

ASSOCIATION of SOCIETIES for GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

CALOTHAMNUS STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER

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Recently Kaye sent me some excellent cuttings of the yellow flowered *Calothamnus quadrifidus* and a very beautiful red *C. villosus*. The cuttings travelled very well as the weather had cooled off somewhat and look very healthy. I find that cuttings taken in late autumn or winter are more successful for me than those in the warmer months. I have a large cold frame which keeps the frost away.

I saw a very interesting experiment in the late summer. A friend had to dig out some native plants, including a *Calothamnus torulosus*, as she was extending her pottery shed. These were very large, about 3 years old, so as the backhoe was there to level the site, she asked the operator to dig a large hole for each plant while she pruned them severely. More than half of the vegetation was taken off. The holes were filled with water then each plant was dug out with the backhoe & immediately put into the prepared hole. After the replanting the foliage was gently sprayed for the rest of the day & at least three times a day for the next couple of weeks. (It was very hot weather) Within a month the *Calothamnus* had put out masses of new shoots & together with the others (*Hakea laurina* & *salicifolia* & *Melaleuca armillaris*) are growing well!

Our seed bank is the same as for our last newsletter, but I will attempt to obtain some different species before spring. Of course any donations of seed will be gratefully accepted.

I will start to describe some species of *Calothamnus*, using our plant report sheets as well as the descriptions I received from the Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens. These may help to identify some plants.

Calothamnus affinis. *affinis* meaning related or similar.
0.7-1.5 m x 1 - 2 m Flowering Sept-April

A low spreading shrub; branches glabrous; leaves to 5 cm long, very narrow or terete, but usually flattened, oil glands often prominent, blunt or pointed, young growth often hairy; flowers in one sided clusters formed by tight groups of three flowers making a spike to 12 cm long.

These flowers are crimson to deep red with the calyx tube buried in the stem; staminal bundles 4, about 2 cm long; capsule globular to 0.5 cm the base being buried in the stem.

We have no reports on this species as it is not a widely cultivated species. It would be a suitable garden specimen, growing in most soils

in partial or full sun & withstanding extended moist periods. I guess that availability of seed would be the limiting factor.

The variety *teres* has terete leaves & the variety *longistamineus* has stamens to 3.5 cm long.

Calothamnus asper. asper meaning rough (the scabrous leaves)

Rough net bush. 2-3m x 3-5m. Flowering Sept - Dec

An erect, much branched medium to large shrub; branches thick; leaves to 2.5 cm x about 0.2 cm, linear, flat, rigid, scabrous, blunt or pointed, gradually diminishing in breadth towards stem end, pilose (sprinkled with rather long simple hairs). This gives the foliage a lovely silvery look. Flowers are mostly 3-5 together in short sessile clusters, usually among the leaves at the ends of the branches. Flowers are a bright red with gold anthers, the staminal claws (4) are more or less equal; fruit globular about 1 cm with 4 lobes nearly touching.

This is a very adaptable and showy species, growing well in most soils with dappled shade, partial or full sun. It takes light frosts, & extended wet or dry periods. Ideally suited to all gardens, roadside or farms & makes a nice informal hedge.

Calothamnus asper is closely related to *C. quadrifidus* so here are some of the differences. Leaves on *C. asper* are always flat & pilose, especially on the margins; *C. quadrifidus* leaves are slightly flattened to terete, generally pilose or hirsute but sometimes glabrous. *C. asper* leaves are 1.2-1.8 cm long, 1.4-2mm wide; *C. quadrifidus* ones are 1.5-2cm long, 0.8-1.5mm wide. On *C. asper* the calyx tube is broadly bell shaped, 5-6mm long while that of *C. quadrifidus* is narrowly bell shaped 3-4mm long. The fruits of *C. asper* are 9-12mm long x 8-10mm wide while those of *C. quadrifidus* are 7-9mm long & 7-8mm wide. But the best difference (get out your magnifying glasses) is that the filaments on the staminal claws are 27-30 for *C. asper* & 18-20 for *C. quadrifidus*.

Calothamnus blepharospermus. (seed with an eyelid -- refers to hairs on seed edges.) 1-2 m x 1-3 m Flowers Sept-May

A spreading bushy small shrub; branches thick with long hairs; leaves to 8 cm x about 0.5 cm, flat, broadest near tip, rigid, warty along midrib & margins, usually hairy; flowers few, in irregular spikes or clusters, sometimes around stem; calyx densely hairy; staminal bundles 5, equal, about 3-4 cm long, bright orange-red; fruit cylindrical, warty, about 1 cm long with 5 lobes.

An adaptable species, although not widely known in cultivation. It prefers well drained soils with partial or full sun. Ideally suited for semi-arid areas. Withstands medium frosts and extended dry periods. Main flowering period is midsummer. The variety *glaber* differs in having

smaller, narrower leaves that are not hairy.

Calothamnus chrysantherus. meaning gold anthers.

Golden net bush. 0.5-2.5x 1-2 m Flowering June-Nov.

An erect to spreading small shrub; branches more or less corky; leaves to 10 cm long, terete or slightly flattened, pointed tip; flowers few, one sided clusters; calyx sessile, hairy; staminal bundles 5, all equal, about 3 cm long, rich red with gold anthers; fruit to above 1 cm long, lobes persistent.

A most ornamental dwarf species. Although it occurs naturally over a wide area of mainly red sands with low rainfall, it will grow in most soil types, providing it has a warm to hot location, with partial to full sun. Frost and drought tolerant.

Sorry, but I made a little mistake when talking about our seed bank, as there is also some *Calothamnus rupestris* seed available. After reading about some different species, how about sending for some seed? The more species we can have growing in different areas the more complete our picture of *Calothamnus* for cultivation will become.

By the way the Tasmanian Region of S.G.A.P. have joined our Study Group, so I hope to hear if anyone in Tasmania has tried growing *Calothamnus*. If not maybe someone would break the ice and send for some seed.

Thank you to all those who have paid the \$2 fee for 1987-88 which is due at the end of this month.

Bye for now, hope to hear from you soon.

Regards,

Barb

I always enjoy reading your Bulletin. The outings sound so enjoyable