



Australian Native Plants Society (Australia) Inc.

## ACACIA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER

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**Note: If you wish to view or download previous Study Group Newsletters, they are available on the Study Group website.**

**The address is:**

**<http://anpsa.org.au/acaciaSG>**

### From The Leader

Dear Members

In mid November I had a few days in Canberra, mainly to give a talk at the ANPS Canberra monthly meeting (on the subject of Acacias, of course), but also the opportunity to have a look at some of the sights of Canberra was too good an opportunity to miss. I was impressed with how active and vibrant the Canberra Group is. They are involved in a wide range of activities, one of which currently involves planning for the 2015 ANPSA National Biennial Conference.

Coincidentally, this will be held in mid November (from 15-20 November 2015), exactly 12 months since my recent visit. It is a good time of year to visit Canberra, and I suggest that you make a note in your diary now and take the opportunity to catch up with other ANPS members at the Conference. I understand that there will be an opportunity at the Conference to visit the superb garden of Acacia Study Group members Ben and Ros Walcott (whose garden recently featured on an Australia Post stamp).

There will also be opportunity to visit the Australian National Botanic Garden, and also the National Arboretum (refer Tony Cavanagh's article on the Arboretum in our Newsletter No. 124, March 2014). As Tony noted in that article, there is only one wattle represented in the collection (*Acacia caerulea*, the Buchan Blue wattle). This was in flower when I visited the Arboretum in mid November 2014, so there is a good chance that it will be in flower for us at the time of the Biennial Conference.

In relation to this species, Alan Gibb tells me that his long time friend, the late Arthur Court, said that *A. caerulea* is the quickest growing of all Acacias. In his own garden, Alan tells me that he has a plant that is exactly 7m tall after

2 years and 8 months (thanks to Alan for climbing up his big ladder to measure the precise height of his tree). Sometimes it is stated that quick growing plants are often not long lived, but in this case this may not be true – in a book published by the Friends of the National Arboretum (The Arboretum Book), it states that trees of this species live up to 40 years in their natural habitat (but to complicate this theory, Alan tells me that his plant is not currently looking well, maybe the conditions in his garden are not quite perfect).

I will finish this Leader's Message on a note of trivia. Whilst I have been writing this note, my wife Sue has been watching a movie on ABC TV, The Mystery of a Hansom Cab. The movie is set in Melbourne in 1886, and effectively portrays Melbourne as it was at that time. It is all very effectively done, except Sue has pointed out that in one of the scenes, there is a plant which clearly is one of the *Acacia cognata* cultivars. I assume that she may be the only person in Australia who watched this movie and would have noted that this plant did not exist back in 1886!

Just one more item – if anyone has experience with *Acacia gnidium* or *Acacia carneorum*, either in growing them or otherwise, I would be interested in what information you can provide – for a possible future article in our Newsletter.

Bill Aitchison

## Welcome

A special welcome to the following new member to the Study Group.

Bill Willis, Greenleigh, NSW

## From Members and Readers

**Esther Brueggemeier (Westlake, Vic)** has established an aviary in her garden – with a variety of birds – including budgerigars. A number of Acacias are growing within the aviary, and this has given Esther the opportunity to observe which plants are favoured by the birds (especially the budgerigars).

She has observed that the birds are very keen on the leaves of *Acacia floribunda*, and they also chew on the bark. However, they ignore *A. cognata*, *A. verniciflua* and the ferny leaved ones.

Why do the birds overwhelmingly favour one species over the others?

**Esther** has also referred to a Wattle Beer – Baron's Black Wattle Original Ale – which she describes as an incredibly

smooth, dark beer made with Australian roasted Wattle seeds. A full bodied flavour with a hint of chocolate and mocha. In the past this beer has been available at Dan Murphy's and in Victoria at Aldi stores – but can anyone advise where it may be available now?

