



Australian Native Plants Society (Australia) Inc.

# ACACIA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER

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Contents	Page
<b>From the Leader</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Welcome</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>From Members and Readers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Acacias in Costa Rica</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Acacia terminalis</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>A Celebration of Wattle</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Arthur Court 1927 - 2012</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Northern Tablelands Field Trip</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Prostrate Acacia pycnantha</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Acacia baileyana and a water tank</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Overseas threat to Australian wattles</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Acacia mearnsii and Fireblight Beetles</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>New Acacia Species</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Some Acacia Reading</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Seed Bank</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Study Group Membership</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Balance Sheet</b>	<b>10</b>

Whilst mentioning Wattle Day, Maria Hitchcock's new book, *A Celebration of Wattle*, was launched in Canberra on Wattle Day (see page 4). Congratulations to Maria for producing such a brilliant book.

From a Study Group point of view, the highlight of the last few months was our Field Trip to the Northern Tablelands in NSW. Over the weekend, we identified 51 species of Acacia. Our thanks go to John Nevin for the enormous amount of work that he put into making the weekend such a success. A report from Lee Esdaile on the weekend is included on page 4.

Following the weekend, I spoke at the APS Armidale Group's monthly meeting, and since then I have also presented at APS meetings at Warracknabeal and Blackburn in Victoria. One matter that seems to be consistently raised at these meetings is that there are a number of smaller Acacias that deserve to be grown more as garden specimens, but are not commonly available in nurseries. Remember that our Group has a Seed Bank, and you may wish to try propagating some of these desirable smaller varieties from seed from the Seed Bank.

In relation to the Seed Bank, Esther Brueggemeier has been the Curator of our Seed Bank since 2007, and we are very indebted to Esther for all the work that she has put into this role. Esther has, however, come to the decision that it is now time for her to relinquish this responsibility – her work, family and other responsibilities must understandably take priority. On behalf of all members of the Study Group, thanks Esther for all the valuable work you have done.

As we say thanks to Esther, I am delighted to be able to advise that the Seed Bank is moving to Canberra, where it will be the responsibility of Victoria Tanner. Thanks to Victoria for accepting this position. Note that there are

## From The Leader

Dear Members

Down here in Victoria, the last few months have been a great flowering season for Acacias, I think even better than normal. In my own garden, I counted the number of varieties in flower on Wattle Day (1 September), and recorded 32 – although we always have at least a couple in flower at any time of the year.

some changes to the manner in which we ask you to submit your seed requests, and these are explained on page 9.

Thank you to all those members who have paid their subscriptions for the 2012/13 year. If you have not already attended to this, could you please do so as soon as possible. Note that on 9 July, someone made a direct deposit of \$10 to our Bank Account, but on our Bank Statement the entry was only recorded as Deposit – Cash, with no identification as to who made the deposit. If you believe that this was your payment, could you please let me know? Note that our financial statement for the year to 30 June is included on page 10.

Cheers  
Bill Aitchison

## Welcome

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

Maria Hitchcock, Armidale, NSW  
Joanna McLachlan, Bathurst, NSW  
Steve Munn, Barkers Creek, Vic  
Royce and Jeanne Raleigh, Wartook, Vic  
Martin Rigg and Diana Leggat, Yackandandah, Vic  
Marj Seaton, Oakleigh South, Vic  
Shirley Young, South Yarra, Vic  
Menai Wildflower Group, NSW

We recently learned of the death of one of our Study Group members, Sue Bradford, from Caboolture, Qld. Our sympathy goes to Sue's family.

## From Members and Readers

**Martin Rigg and Diana Leggat** (Yackandandah, Vic) are two of our newest members of the Study Group. They recently opened their garden for the first time this season, to 10 people from one of the local garden clubs, some of whom were knowledgeable about Australian plants including wattles. They have made some interesting observations regarding the open garden:

“The foliage diversity (of Acacias) is always a good conversation starter as there is plenty to choose from.

As new eyes wander through the Garden, they see objects and plants that we as owners forget for some time eg *Acacia alata* just coming into flower, in a shaded background site under she-oaks and ironbarks.”

