, and tend to drop all or most of its foliage. The best material to use is fresh new growth that has just hardened off, with the stem still quite green and flexible. You can of course use garden grown material, but to maximise results you need to provide additional fertiliser and water so that it is growing very strongly. Keep in mind that new growth on larger plants that have not been recently pruned, (whether in ground or in pots), will be less successful than the fresh growth following a hard prune. Use of more juvenile material will always produce better results, and good success can be obtained with shoots cut off fresh tubes.

The cutting environment can vary depending on your region and the location of your propagation area. The ideal growing conditions include provision of misting, which is critical in the warmer weather, particularly with *Acacia cognata* varieties. However in cooler periods, it is helpful to be able to switch off the misting system. Rooting is enhanced with use of bottom heat, although this should not

be above 20 degrees Celsius. Your propagation area should have medium light intensity, not located in full sun, nor completely heavy shade. Success is possible without the use of bottom heat and misting, but rooting will take longer, and cutting stress is more likely. The propagation mix used with good success with most *Acacia* varieties consists of 10 parts propagating sand, 6 parts perlite, and 1 part peat.

Overall, good results are obtained using tip, stem, and heel cuttings of young material. Wounding can be beneficial, and some species respond well to foliage cutting to reduce evaporation, although others may react by dropping their leaves. If the tips are very soft, they are better removed to prevent leaf scorching. A well known wattle is *Acacia* ‘Scarlet Blaze’, which must be grown by cuttings to maintain the stunning red wattle flowers. During propagation trials, this plant was found to strike well from very young soft material taken from igloo grown stock. The shoots have barely hardened off, and the long leaves are not cut back. Use of garden material can have a very high percentage of losses.

Most Acacias will strike well with the use of IBA hormone rooting powder, at the strength of 1000 ppm, or 3000 ppm, for more mature new growth. Preliminary trials show some success with the use of IBA and NAA (1000/500 ppm) hormone combination rooting powder, and also with dipping in liquid hormones, at the medium softwood rate of

15mls/litre. There is some indication that rooting would occur without the use of hormones, although the percentage struck is usually much lower. Acacias with grey or hairy foliage are better treated with 1000 ppm IBA powder, and not kept for long periods under mist.

The best time to take *Acacia* cuttings is when the material is really good, usually in late summer and early autumn. Most species can be propagated in January, February and March (under mist) with good results. Basic hygiene of using clean material and equipment, adequate cutting spacing in propagating pots/trays to maximise ventilation, and use of a fungicide post propagation time is beneficial.

Propagation of Acacias is not highly technical. With the right material you can achieve good results with a wide range of garden cultivars. The following table lists some of the plants I have had most experience with. I hope this information encourages people to have a go at this wonderfully diverse group of plants.

Note: Tracey Perrott has been an APS member for over 15 years. For a number of years she has worked for a large nursery where she has had considerable experience in propagating acacias, especially from cuttings but also from seed. In her own garden she has a particular interest in using acacias in a more formal way, and also as bonsai.

Plant Name:	Type of cuttings	Hormones	Difficulty	Other Comments
<i>Acacia acinacea</i>	Stem, tip, heels	IBA 1000ppm	Medium	Use bottom heat, medium light intensity.
<i>Acacia</i> ‘Austraflora Cascade’	Stem and tips best	IBA 1000ppm , IBA & NAA powder 1000/500, liquid hormones	Medium	Best using young pot material
<i>Acacia baileyana</i> prostrate	Stem and tips best	IBA 1000ppm	Medium	Need vigorous juvenile growth following pruning. IBA 3000 can be too strong.
<i>Acacia cognata</i> selections	Stem and tips best	IBA 1000ppm	Medium to difficult	Use firmer new growth rather than soft shoots
<i>Acacia glaucophylla</i>	Tip and stems best	IBA 1000ppm	Medium	Don’t use very soft shoots
<i>Acacia guinetii</i>	Stem cuttings best	IBA 1000ppm	Easy	Not too much mist
<i>Acacia floribunda</i> ‘Abundance’	Stem and tips best	IBA 1000ppm	Easy to Medium	Use firmer new growth rather than soft shoots
<i>Acacia pravissima</i> ‘Little Nugget’	Stem and tips best, or short heel tip combo.	IBA 1000ppm or 3000	Medium	Use IBA 3000 on firmer new growth. Select only healthy foliage shoots
<i>Acacia</i> ‘Mop Top’	Stem and tips best	? 1000ppm	Very Difficult	Cut as you go, do not store material before use.
<i>Acacia sigma</i> ‘Weeping Wattle’	Stem and tips best	IBA 1000ppm	Easy to Medium	Seed very variable.
<i>Acacia</i> ‘Scarlet Blaze’	Stem and tips best	IBA 1000ppm or 3000	Easy to Difficult!	Use material grown in igloo, 3000 for firmer new growth. Remove very soft tips