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Why are Acacia flowers yellow? **Claude Culvenor (Mont Albert North, Vic)** came across a paper relating to identification of the yellow pigment in some Acacia flowers, which he thought may be of interest. The 1924 paper was by James Matthew Petrie, of the University of Sydney, and in 4 species that he studied, he found the yellow pigment was a glucoside of a chemical called kaempferol.

The species studied were *A. discolor* (*A. terminalis*), *A. linifolia*, *A. decurrens* var. *mollis* (*A. mearnsii*) and *A. longifolia*.

### Reference:

Petrie, J. M. 1924. The Yellow Pigments of Australian Acacias. *Biochemical Journal* v18(5): 957-964

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In our Newsletter No. 126 (September 2014) **Victoria Tanner** referred to her recent visit to Arkaroola Sanctuary in the Flinders Ranges (SA). Whilst at Arkaroola, **Marg Sprigg**, Director of the Sanctuary, showed Victoria three *Acacia peuce* growing very successfully. Victoria subsequently asked **Marg Sprigg**, Director of the Sanctuary, about her experience with this species.



*Acacia peuce* at Arkaroola

Photo V Tanner

Marg advised that neither she nor her brother know who gave the three plants to her dad, but they have certainly been at Arkaroola for about 30-35 years (possibly more). All Marg knows is that her father planted them, but an educated guess would be that they would have been seedlings grown by a friend Loris Fotheringham, and that her dad would have given Loris the seed. Loris died close to 30 years ago but she used to grow all sorts of plants for

her dad – she did botany at the University of Melbourne back in the 1920-30s (so Marg was told by her dad).

Marg has seen the trees flower and set seed 3 times in the 20 years she has lived at Arkaroola, but all of that has been since 2001(?). Her brother doesn't remember them flowering prior to that and he has been at Arkaroola for about 40 years.

Marg advised that about 2-3 months ago, she germinated some 3 year old seed. Unfortunately, her pup who loves to dig and pull things out of containers saw that most of them didn't get very far. Marg advises that they are easy to grow, just the usual pouring over of boiling water and leave them to cool, and wait for the seeds to swell before planting them in pots.

She still has 3 survivors (she had to go away and left some of them too damp, and they didn't hold up.....). The rest only have about 3-4 true leaves so far, so have a long way to go. Unfortunately the euros think they are great to chomp while the leaves are still soft (and even when they stiffen up they will chew them back).

\*\*\*\*\*

**Mark Hewitson (Dee Why, NSW)** has observed that when watering the various Acacias in his garden, if he waters directly on the top layer of the soil, the water tends to run along the surface of the soil when it is dry ... and potentially away from the plant. However, when water hits the bipinnate leaves and phyllodes, large water droplets are broken up and sliced into much smaller water particles, which are able to penetrate the surface and be absorbed at the plant base. Hence, Mark suggests watering at the top of the plant, rather than at the base, and let the phyllodes break down the water into smaller droplets.

Mark is not sure how much of a factor this is when droplets fall as rain, as the impact on the ground is obviously much higher, but it definitely makes a difference when watering plants with a dropper. A great little evolutionary trait to make sure that what little water lands there is not lost!

In a subsequent note, Mark reports that he was speaking to a farmer regarding the issue of water running off dry soil. The friend advised that a good method is putting down old bedsheets on the ground (or any large cloth that can hold water), and then water on top of the sheets. The sheets hold the water allowing it to soak into the top soil.

## Reports on Growing From Seed

Thank you to a number of members who have provided reports of their propagation from seed.

**Jan Sked (Lawnton, Qld)** reports (8 Oct 2014) as follows:

You sent me some Acacia seed a few months ago. So far I have sowed the following seed at the end of August:

*Acacia complanata* (no germination yet)  
*Acacia chinchillensis* (germinated @ 20 days)  
*Acacia decora* (germinated @ 20 days)  
*Acacia gittinsii* (germinated @ 20 days)  
*Acacia grandifolia* (germinated @19 days)  
*Acacia granitica* (germinated @ 19 days)  
*Acacia handonis* (no germination yet).