Martin and Diana also refer to the Acacias in the local bush and in their garden:

“Our local area has the usual mix of common Acacias which make the bush more beautiful at present, as I ride through the trails on my mountain bike this afternoon ie *A. dealbata*, *A. melanoxylon*, *A. pravissima* and *A. rubida*.

We have a small area of remnant grassy/shrubby woodland, 1ha, which includes local and regional Acacias to fill the understorey eg *A. dealbata*, *A. acinacea*, *A. pycnantha*, *A. genistifolia*, *A. verniciflua*, *A. buxifolia*, *A. aspera*, *A. dawsonii*, *A. paradoxa*, *A. phasmoides*, *A. triptera* and *A. melanoxylon*. This area is a wild and pleasant contrast to our display garden area, which often means work and planting etc.

A young *Acacia buxifolia* (1.5m x 1.5m) is fabulous now with *Hardenbergia violacea* in flower scrambling up through the foliage and flowers.

We have 10 or more new locations in the NE Victoria area where we live and continue to search new areas including Acacias.”

Martin and Diana have a specific question in relation to *Acacia merinthophora* and are hoping Study Group members may be able to help them. They have been trying to propagate this species from seed but have found successful germination very difficult to achieve. They are hoping someone may know the secret. Can someone help?

\*\*\*\*\*

**Don Perrin** (Redcliffe, Qld) writes (28 Aug 2012): “I find my admiration of wattle flowers is increasing year by year. *A. brunioides* is the kind of smallish wattle we should be presenting to the public. It has flowered for about 3 months and is continually attractive. *A. decora* is great here just now.”

\*\*\*\*\*

**Margaret Lee** (SA) writes: “Many thanks for the newsletter - always a great read. It has inspired me to try some more small acacias, as Royce suggests.

Last spring I planted seeds of *A. melanoxylon* and *A. pinguifolia*. The packets were labelled 1983, so I thought germination might be a bit patchy. However, I think every one must have come up. It's amazing how long seed lasts.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Our Newsletter No. 110 (September 2010) included a photo of an *Acacia tetragonophylla* with part red flowers (taken near Coober Pedy by Phil Hempel). **Bruce Clark** (Panmure, Vic) advises that he recently visited the Desert Park at Alice Springs, and there he noticed two flower balls on an *Acacia nyssophylla* that had red spots on them. Because time was pressing, he only got a somewhat out of focus photo, but the photo does bear a close resemblance to

Phil Hempel's photo (the photo is a bit blurred to reproduce in the Newsletter). So it appears that part red flowers can occur with both *A. tetragonophylla* and *A. nyssophylla*.

\*\*\*\*\*

In our previous Newsletter (No. 117, June 2012) we included articles on Acacias growing in Costa Rica and also *Acacia terminalis*. Both of these articles drew a number of comments from members and these are included below.

## Acacias in Costa Rica

**Jeff Irons** (UK) commented as follows: "Could it be that flower bud initiation is controlled by temperature and flowering by day length? If so the day length in Costa Rica could be always too short for flowering of some species, particularly spring flowering ones."

**Phil Hempel** (Diamond Creek, Vic) commented as follows: "My rule of thumb is that native plants from the tropical humid areas of Australia will not grow in areas where the temperature drops below 10 degrees. I would guess that plants that grow well in dry summers and wet winter areas where the temperature often drops below 10 degrees will not survive in the humid environment of tropical Australia.

I see that most of the Acacias that Eraldo is growing and that do not flower come from southern Australia or the ranges around the NSW/Qld border with dry summers and cold wet winters. However for this to be true, all tropical species should flower but *A. auriculiformis* is listed as not flowering and it should flower as it comes from the same environment as *A. holosericea* and *A. subulata*. *A. deanii* does flower and for this theory to be correct it should behave as do the other southern species.

The problem does not seem to have a correlation between location, climate, flower or leaf type, subgenus and section. The only suggestion left from me is it is a mite or fungal problem. Eraldo states that he has had a close look at the buds and cannot see anything there, however if it is a fungal problem then the spores can only be seen by using a microscope. Mites can be seen with an eye piece but very difficult to see with the naked eye. The fungal pathogen *Uredo rangelii* (Myrtle Rust) comes from Central and South America, Costa Rica is in this area, it would be an idea to have the plants checked just in case it is another fungal disease."