Spring Extenders

by Warren and Gloria Sheather, Armidale, NSW

Over the years we have steadily increased the number of wattles growing in our garden. We have been pleasantly surprised at the number that flower out of the normal spring period. We call these wattles “spring extenders” because they bring that spring feeling to the garden throughout the year.

Acacia deanei is a tall shrub with light green bipinnate foliage. For many months of the year the plants produce pale yellow flowers in globular heads. The blooms provide a contrast with the foliage. *Acacia deanei* is a handsome plant and was named after Henry Deane a railway engineer/botanist.

Acacia implexa, the Hickory Wattle, will develop into a tall shrub or small tree. The phyllodes are sickle-shaped. In summer plants become covered masses of cream, globular flower heads. The summer flowering extends for many months.

Acacia implexa occurs naturally on our property, Yallaroo. The property was heavily grazed before our purchase. After the removal of stock, over ten years ago, *Acacia implexa* has regenerated in large numbers. Hickory Wattle has dense timber and makes excellent firewood.

Acacia oshanesii is another species with bipinnate foliage. Our specimen is about five metres high by at least three metres wide. In early summer plants carry sprays of highly perfumed flowers. The scent permeates the garden.

Acacia parramattensis, as the name implies, is a Sydney native. Light green bipinnate foliage characterises this tall shrub or small tree. From mid-December onwards plants produce profuse clusters of yellow flowers. *Acacia parramattensis* also suckers. Our two plants, over two years or so, have developed into a dense grove of colourful wattles. Young plants often play host to Common Imperial Blue Butterfly caterpillars. They are guarded by regiments of small black ants. The caterpillars probably exude nectar that rewards the ants for their protection.

Finally we should mention a plant that we bought as *Acacia uncinata*. Unfortunately the botanists have rent this species asunder and now *Acacia uncinata* has become about six species. After exhaustive research we are fairly sure that our plant is *Acacia piligera*. Our specimen is a compact shrub about one metre tall. The phyllodes are grey-green and almost oval. Individual golden flower heads are held on one centimetre long peduncles at the base of each phyllode. The peduncles are long enough to hold the flowers above

the foliage. The plant began to flower in early December 2007 and in January 2008 is still carrying buds and flowers.

Acacia piligera is a beautiful shrub with attractive growth habit, foliage and flowers. Cuttings have been taken.

Wattles and Women

by Warren and Gloria Sheather, Armidale, NSW

Note: This article was originally published in the NSW APS Newsletter in October 2007.

On a recent Australia all Over radio programme Ian McNamara, during a segment on wattles, mentioned Joseph Maiden who was so interested in the genus that he named his daughter *Acacia Dorothy Maiden*. Maiden, who was Director of Sydney Botanic Gardens, then named *Acacia dorothea* after his daughter.

This started a train of thought about women and wattles. A search through Terry Tame’s book *Acacias of Southeast Australia* found seven species named after women. No doubt there are others.

Three were named after women who were early members of the Wattle Day League. These are: *Acacia clunies-rossiae* named after Mrs. Clunies-Ross, *Acacia kettlewelliae* named after Agnes Kettlewell and *Acacia mabellae* named after Mabel Cabbage the daughter of Richard Cabbage the collector of the type specimen. He was a surveyor, botanist and plant collector.

Acacia flocktoniae commemorates Margaret Flockton who was Joseph Maiden’s botanical artist. *Olearia flocktoniae* was also named after Margaret. This rare Daisy Bush comes from the Dorrigo area.

Much more recently we have *Acacia caroleae* named in honour of Les Pedley’s wife Carol. Les is a botanist at the Brisbane Herbarium.

Acacia tindaleae honours Mary Tindale a botanist at the Sydney Herbarium. The type specimen was collected and named by Les Pedley.