I will sow more seed when I have more seed boxes free. All the seed had boiling water poured over them and then soaked overnight before planting.

\*\*\*\*\*

**John Boevink (Port Sorell, Tas)** has provided (24 Nov 2014) a quite detailed report on his propagation results:

“At the Qld conference we talked about providing some feedback to the group on what gets done with the seed samples provided. I have been quite aware I have not yet done so myself. In part it is because last year I tried to be careful with these wonderful samples and only tried a few:

*A. spectabilis*, *A. spondylophylla*, *A. riceana* came up well and are growing as plants of various (small) sizes in our garden, 2 of each.

One *A. spondylophylla* is relatively big, the other the smallest of the lot and is very marginal. One never knows whether it is the spot the plantlets were put in or their intrinsic vigour. Or their "luck" in early stages of the germination and transfer to tubes. I do not leave them more than a few weeks in the standard punnets, often less.

We always do the boiling water pre-treatment for acacias. (That is why I have not yet tried the *A. pendula*, which is said not to respond to this.)

In view of this reasonable result we did some serious sowing this year with, in my opinion, quite acceptable success at this stage. For most types we still have about half left of the seeds provided. Possibly the dying is yet to come, but many are now in the tube stock stage.

The score:

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <i>blakelyi</i>       | 3 tubes   |
| <i>deanii</i>         | no germination  |
| <i>fauntleroyi</i>    | fastest response. 5 in tubes. A few latecomers still to be transferred to tubes |
| <i>heterochroa</i>    | very slow 3 in tubes  |
| <i>menzelii</i>       | no germination  |
| <i>merinthophora</i>  | 2 tubes   |
| <i>notabilis</i>      | 6 tubes   |
| <i>pilligaensis</i>   | 3 tubes   |
| <i>plicata</i>        | 1 tube  |
| <i>podalyriifolia</i> | 7 tubes   |

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <i>pubescens</i>   | very slow, 12 plantlets yet to be transferred |
| <i>rossei</i>      | 6 tubes                                       |
| <i>scirpifolia</i> | no germination                                |

Furthermore Riitta used our own seed for the following:

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <i>aphylla</i>       | 7 tubes  |
| <i>boormanii</i>     | extensive germination but weak plantlets, not sure of status |
| <i>cardiophylla</i>  | 3 tubes  |
| <i>spathulifolia</i> | 8 tubes  |
| <i>suaveolens</i>    | 17 tubes   |
| <i>terminalis</i>    | 15 tubes   |

Many of these are intended for sale by our NW Tasmania group. *A. suaveolens* and *A. terminalis* are locals.

We use a "greenhouse" to assist germination, but nights can be pretty cool in spring in our place (North coastal Tas) and the seeds would feel that. And the greenhouse needs to be well aerated or the heat would be way too high by day.

I think this is a big limitation to comparing germination success between operators.

There are just so many factors quite random that may or may not affect seed of a particular species and thereafter possible specific requirements for the baby plants.

So in terms of any use for this type of feedback: If nobody or very few members succeed with a particular seed lot it may be a good idea to try and get another lot. Or at least warn future users of this circumstance. I don't expect it will deter many. More generally such feedback may provide information to other members in the local area that specific acacia plants may become available."

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**Winifred Bennet (Greensborough, Vic)** writes as follows:

"When I put the seeds in I did not count them so I am afraid I have no "scientific" information. I can tell you the ones that came up vigorously:

*A. spectabilis* – just about all the seeds it must be – in 6 days!

Also came up well:

*A. acinacea*, *A. anceps*, *A. aneura*, *A. blakei*, *A. curvata*, *A. drummondii* var. *drummondii* / *elegans* / *candolleana* (var. *affinis* and var. *grossus* did not come up), *A. guinetii*, *A. pulchella*."