**Marion Simmons** (Tas) writes: "Just a comment on Acacias not flowering when you think they should or would. We were growing *A. macradenia* here for many years and it never looked like flowering at any time. I always thought that the reason was probably that it was out of its 'comfort zone' (too far south)."

## Acacia terminalis

The following comments were received following Victoria Tanner's article on *Acacia terminalis* in the last newsletter.

**Jeff Irons** (UK) commented: "In the June 2012 newsletter it is stated that *A. terminalis* seeds may be germinated with "the usual hot water treatment." In Langkamps's book "The Germination of Australian Native Plant Seed" *A. suaveolens* and *A. terminalis* are listed as species that should be treated with water below 80C because boiling water will kill their embryos."

**Marion Simmons** (Tas) commented: "The article on *A. terminalis* has inspired me to look more closely at the species over here which is very widespread. I do realise that only ssp. *angustifolia* does occur in Tasmania but you never know, do you?"

**John Boevink** (Tas) commented: "A modest addition to comments on *A. terminalis*: we have 2, one yellow, one white-cream. We find the flowers last incredibly long. Unlike *A. retinodes* which just forms enormously many flowers and so is "always" in flower here (Central North Tas). Wildlife eats (and thereby kills) *A. terminalis*, when it is small."

**Dan Murphy** recalled some research carried out in the 1980s on pollination of *A. terminalis*, and I followed up the paper that he was referring to. This research showed that whereas most Acacias are insect pollinated, *A. terminalis* has particular adaptations that result in it being primarily bird pollinated. In particular, it has large red extra floral nectaries that almost exclusively secrete nectar at the time of flowering. The colour red is visible to birds but not to some insects. Also the nectar secretions reflect sugar concentrations that are normally associated with bird nectars. Flowering also occurs in autumn, a time of year when, for example, pollinating bees are less active.

**Reference:** Knox, R. B., Kenrick, J., Bernhardt, P., Marginson, R., Beresford, G., Baker, I., and Baker, H. G. 1985. Extrafloral Nectaries as Adaptations for Bird Pollination in *Acacia terminalis*. American Journal of Botany, Vol. 72, No. 8 pp. 1185-1196.

**Victoria Tanner** has also provided a 2003 reference that she found on an ABC Science program, which commented as follows:

"With their tough, water-saving leaves, wattles have adapted well to the mainly dry Australian conditions. But they also have something else: a supercharged evolutionary system which enables them to evolve quite rapidly into new species.

Whereas many plants are stable over time, wattles are diversifying before our eyes. Take the sunshine wattle, *A. terminalis*, for example. This wiry shrub, one of the rare

wattles which flowers in late summer, grows across the NSW coast and ranges, and also in Victoria and Tasmania. This species has been causing some taxonomists to tear out their hair in frustration. Once thought to be a single species, *A. terminalis* has now been found in so many slightly different forms that taxonomists suspect this group is in the process of speciation.

Given time, and if a barrier to interbreeding were ever established - such as a large area of cleared land - some members of the *A terminalis* group may become a new species".

<http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2003/07/03/2578547.htm>

## A Celebration of Wattle

Congratulations to Maria Hitchcock on the launch of her new book, A Celebration of Wattle.



Maria Hitchcock and the Honourable Peter Garrett, Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth at the launch of Maria's new book 'A Celebration of Wattle' at the Australian National Botanic Gardens on Saturday, September 1. Minister Garrett launched the book at the highly successful event. The book is now available at most bookshops or from the author at an attractive price of \$29.95.

**Photo: Anna Hitchcock**

## Arthur Court 1927-2012

We recently learned of the death of Arthur Court on 18 May 2012. Arthur was born in Melbourne on 25 December 1927 and for many years from 1957 was a botanist with the National Herbarium, Melbourne. He later transferred to the Canberra Botanic Gardens and Herbarium where he was Officer-in Charge of the Herbarium. He had a special interest in Acacias and was one of the contributors to the Flora of Australia volumes on Acacia. He described a number of species of Acacia. His botanical interests continued after his retirement, with an ongoing interest in Acacias. He also had an interest in larger trees and also travelled to China on a few occasions and had an interest in plants there.