Finally there is Maria Hitchcock a Life Member of the APS. Maria was instrumental in having the first of September officially gazetted as Wattle Day, the acceptance of *Acacia pycnantha* as our floral emblem and is the author of the Wattle book. Maria also successfully marshalled opposition to the proposed name change from *Acacia* to *Racosperma*.

All in all many women have contributed to our knowledge and interest in this colourful genus.

Acacia ashbyae

by Warren and Gloria Sheather, Armidale, NSW

Acacia ashbyae is a Western Australian native and is a spreading, round shrub with a maximum height and spread of two metres. The phyllodes are long and narrow. Flowers are globular, about one centimetre across, bright yellow and appear in spring.

Some years ago we planted an *Acacia ashbyae*. The plant survived for a few years then expired before flowering. Fortunately we took cuttings before the plant died. The cuttings took root rapidly. We are now up to the third generation from the original plant and specimens are scattered throughout the garden.

Acacia ashbyae is an ornamental wattle. We are eagerly waiting for our plants to flower. The species is named after Miss A. M. Ashby, a C20th collector and botanical artist. This wattle is another candidate for “Women and Wattles” (see article above).

Notes on Three Uses of Wattles

(1) Ankylosing Spondylitis and *Acacia myrtifolia*

by David Pye, Bullengarook, Vic

Several years ago, our APS group was approached by a person (David) who was seeking a plant he knew as “Tasmanian Native Hop”. David suffers Ankylosing Spondylitis (AS), a chronic, painful, degenerative inflammatory arthritis primarily affecting spine and sacroiliac joints, causing eventual fusion of the spine. He had been told of the plant by an old Tasmanian bushman who used it to relieve his own arthritis, and claimed that aborigines used the plant for the same purpose. David found that eating a powder made from the plant gave some relief from his AS symptoms. He dried the leaves, crushed them in a mortar and pestle, and sprinkled the powder on his toast.

On trying to identify the plant, *Daviesia latifolia* (Hop Bitter pea) and *Acacia stricta* (Hop Wattle) were ruled out. The plant had also been found growing in the Dandenongs and had been used for some years, with good effect. Some dried material was given to us, and fortunately, it had been collected at flowering time. It resembled *Acacia myrtifolia*,

and David’s description of the plant was also consistent with *Acacia myrtifolia*. On searching the literature, a single report was found that *A. myrtifolia* had been used as a hop substitute for brewing beer. *A. myrtifolia* foliage from our garden was tested by David and found to be effective. Does anyone know of the use of wattles for treating arthritis or other inflammatory diseases? I understand that there has been some work done at the Australian Centre for Complementary Medicine (University of Queensland).

(2) Wattle Bark for tanning

by Bill Aitchison

I was recently reading a book *What a Journey – Life in the Victorian Railways 1948-1987*, by Thomas E Yeats, in which the author recalls his experiences over a lifetime working in the Victorian Railways.

In the chapter covering the period 1952-1953, he recalls doing the Station Master’s Examination and how tricky some of the questions were. One question he still remembers was:

“If a person wished to strip bark from wattle trees on railway property, under which section in the railway accounting system would the revenue derived be dealt with?”

He then comments that “wattle bark was used in the tanning of animal hides, and railway reserves were a good source of this material”, and that the answer to the question was that “an ordinary sale would come under sundry debits, but wattle bark was the exception, it had to be treated as a rental debit.”

(3) Acacias in Floristry

by Bill Aitchison

Although Esther is too modest to talk about it, one of our Study Group Leader’s many talents relates to floral art.

The following photo is of one of her recent arrangements, featuring banksias, beaufortias, Gynea leaves and foliage of *Acacia cognata* 'River Cascade' (lots of it).



Sadly, it does seem that acacias, and native plants in general, are much underutilized by the florist trade (at least based on what seems to be the situation in Melbourne).

Acacia farnesiana

by Bill Aitchison

Acacia farnesiana, commonly called mimosa bush, is widespread throughout much of the Australian outback, occurring in all mainland states except Victoria.



In the past there have been differing classifications of it as being either native or introduced - its classification as native by some botanists reflecting its presence in Australia well before European settlement in 1788.