\*\*\*\*\*

**Mark Hewitson (Dee Why, NSW)** has provided the following report on his propagation of *A. terminalis*.

**Germination:**

\* A standard overnight boiled water soak was not enough to swell any of the *A. terminalis* seeds I tried on first attempt (10 seeds)

\* Seeds required either nicking the top of the seed coat, or further boiled water soaks.

\* Some seeds have taken more than 24+hrs before swelling occurred

\* The latest method I have used is using "smoked water" for the boiled water soak. I only tried on 3 seeds and got 100% success with seed swelling and germination. Using my webber, I was able to burn a bunch of acacia leaves and have the smoke accumulate into some wet vermiculite sitting in a flour sifter. (<https://flic.kr/p/qymnev>). I then put my "smoked vermiculite" in a large bottle, added boiling water and shook it around, then added this (still hot) water to a pot with seeds in it



*Acacia terminalis* seeds, before soak, after soak and germination Photo M Hewitson

**Soil:**

\* Using tubestock, I have stuck with a standard soil mix of:  
 1 part River Sand  
 3 parts Native potting & planting mix  
 1 Sprinkle of Osmocote  
 I have tried adding some peat before, but the only plants that survived in that mix had stunted growth.

**Growth log:**

\*Sprouts as usual with pair of pinna leaves. These later turn red and curl up to resemble a pair of horns!

(<https://flic.kr/p/qb4uaV>)

\*First branch consists of single pinnae leaf with 6-7 leaflets. (<https://flic.kr/p/qaTJen>)

\*Followed are 3 consecutive sets of single-pair pinnae with 4-7 leaflets, and a single distinctive red petiolar gland. (<https://flic.kr/p/qaGqaV>). Single Petiolar glands are present approximately 1/3 to 1/2 of the way between base of pinnae and base of branch, with stem and branches growing more white hair (<https://flic.kr/p/pv88cY>).

\* Next leaf consists of set of 3 pairs of pinnae. Now also has single jugary gland at tip of rachis.

(<https://flic.kr/p/qMAQte>).



- \* Next leaf consists of set of 5 pairs of pinnae. Now has single jugary glands at base of pair 3, 4 and 5 (tip) (<https://flic.kr/p/qMBme6>).
- \* Main stem is hairy and red
- \* Branches mainly green with small amounts of red.
- \* New leaflets start out reddish, then turn pale green followed by darker green (<https://flic.kr/p/qKtVgS>)
- \* Does not like too much direct all day sunlight, otherwise the leaves close up by midday

\*\*\*\*\*

In our Newsletter No. 125 (June 2014) we referred to some seed that we have in our Seed Bank labelled as *Acacia* sp. Hollands Rock, but where we do not know what the seeds are. We invited members to try propagating these seeds, and **Alan Gibb (Bobinawarra, Vic)** is one member who took up this invitation. Alan initially sowed 6 seeds, of which 5 germinated (although 1 of these seedlings was rather weak). Sadly, these seedlings were hit with a hailstorm, and seemed to get frozen. Alan then sowed 3 more seeds, 2 of these germinated and 1 of these is still going. Alan believes that it looks as though it will be a nice small wattle, a mounding plant. In due course, we will hopefully be able to identify which species it is. The seeds have only been taking about 5 days to germinate. In each case, Alan has nicked the seeds (and has not used any hot water treatment). Nicking is not easy, as the seeds are so tiny, but Alan has found this to be the most effective pre-treatment for the seeds.

## Some Observations on Seeds

**Mark Hewitson (Dee Why, NSW)** has shared with us some recent experiences with *Acacia* seeds.

The first relates to *Acacia linifolia*, where upon opening some ripe seed pods he got a surprise and found small white grubs growing inside (pictured below). It has been suggested to us that these grubs are larvae of a seed beetle in the family *Bruchidae*.