**Acknowledgement:** Some of the above information was obtained from Botanists of Australian Acacias, by Normal Hall (CSIRO), and some from Alan Gibb.

## Northern Tablelands Field Trip

by Lee Esdaile, Hallsville, NSW

The field trip held over the weekend of August 18/19 was a great success. Participants were Bill Aitchison, Alan Gibb and Ray Purches from Victoria, Allan and Dianne Carr from Queensland, Victoria Tanner from Canberra, John and Barbara Nevin, Maria Hitchcock and Penelope Sinclair (plus Patrick Laher and Suzanne Robertson on Saturday only) from Armidale, and Peter and Lee Esdaile from Tamworth, and ranged from experts on the genus (most) to enthusiastic amateurs (Peter and I).



Field Trip participants

Photo: Penelope Sinclair

The preparation for this trip had been outstanding. I can't imagine how many kilometres John and Patrick must have travelled to find the various species (apparently on one trip they had an encounter with a feral pig – happily not repeated on our weekend!). John had compiled an extensive

collection of reference material for each of us including a detailed description of each of the 77 species to be found on the Northern Tablelands which he variously distributed over both the Friday and Saturday nights, as well as an itinerary for each day. On the Friday night after dinner we had a briefing from John, then Maria talked about her new book "A Celebration of Wattle".

Saturday's schedule covered the Torrington State Conservation Area, and luckily the predicted forecast of minus 4 to 11 degrees with strong winds didn't eventuate. We travelled over the eastern side in the morning then the western side as far as Emmaville in the afternoon. Early in the day we got as far north as Bolivia Hill, where we had to scramble up an embankment then down an almost vertical drop into a railway cutting. (At this point I was beginning to wonder what we'd got ourselves in for, but luckily most subsequent forays didn't require such exertion). Wattles we saw that day were (alphabetically) *A. betchei*, *binervata*, *brownii*, *burbidgeae*, *buxifolia*, *dawsonii*, *dealbata*, *filicifolia*, *fimbriata*, *granitica*, *implexa*, *latisepala*, *longifolia*, *macnuttiana*, *montana*, *pruinosa*, *pubifolia*, *pyncostachya*, *rubida*, *torringtonensis*, *ulicifolia*, *venulosa*, *viscidula* and *williamsiana*, plus clouds of *neriifolia* across the hills. *A. betchei* was interesting - it wasn't in flower but its foliage turns reddish in winter as a form of antifreeze. For me the standout was *A. pruinosa* (photo below - really spectacular and one I'll definitely be planting). Of the many other non-acacias we saw I thought the *Banksia neoanglica* (previously *B. spinulosa* var. *neoanglica*) which grows to about one metre in height and has a lovely russet-coloured flower with incredibly shiny black (and more rarely gold) styles was also outstanding. I'm surprised it hasn't been commercialised.



*Acacia pruinosa*

Photo: Peter Esdaile

On the Sunday we headed east towards the Gibraltar Range National Park. Once again we had been given detailed instructions from John as to the various stops, however quite often we'd be looking at something to the side of the road and would look up just in time to see the convoy screeching to a halt a few metres in front of us! We went as far as Mulligan's Hut in the afternoon where John gave a demonstration of using keys to identify each species:-both

Bruce Maslin's DVD based version and the Williams and Harden (UNE) paper-based "Short Key to the Common Species of the New England Tablelands". Sunday's new species seen were *barringtonensis*, *beadleana*, *falcata*, *falciformis*, *floribunda*, *irrorata*, *melanoxydon*, *mitchellii*, *nova-anglia* (which looks more like a eucalypt), *obtusifolia*, *siculiformis*, *stricta* (previously only recorded 60 km from Glen Innes but this one found 13 kms closer, much to John's excitement), *suaveolens* and *terminalis* ssp. *terminalis*, plus more excitement when *ixodes* and *orites* were found where they hadn't previously been recorded. We saw *A. venulosa* on both days but one we saw on Sunday (photo below) had much paler flowers than the Saturday one - genetic variation at work, no doubt.



*Acacia venulosa* (paler form)

Photo: Peter Esdaile

Peter and I headed back to Tamworth that afternoon having had a really enjoyable and informative trip, however some people were continuing on the Monday towards Inverell. So thank you to everyone who made the trip possible, especially John for the time and effort he put in.