A recent paper by A Bean (2007) rejects the use of the 1788 date for the purpose of classifying plants as native or introduced, and presents a system of assessment using a combination of ecological, phytogeographical and historical criteria.

The paper then presents case studies covering 40 species of disputed origin status, assessing data for each species against the assessment criteria, and makes a recommendation in relation to its status in Australia. One of the species presented as a case study is *A. farnesiana*, and the recommended status for Australia is that it be taken as an alien plant.

In another recent paper, Dr HariPriya Rangan and Dr Christian Kull, from the School of Geography and Environmental Science at Monash University, explore "the enigma behind the widespread presence of *A. farnesiana* in the Outback landscape of Australia." The enigma is that the plant is not considered native to Australia, having its origins in Central America and the Caribbean, but that the plant arrived here well before Captain Cook in 1770.

The paper explores how the plant may have arrived in Australia and spread across the Outback. It considers the possible role of early navigators from the 15th century onwards, and presents a number of ways in which the plant may have arrived in Australia.

It also addresses the question of how the plant has spread so widely across the interior of the continent. It notes that some indigenous groups may have played a role in its inland diffusion (valuing the seeds for their protein). However, more significantly, the authors explore the role of camels in the spread of the plant - and note the "remarkable overlap" between the distribution of *A. farnesiana* and centres of Afghan camel activity and transport routes.

This paper provides a highly readable and fascinating insight into the origins behind the widespread presence of *A. farnesiana* in Australia and challenges any traditional thinking that Australian history only commenced with European settlement in 1788.

The paper is to appear in a volume titled "Human Ocean: Indian Ocean Cultural Studies" (eds. S. Moorthy and A. Jamal), hopefully to be published later this year. However, if any Study Group member would like a copy of the paper, the authors would be happy to provide one - please contact them directly (email either hariPriya.rangan@arts.monash.edu or christian.kull@arts.monash.edu).

References:

Bean, A 2007. A new system for determining which plant species are indigenous in Australia. *Australian Systematic Botany*, 20: 1-43

Rangan, H and Kull, C 2007. The Indian Ocean and the making of Outback Australia: An ecocultural odyssey. (Paper presented at Indian Ocean World conference held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 11-12 August 2007)

Acacia Reading - Muelleria – Acacia Special Issue

A special edition of *Muelleria* was published in January 2008, containing 9 Acacia papers plus a short introduction. Eight of these papers were presented at the Acacia 2006 Conference held in Melbourne in August 2006. The ninth paper, by Bill Molyneux and Sue Forrester, describes three new Acacia species from East Gippsland, Victoria (being *Acacia infecunda*, *A. nanopravissima* and *A. tabula*).

The Acacia Study Group has received a copy of this special issue of *Muelleria*, and for this we extend our thanks to Dr Dan Murphy and the RBG Melbourne.

Wattle Grow

Following the reference to Wattle Grow in our previous newsletter (December 2007), a group of 7 people recently shared in the purchase of a 15kg bag of this granular inoculant (being 4 Study Group members and 3 other APS members). Hopefully we may get some future feedback from these people in relation to their experiences in using the product.

It is possible that in future we may arrange another similar purchase. If you think you may have an interest in joining in such a purchase, please register your interest with Esther or Bill. Our recent purchase worked out at \$9.25 per kg.

Welcome

A special welcome to the following new members and subscribers to the Newsletter:

Judy Barker, Hawthorn East, Vic
Russell Cumming, Townsville, Qld
John Thompson, Hampton, Vic

Study Group Membership

Acacia Study Group membership for 2007/08 is as shown below

The annual membership fee is as follows:

\$5 (newsletter sent by email)

\$8 (hardcopy of newsletter posted in Australia)

\$12 (hardcopy of newsletter posted overseas)

Subscriptions may be sent to:

ASGAP Acacia Study Group Leader

Esther Brueggemeier

28 Staton Crescent

Westlake, Victoria 3337

Subscriptions may also be paid directly to our Account at the Bendigo Bank. Account details are:

Account Name: ASGAP Acacia Study Group

BSB: 633-000

Account Number: 130786973

If you pay directly to the Bank Account, please advise Esther by email (wildaboutwattle@iprimus.com.au)

Seed Bank

A listing of our Seed Bank was included in Newsletter 98 (September 2007).

We have had a request for seed of *Acacia minyura*– is anyone able to help with seed of this species?