However, further thinking about the grubs drew us to a 1983 paper by Tony Auld. This paper looked at seed predation in 28 species of native legumes in the Sydney region, with one of the species studied being *A. linifolia*. The paper concluded that the main predator for this *Acacia* was the seed weevil *Melanterius maculatus*. The paper noted that while bruchids are significant seed predators in the Sydney region, they are not the dominant predator group, as is the case in central America. In this study, Bruchids were recorded as seed predators in only one genus, *Pultenaea*.

What experiences have other Study Group members had with seed predation of wattles? Can someone confirm the identification of the grubs in Mark's photo?



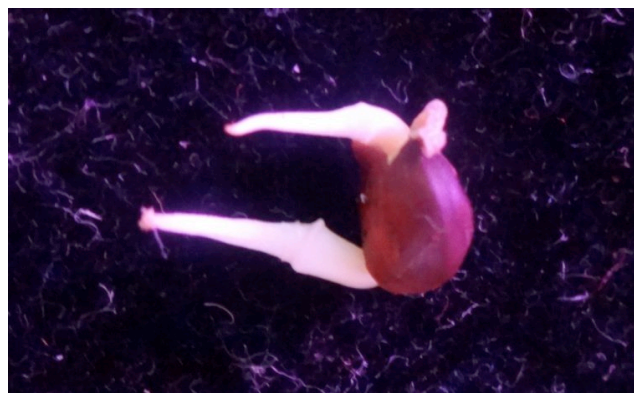
*Acacia linifolia* grubs

Photo M Hewitson

### Reference:

Auld T.D. (1983) Seed predation in native legumes of south-eastern Australia Aust J. Ecology 8, 367-376.

The second experience that Mark has shared with us relates to his propagation of some seed of *Acacia acuminata*. One of the seeds that germinated sprouted in two places (see photo), and he thought this was a bit strange.



*Acacia acuminata* seed

Photo M Hewitson

We asked Dr Dan Murphy if he could throw any light on Mark's observation. Dan commented that it could just be an aberrant embryo. Alternatively it could be an "adventitious embryo" which has been discovered in some *Acacia* (and is evidence for possible apomixes). Dan referred to a paper by Rose Andrew et al on *Acacia aneura* (reference below). Dan also noted that he doubts there would be an extra hypocotyl in the adventitious embryo.

### Reference:

Andrew, Rose L. et al (2003) Genetic, cytogenetic and morphological patters in a mixed mulga population: evidence for apomixes Aust Systematic Botany 16, 69-80

Mark has also referred in one of his communications to the

fact that some of his seeds germinate, but are then unable to shed their seed coat. He comments that it is important to remove the seed coat as soon as possible after it shoots out of the soil, as it will dry and harden like rock and become very risky to the plant to remove after that point. The best method that Mark has found is to keep the seed coat wet with a water spray for a bit, and then using a pair of tweezers, start pinching the bottom of the seed coat gently, like popping a prawn out of its tail shell. Any other method he has tried is always very risky and he has lost a few by placing too much strain on the tip of the stalk where the seed joins.

Interestingly, in 1971 **Inez Armitage** (who was then Leader of the Acacia Study Group), referred to this same problem in ASG Newsletter No. 7 (October 1971):

"Ever lost a precious seedling because it came up with its seedcase attached and either you broke the seedling in trying to pull off the seedcase or it stayed on and the seedling shrivelled away? Well, here's how to overcome this. If your seedling is not already in a container by itself, transfer it to the tin or tube in which you intend it to grow. Fill a jam jar absolutely to the brim with water. Get two pieces of very thin but rigid plastic (such as that commonly used by nurseries for labelling plants), lay these across the top of the jar with a space in between. Then rest your tin or tube upside down on the plastic strips with the top of the seedling fully immersed in water. Leave in a warm place (sun, if it's not too hot) for half to one hour. If the seedcase has not come off by itself it will be soft enough and loose enough to be easily but carefully removed. This delicate operation has, so far, never failed."