### Additional Note

On the Monday, a small group extended the weekend to a third day. We travelled from Glen Innes to Inverell via the Gwydir Highway, visited the Goonooowigall Nature Reserve and then proceeded along the Bundarra Road (Thunderbolt's Way) to Armidale. In Armidale, we enjoyed a tour of John and Barbara Nevin's garden, and then headed south to Dangars Falls in the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park.

New species found on Monday were *A. deanei*, *A. flexifolia* (brilliant massed flowering in one location), *A. ixiophylla*, *A. leptoclada*, *A. leucoclada* ssp. *argentifolia*, *A. paradoxa*, *A. triptera* and, at Dangars Falls, *A. ingramii* and *A. diphylla*.

## Prostrate *Acacia pycnantha*

Our national floral emblem, *Acacia pycnantha*, is normally thought of as being a medium shrub or tree, although smaller forms are sometimes found, especially in drier areas. In June this year, **Bill Newell** found an apparently prostrate plant in the Brisbane Ranges west of Melbourne. He was unable to find any reference to this species having a prostrate form, and had never noted one in 20 years of looking at wattles.



*Acacia pycnantha*

Photo: Cathy Powers

**Cathy Powers (Balliang, Vic)** visited the location of the plant in mid August, when it was in flower (see image above). Cathy commented as follows:

“The top of the trunk appears to have growth similar to prostrate plants. The branches lie on the ground and vary from 50cm to about 100cm from trunk to end of branch. Typical of this plant, the leaves and flowers are mostly towards the end of the branches and the centre is rather bare where the trunk is located. That it grows on the edge of the track where there has been recent and previous machinery damage to other plants, I guess the possibility of a damaged plant in infancy is there but it does not give that impression. Would it be something worth pursuing in cultivation is a vexing issue. There are certainly a lot better prostrate Acacias (in my opinion) such as the *Acacia aculeatissima* which is just about to go whoosh with flowers (of course, it is a bit more prickly).”

More recently, I was talking to **Alan Gibb** who advised that in his garden at Bobinawarrarah (in NE Vic) he has what he believes is genuinely a prostrate form of *A. pycnantha*. This plant was propagated from cuttings taken from a plant growing in another garden. This parent plant was purchased from a nursery as a normal *A. pycnantha*, but turned out to be prostrate – as is the plant currently in Alan’s garden. Alan’s plant is now about 3 years old, about 1m across, still prostrate and flowered this year. If it sets seed, Alan will propagate it from seed and will be interested in the form of

any new plants that he obtains.

## *Acacia baileyana* and a water tank

The following question has been raised by someone who is having a water tank installed. The water tank will receive water collected from the roof of their house. Overhanging the roof is an *Acacia baileyana*. The contractor installing the tank advised the home owner that the *Acacia* would need to be removed as its flowers are toxic.

The home owner likes the *Acacia* and is reluctant to remove it without good cause. Does anyone have any comments as to the situation in which the home owner finds themselves, and how they should handle the situation?

## Overseas Threat to Australian Wattles

In our Newsletter No. 116 (March 2012) I referred to the threat that new diseases attacking Australian wattles grown in plantations in Africa and Asia could reach our shores and cause serious damage to our wattles that would have no immunity to these pathogens.

I subsequently wrote to Senator the Hon. Joe Ludwig, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, about this potential threat to Australian *Acacia* species. I received the following reply, dated 16 July 2012, from Bill Magee, Assistant Secretary, DAFF Biosecurity Plant. I thought the reply was helpful and well considered, but I am unsure as to what further action to take now, if any. I would appreciate any input from Study Group members in this regard.

“Dear Mr Aitchison

Thank you for your letters of 23 June 2012 to the Hon. Tony Burke MP, Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, and to Senator the Hon. Joe Ludwig, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, about potential threats to Australian *Acacia* species from exotic plant pathogens. Your letter to Minister Burke was forwarded to Minister Ludwig as the matter you raise falls within his portfolio responsibilities. Minister Ludwig has asked me to reply on his behalf.

Australia maintains a strong quarantine system to ensure that imported seed, nursery stock and tissue culture of *Acacia* species can be safely imported. In addition, Australia has long-standing import requirements which prohibit the entry of seed of *Acacia* species considered to be weeds. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has examined the import conditions for germplasm of *Acacia* species in light of the information of the fungi causing wilting and death of Australian *Acacia* species in

plantations in Africa and south-east Asia. The department considers that the current conditions for tissue cultures and seed adequately address the risk of entry of these fungi. Records held by the department indicate that most *Acacia* germplasm material is imported as seed or tissue culture. In light of these emerging wilt pathogens, the department will require that any imports of nursery stock are to be grown in government post-entry quarantine stations to minimize the risk of entry of these exotic pathogens.

International travellers and mail are inspected for quarantine risks as the border by departmental staff. Nevertheless, we are ultimately dependent upon the awareness and honesty of all people entering Australia to respect our quarantine laws.

While the department is able to regulate the above pathways, it is important to acknowledge that there may also be pathways of spread for some exotic pathogens which are not possible to regulate. For example, it is not practical to regulate spread by contaminant spores on goods or clothing and the spread of pathogens can occur through natural means. For instance, the movement of *Ustilago scitaminea*, the causal fungus of Sugarcane Smut, into Australia was likely via wind-blown spores from south-east Asia.

The department is not able to directly fund or perform research to assess the risks to native *Acacia* species from exotic pathogens. Research on Australia's biosecurity risks is currently administered through the Plant Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre (PBCRC). The *Acacia* Study Group may wish to contact the PBCRC ([www.crplantbiosecurity.com.au](http://www.crplantbiosecurity.com.au)) with a proposal for research aimed at determining the risk to Australia from the emerging pathogens of *Acacia* species grown overseas. The PBCRC may consider this topic when evaluating its research priorities over the next 4-5 year term.

I trust that this information provides clarity on the Australian Government's response to the risk to Australia from exotic *Acacia* pathogens. The department appreciates the advice provided by the members of the Australian Native Plant Society on this issue.

I have copied your letter and our response to the Chief Executive Officer at Plant Health Australia as they may have an interest in this issue.

Thank you again for bringing this matter to the attention of the Australian Government.

Yours sincerely

Bill Magee  
Assistant Secretary  
DAFF Biosecurity Plant"

## Acacia mearnsii and Fireblight beetles

*Acacia mearnsii* is one of the species that has been attacked by a fungus in African plantations (see above). Closer to home (at least for those who live near Melbourne), it has recently been the subject of attack by a beetle in areas where it has been regenerating after bush fires. These attacks have taken place in areas to the north of Melbourne – with reports of attacks in St Andrews, Strathewen, Humevale and Riddells Creek.

The following is an extract from an article written by **Julia Franco** that appeared in Fringe Focus, the Community Environment Newsletter of Nillumbik Shire Council.

“The dense regrowth of Black Wattles (*Acacia mearnsii*) in the fire affected areas are losing their leaves and appear to be dying. Closer inspection has revealed a small green grub having a feast on the green leaves of these wattles, which is turning the landscape into a rusty hue as the leaves start to die. It was originally thought that a caterpillar was causing this havoc, but to confirm this photos of the grub were sent to the Melbourne Museum Discovery Centre who have kindly identified the species. The Museum confirmed that the grub is actually the larvae of the Fireblight beetle, (*Peltoschema orphana*). This particular Fireblight beetle is a species- specific defoliator, that is, it will only defoliate the leaves of the Black and Silver Wattle.

The Fireblight beetle is a native beetle. Not much research has been conducted on this species and it has only been formally recorded severely impacting on these two species of wattles in plantations. This beetle defoliates the plants and strips the foliage to a point where it can result in plant death. Only a small portion of the wattles have been observed to recover. In the fire affected areas (where there are dense stands) it is probably responding in a similar way it would when it is presented with a smorgasbord of Black and Silver Wattles in plantations. The defoliation and possible plant death caused by the Fireblight beetle larvae is obviously bad for the Black Wattles, but is really good for the natural thinning of these dense stands!

The Fireblight beetles and their larvae form part of the natural succession of the ecosystem as it recovers from the impact of fire. The reproductive mode of these beetles allows them to respond to significant changes in the environment, such as fire and dense regrowth of plants, and this event forms part of the natural process of thinning out dense stands of certain wattles.