## Fungus on *Acacia baileyana*

by Geoff Lay, Box Hill North, Vic

*Maranoa Gardens is a public native garden in Balwyn, a suburb of Melbourne. A fungus growing on an apparently healthy Acacia baileyana (prostrate form) prompted a question as to what the fungus was, given that fungus normally grow on dead things. Our thanks to fungus expert Geoff Lay for inspecting the fungus and writing the following report.*

Your Study Group leader noticed fungus growing on a healthy *Acacia baileyana* in Maranoa Gardens and asked me for my comments.

Fungus are not part of the plant kingdom but have a completely separate kingdom. Most fungus are microscopic but the ones big enough to be seen with the naked eye (such as mushrooms and toadstools) are called macrofungus. Fungus has no chlorophyll so it cannot produce energy from sunlight by photosynthesis. Instead it relies on pre-existing organic material for food. That is a polite way for saying they rot things that are, or were, alive.



Fungus on *A. baileyana* at Maranoa Gardens Photo P Birch

Macrofungus start out as microscopic threads (hyphae) that grow outwards and produce enzymes that soften and break apart (i.e. rot) the chemicals in the substrate (wood). The hyphae absorb these simpler chemicals to fuel further growth. When the hyphae have enough in storage and the weather is right, then the fruiting bodies are produced. The fruiting bodies are the mushrooms for ground dwellers, but for tree rotters they are commonly brackets (i.e. shaped like shelves growing out of the trunk). The sole purpose of the fruiting body is to produce spores which are disbursed in the air. Spores are similar to but are much smaller and lighter than seeds and will float in the air. If the spores eventually find a suitable landing then they germinate into a new hyphae.

The fungus that rot living things are called parasites, however, the vast majority of fungus that interact with plants are saprotrophic. Saprotrophic fungi rot organic material that was once alive but is now dead. The fungus that Bill saw was *Schizophyllum commune* (see pictures of upper and lower surfaces) which is saprotrophic. Although most of the acacia was alive, a small section along one side of the middle of a branch had died. The fungus was rotting this small piece of dead wood.



*Schizophyllum commune* upper surface

Photo: G Lay





*Schizophyllum commune* lower surface Photo G. Lay

Why won't this fungus rot the healthy wood above and below the dead section? Fungus requires both oxygen and moisture. Where the sap flows, the wood is living and very wet. The sap forces the oxygen out so the fungus cannot survive.

*Schizophyllum commune* is unique in that the gills (the straight lines on the under-surface) open out longitudinally in damp conditions to release the spores. When the fungus is too dry, the gills close up again. Hence the common name of 'split gills'. You can see some open gills in the illustration. Normal gills never split, the spores hang off the sides and are not hidden in the middle. Because the gills can open and close, the fruiting bodies survive for several months or longer; usually they are eventually attacked by a green algae. They can be regarded as 'perennials' in comparison to ground-growing mushrooms which only last days, so 'annuals'. Note that even when the fruiting bodies disappear, the hyphae in the wood are still alive rotting the substrate until it is exhausted and more fruiting bodies may appear at a later date.

If a fungus decays large sections of wood then there are two basically two types of wood rots. Brown rot occurs when the fungus destroys the cellulose in the walls of the plant cells, but not the dark coloured lignin inside. The result is a brown cubical structure. White rot occurs when the fungus rots both the walls and the interior of the plant cells so there is nothing left. The result is lighter in colour and may be spongy, stringy, layered or featureless. It often looks like a white hobby glue such as Aquadhere.

In a previous issue of the newsletter I discussed mycorrhizal fungi, which form a symbiotic relationship with plant roots. Acacias do not form mycorrhizal associations with fungus; instead they form a similar relationship with bacteria. Rhizobia are soil bacteria that fix nitrogen (diazotrophs) after becoming established inside root nodules of legumes (*Fabaceae* including *Acacia*). Rhizobia require a plant host; they cannot independently fix nitrogen.