Soon enough natural processes will take their course and we expect to see birds, mammals or other insects move in to eat the grubs. We also expect to see other plants taking up the space left by the dying wattles, but all in good time! The additional light created should hopefully encourage other

indigenous species to fill the void, but this depends what is in the soil seed bank on your property. Keep an eye out for weeds, and control them as soon as you see them emerge.”



**Acacia meurnsii affected by Fireblight Beetle** Photo: Ian McLeish

**Russell Best (Riddells Creek, Vic)** is a member of our Study Group and has an interest in the events taking pace with this beetle. Russell has made some observations as follows:

“With the drought followed by good rains, many unusual events have happened in the past two years, including many noticeable and not atypical spikes in populations in some insect species. Most noticeably, locusts of course, dragonflies last year, Common Brown butterflies last year, etc. This one looks scary but it might well be just another natural occurrence. It seems obvious that fire is a key factor but it might be happening within a natural drought-rain spike too, massively increasing their numbers in fire areas. The last time we had a rain event like 2010-11 and this year was 1973-4 and most events occurred then too - at least in terms of butterflies and locusts. It is important to note that the story of this beetle event is a result of what happened last year, and probably two years ago. It will probably be a combination of one or more of many good environmental conditions (eg. fire plus rain), a reduction in predation of adults and/or larvae, an increase in food (like many butterfly caterpillars that host on meurnsii, it might be that these beetles prefer new growth on small black wattles and there are lots of these currently, etc).

Others will perhaps know better but I'd guess this is a natural phenomenon and I hope it is a case of 'don't panic'!

... *Acacia decurrens* is another species that is being ignored by the beetle and in true Darwinian form is gaining a significant advantage. This does need action, with care being taken to leave any plant that is being used by local butterflies as a host.”



**Fireblight Beetles**

Photo: Ian McLeish

Julia Franco found online an old (1910) book called *The Handbook of Destructive Insects*. Part V has a chapter on the Fireblight Beetle. This book states that “of all the insect enemies of the wattle industry, this beetle is by far the worst”.

<http://archive.org/stream/handbookofdestru05fren#page/4/mode/2up>

If anyone has any observations or comments in relation to this beetle, they would be very welcome.

## New Acacia Species

### *Acacia atrox* ssp. *planiticola*

*Acacia atrox* ssp. *planiticola* is a recently described new subspecies of *A. atrox*. It is known only from a single population in Kirramingly Nature Reserve on the North Western Plains of NSW. Although all plants are in a conservation reserve, the subspecies is considered threatened.

**Reference:** Copeland, M. C., & Kodela, P. G. *Acacia atrox* subsp. *planiticola* (Fabaceae: Mimosoideae), a new threatened subspecies from the North Western Plains of New South Wales, Australia. *Telopea* 14: 63-68 (2012)

### *Acacia aneura* and its close relatives

Bruce Maslin and Jordan Reid have recently completed a revision of Mulga (*Acacia aneura* and its close relatives) in Western Australia, with the result twelve species have been recognized in three informal groups, the Blue, Grey-green and Green Alliances. Five of these species had previously been recognized (being *A. aneura*, *A. ayersiana*, *A. craspedocarpa*, *A. minyura* and *A. paraneura*). Seven new species are described, being *A. aptaneura*, *A. caesaneura*, *A. fuscaneura*, *A. incurvaneura*, *A. macraneura*, *A.*

*mulganeura* and *A. pteraneura*. Five of these species had formerly been treated as varieties of *A. aneura*.

**Reference:** Maslin, B.R. & Reid, J.E. A taxonomic revision of Mulga (*Acacia aneura* and its close relatives: Fabaceae) in Western Australia. *Nuytsia* 22(4): 129–267 (2012).

Another paper has been published in the same issue of Nuytsia in relation to *Acacia aneura*, reference as follows: Maslin, B.R., O’Leary, M., Reid, J.E. & Miller, J.T. The type of *Acacia aneura* (Mulga: Fabaceae) and ambiguities concerning the application of this name. *Nuytsia* 22(4): 269–294 (2012).

Note that both of these papers can be accessed online at (<http://florabase.dec.wa.gov.au/nuytsia/>).

## Some Acacia Reading

### Design A Native Garden Issue No. 1

Back in 2010, I provided some photos and responded to some wattle questions, in relation to a proposed new magazine on Native Gardens. The magazine has now been published and may still be available at local newsagents (at a pretty reasonable price of \$8.95 for a full colour glossy 130 pages). The magazine includes a number of articles on native gardens, including one headed Typical Aussie, referring to “the quintessential Australian plant, wattle”. Our Study Group is referred to in the article.

The magazine also includes descriptions of about 230 native plants, including about 15 Acacias.

### National Identity and International Science: The Case of Acacia By Libby Robin and Jane Carruthers Published in Historical Records of Australian Science, 2012, 23, 34-54

The debate over the name Acacia came to a conclusion last year at the International Botanical Congress held in Melbourne. What happened at Melbourne and in the years leading up to that, is now a matter of history.

This paper, however, provides a fascinating insight into the role that history and botanical politics played in both the decision taken at Vienna in 2005 to conserve the genus *Acacia* with the type *A. penninervis*, and the confirmation of this decision at Melbourne.

## Plants of Melbourne’s Western Plains Written and published by APS Keilor Plains Group

The APS Keilor Plains Group is a member of the Acacia Study Group. They have recently published this 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of a book relating to plants of Melbourne’s Western Plains. The book includes descriptions and photos of 10 species of Acacia occurring in this area, being *A. acinacea*, *A. dealbata*, *A. implexa*, *A. mearnsii*, *A. melanoxylon*, *A. paradoxa*, *A. provincialis*, *A. pycnantha*, *A. rostriformis*, and *A. verticillata*. The book has been quite superbly produced and is very reasonably priced with a RRP of \$19.95.

## Seed Bank

The Curator of our Study Group Seed Bank is Victoria Tanner. Study Group members are entitled to lodge up to 3 orders per member per year, with 18 packets maximum in each order (negotiable). There is a charge of \$2.40 in relation to each order, to cover the cost of a padded post bag and postage. The \$2.40 may be paid in stamps (eg four 60 cent stamps) or by direct credit to our Group’s bank account. Some members include an additional payment with their annual subscriptions to cover the Seed Bank charge.

Requests for seed may be lodged in either of the following ways:

1. By email to our Study Group email address, [acaciastudygroup@gmail.com](mailto:acaciastudygroup@gmail.com) (emails to this address go directly to both Victoria and Bill Aitchison). If you make a request by email, you will also need to make the necessary payment by one of the above methods. If you are paying by stamps, these should be mailed to Bill Aitchison, 13 Conos Court, Donvale, Vic 3111.
2. By mail (enclosing stamps if required). These requests should be posted to Bill Aitchison (address as in the previous paragraph). Bill will then advise Victoria of the request.

Donations of seed are always welcome. If you have some seed that you would like to donate to the Seed Bank, this should be forwarded to Bill Aitchison, who will pass it on to Victoria.

An up to date seed list is normally included in our September Newsletter, but this year the list will be included in our December Newsletter. If you would like a copy of the most recent list produced, please advise Bill Aitchison.

# Study Group Membership

Acacia Study Group membership for 2012/13 is as follows:

- \$7 (newsletter sent by email)
- \$10 (hardcopy of newsletter posted in Australia)
- \$20 (hardcopy of newsletter posted overseas)

Subscriptions may be sent to:  
 Bill Aitchison  
 13 Conos Court  
 Donvale, Victoria 3111

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 us by email (acaciastudygroup@gmail.com)

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**NOTE: Annual membership fees for 2012/13 are now due, we would very much appreciate it if you could attend to this (or advise us if you do not wish to renew your membership).**

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ANPSA ACACIA STUDY GROUP FINANCIAL BALANCE SHEET 2011-12			
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>Balance at 1.7.11</b>		\$469.76
	Members' subs and donations	\$1,124.00	
	Other Income	<u>\$20.50</u>	
	Total Income	\$1,144.50	\$1,144.50
<b>EXPENSES</b>	Stationery	\$22.80	
	Printing	\$375.00	
	Photocopying	\$288.00	
	Postage	<u>\$218.40</u>	
	Total Expenses	\$904.20	-\$904.20
<b>BALANCE</b>	<b>Balance at 30.6.12</b>		\$710.06