## A Fire of Gidgee Coals

**Des Nelson (Alice Springs)** has sent to me a copy of a story that he wrote back in 2007, titled "A Fire of Gidgee Coals". It is not a particularly botanical paper, but is simply a yarn about *Acacia georginae* and how this species of *Acacia* occupied so much of Des's working life. This species is grazed by cattle, but there is a problem as in some areas it is quite toxic. In this paper, Des tells the story of his role in the research carried out (especially in the 1950s and 1960s) on the subject of gidgee poisoning.

Des comments that he believes it is important to record features of scientific field work not mentioned in files and official publications.

The paper is too long to include in this Newsletter, and so I have just included a few short extracts from the paper. If any Study Group member would like to read the paper, let me know.

On the species in general, Des comments:-

"*Acacia georginae*, the Georgina gidgee tree, occupies an area of 5,600 sq km in eastern central Australia, NT, plus a large area in western Queensland. Gidgee is a small gnarled tree with grey foliage. It may have one or more twisted trunks with dark bark. It bears yellow wattle ball flowers followed by flat but spirally twisted pods. You know you are in Gidgee country when it flowers, as it emits a strong smell like coal gas. This smell is also evident when the foliage is damp from rainfall. Bush flies abound when gidgee is in flower. Gidgee wood is very hard as anyone who chops a gidgee with an axe soon discovers."

On its use as firewood:-

"Gidgee firewood burns with great heat. Overnight the fire dies down to leave a covering of fine white ash. When you brush this aside hot glowing coals will be revealed."

"I became familiar with gidgee when I went to Elkedra station north east of Alice Springs in 1953, to work as a jackeroo. Once, I bought gidgee firewood to the homestead. It made the top of the wood stove glow red hot. Gidgee was banned from house use."

On its toxic properties:-

"Cattle will graze gidgee foliage, but there is a problem. In the western part of its growth area, gidgee is quite safe. In the eastern part of its range, towards and over into Queensland, there are areas where gidgee can be toxic, causing the deaths of many grazing animals. This region of toxicity begins at about Ooratippra Station on the Sandover Highway, and Tarlton Downs on the Plenty Highway. Research into the problem of gidgee poisoning took up much time from Chemistry and Botany sections of the

Animal Industry Branch of NT Administration in the 1950's and 1960's. Work done by organic chemist Ray Murray and colleagues determined that the toxin in gidgee is a fluoroacetate similar to the poison 1080. This blocks a physiological process, the Krebs cycle. There is no antidote. Animals not too badly affected may recover if rested."

On the results of the research:-

"The gidgee research had determined that toxic trees occurred only over limestone or dolomite rock. Areas of toxic gidgee were pin pointed, so enabling cattlemen to keep livestock away from them, or they could be isolated by fencing.."

## ***Acaciacapsus* – a new plant bug genus**

*Acaciacapsus* is a recently described new plant bug genus. The genus currently comprises 8 species which are primarily found in arid and semi-arid regions of non-monsoonal regions of Australia.

Those *Acaciacapsus* species that have known host plant associations are all found with species of *Acacia* – in fact 5 of the 8 species have a host plant association with *Acacia*, with host plant associations for the remaining 3 species being unknown. The various species generally feature yellowish colouration with contrasting orange, red or brownish markings.

The name *Acaciacapsus* has been applied to the genus in recognition of the host plant associations of the genus and to the colouration that matches that of *Acacia* flowers. *Capsus* refers to mirid bug.

Some of the newly described species have limited distributions (eg *A. amadeus* has only been recorded from two localities in central Australia south east of Alice Springs) whilst the most widely distributed is *A. aureolus*, which ranges from the Flinders region of SA to the Northern Wheatbelt and Pilbara in WA.

The new taxa described were discovered as part of the Australian Government's Bush Blitz species discovery program ([www.bushblitz.org.au](http://www.bushblitz.org.au)). This program began in 2010 and so far has discovered about 600 new and undescribed species (the Bush Blitz website notes that there are an estimated 566,398 plant and animal species in Australia but three quarters of this biodiversity is yet to be identified).

### **Reference:**

Cassis, G., and Symonds, C. (2014). Systematics and host plant associations of a new genus of *Acacia*-inhabiting plant bugs from arid Australia (Insecta : Hemiptera : Heteroptera : Miridae : Orthotylinae). *Invertebrate Systematics* 28, 522-554

## **Acacias in the News**

**Terry Fewtrell (President, Wattle Day Association Inc)** has drawn our attention to a story that was on ABC Radio National's Bush Telegraph on 30 October. The story concerned *Acacia mangium* being grown and harvested for woodchips on the Tiwi Islands. Terry notes that the species appears to have a rather distinctive flower and the timber seems to be attractive if used for furniture and flooring. He suggests it is a bit sad for it to end up as woodchips. See the following link:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-10-28/tiwi-islands-prepare-for-historic-timber-harvest/5845442>

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In South Africa, new legislation now requires land owners to monitor and remove invasive plants from their property, or alternatively to face a fine of up to R5 million or maximum 10 years imprisonment.

A number of Australian *Acacia* species are included in the list of prohibited species as specified in the Regulations accompanying the legislation. Category 1 species must be removed immediately, and these include *A. adunca*, *A. cyclops*, *A. elata*, *A. fimbriata*, *A. implexa*, *A. longifolia*, *A. paradoxa*, *A. podalyriifolia*, *A. pycnantha*, *A. saligna* and *A. stricta*. Species included in Category 2 are *A. dealbata*, *A. decurrens*, *A. mearnsii* and *A. melanoxylon*. For Category 2 species, the land owner must obtain a permit and ensure that they do not spread outside the property.

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The ABC reported (9 January 2015) that a Melbourne recorder maker Joanne Saunders has been described by a leading recorder virtuoso Genevieve Lacey as being "the best recorder maker in the world". The report noted that baroque recorders were mainly made with European boxwood, which Ms Saunders sometimes uses, but her popular soprano recorders are made from mulga, *Acacia aneura*. Ms Saunders says that "It's a very dense wood and you can get good power out of it."

## **Photos of Wattle Places**

I have used some licence in choosing this month's Photo of a Wattle Place. It is not really a photo of a Wattle Place, rather it is more a photo of a Wattle Event, and one that took place as a celebration of Wattle Day just over 100 years ago. The photo was taken in Mount Gambier, SA, on Wattle Day, Saturday 29 August 1914, and shows a group of young women, girls and boys with trays of wattle



blossom to sell to raise money for the Ladies Patriotic Fund. An article in the Border Watch newspaper on 2 September 1914 reported that following this event £70 was available to send on to the Red Cross Fund in Adelaide.



State Library of South Australia PRG280/1/13/365

The group in the photo were standing in front of the Mt Gambier New Institute building where a notice advertises a concert by the SA baritone, Peter Dawson, that was held on the previous Thursday.

## Seed Bank

An up to date list of species held in our Seed Bank was included in Newsletter No. 126 (September 2014).

Our thanks to Mark Hewitson, Phil Price and Marg Sprigg for recent donations to the Seed Bank.

The procedure for requesting seed from the Seed Bank is as follows. 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 \$3 in relation to each order, to cover the cost of a padded post bag and postage. The \$3 may be paid in 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.

Although we do purchase some seed from commercial sources, we also rely upon donations of seed. If you are able to help with any seed donations they would be very welcome (we would ask you to post any donations to Bill Aitchison, who will forward them on to Victoria). It also helps enormously if you are able to clean, sort and label the seed correctly. Also, we would like to have provenance information for all seed in the seed bank – so if you donate any seed, could you also provide any information you have in relation to provenance.

We would like to maintain some data on your results in propagating seed from the Seed Bank. We would therefore ask if you could provide a report on your results, recording information on species, number of seeds sown, number germinated and days after sowing.

## Study Group Membership

**Acacia Study Group membership for 2014/15 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](mailto:acaciastudygroup@gmail.com)).**