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#### ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS Inc.

# EPACRIS STUDY GROUP

Group Leader: Gwen Elliot, P.O. Box 655 Heathmont Vic. 3135

## NEWSLETTER

No. 17

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March 2004

Greetings to all Epacris Study Group members. This Newsletter follows the ASGAP Conference, held at Launceston Tasmania in January 2004 and it certainly provided a horticultural feast for Epacridaceae enthusiasts.



Launceston, Tasmania

Tasmania is so rich in *Epacris* and its relatives, we all experienced something new each day. Our Study Group was well represented with around 12 members in attendance, and we also now have several new members who joined up at our Study Group display.

Founding Epacris Study Group Leader, Dr. Ron Crowden gave an inspiring presentation on Tasmanian Epacridaceae and Ron also joined me to provide part of our special Epacris Study Group segment as did former Study Group Secretary, Dick Burns. Ron has kindly provided the powerpoint presentation material for the information of members who were unable to attend the Conference and it will be included in possibly our next Newsletter.

Dick Burns was leader of the Pre-Conference Tour to north-western Tasmania, including the Cradle Mountain National Park and during our travels we saw flowering plants of *Epacris curtisiae*, E. gunnii, E. impressa, E. lanuginosa and E. serpyllifolia.

As part of our Study Group display at the Conference a series of triple-fold photo cards were prepared for display and for sale. A special page featuring these cards is also enclosed with this Newsletter, and as a Special Offer to Study Group members, the cards can be posted anywhere in Australia, at no extra cost. (As I will be away during April, please be prepared for a delay in reply if you are ordering then.)

As a follow-up to the Conference it seemed appropriate that our Profile Page for this issue should feature one of the several Tasmanian endemic species, and what could be more fitting than Epacris tasmanica.

The 23rd Biennial ASGAP Conference will be held in Perth from October 1st - 7th, 2005, with Pre-Conference tours commencing on September 26th, and Post-Conference tours also available. You can register your Expressions of Interest now with the Conference Secretary, at PO Box 64, Nedlands 6909. As there are no species of *Epacris* in the west our Study Group will not have the same high profile as in Tasmania, but there will be many other plants, including some in the Epacridaceae family of course, for those able to travel to WA in 2005.

I trust you enjoy this Newsletter and look forward to receiving your items and comments for our next issue in Spring 2004.

With greating. ComenE.

#### **NEWS AND NOTES**

Welcome to new Study Group Members

Following the ASGAP Conference in Launceston and a subsequent talk to A.P.S. South East Melbourne region in February, we are delighted to be able to welcome to the EPACRIS STUDY GROUP the following new members -

Ian Cox of Kenthurst NSW

**Norma Duff** of Lower Barrington Tas.

Barbara Nevin of Saumarez Ponds NSW,

Anthony Parry of Churchill Vic. and Würenlingen, Switzerland

Pat Tratt of Emerald Vic

Talks will also be provided to, A.P.S. Yarra Yarra group on March 4th, to Wilson Park on March 9th and to Marcondah region on. March 19th. Hopefully we may be able to welcome some further new members in our next Newsletter.

**Epacris Study Group member honoured** 

Recipients of the ASGAP Australian Plants Award at the 22nd Biennial Conference were **Marion and John Simmons** of Legana, Tasmania. Marion and John received the award primarily for their outstanding work in regard to the genus of *Acacia*, but Marion is also a long-time member of the EPACRIS STUDY GROUP.

What a year it is for Marion and John. Just over 2 weeks after Conference ended the Australia Day Awards for 2004 were announced, and once again we found the names of MARION & JOHN SIMMONS among those being honoured as Members of the Order of Australia (OAM).

Congratulations Marion and John, and thanks from us all for your ongoing work with Australian plants.

Actually four people from the ASGAP Conference received Australia Day Awards.

Kay Geeves who assisted in leading one of the Pre-Conference tours received an OAM for her service to botany and conservation through the Australian Plant Society, as did Gwen Harden, for her service to botany as a researcher, publisher, conservationist and educator. Gwen also received the Australian Plants Award in the Professional Division at the Conference.

Finally an OAM was also awarded to Ivan Holliday from South Australia whose work with the genus Melaleuca is known to many A.P.S. members.

Congratulations to all concerned.

#### News & Notes from Members

**Faye Candy** of Berwick Vic. wrote and kindly sent some *Epacris pulchella* seed. Faye mentioned that she lost several *Epacris* plants during the summer of 2002/3, despite trying to keep the water up to them. The ones in the garden fared better than those in pots.

**Kris Schaffer** of Tasmania sent her study group renewal inside a delightful card featuring *Richea scoparia* (from the Epacridaceae family) illustrated by Tasmanian artist Sylvie Gerozisis. Sylvie's *Botanica tasmania* series of cards are available from PO Box 164, Woodbridge 7162 - Ph. 03) 6267 4563.

**Jeff Irons** of England received our October 2003 Newsletter the day after he had presented a lecture on Conservatory Plants and had included mention of *Epacris impressa* and the large number of selected cultivars grown in conservatories in the U.K. during Victorian times. Jeff feels that the heating and light levels of many modern British houses would seem to indicate that conditions could be suitable for growing *Epacris* as a house plants, but centrally heated houses may be too dry for them.

Jeff's plants of *Epacris serpyllifolia* have grown well during the summer of 2003 and he has transplanted some of the seedlings that germinated during the previous spring. The remainder will be potted as soon as he has space for them.

A new series of COLOUR PHOTO GREETING CARDS featuring Epacris

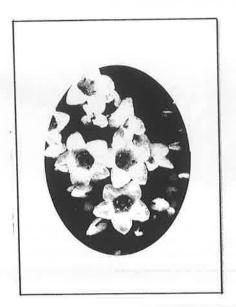
Sixteen triple-fold greeting cards, all featuring full-colour photographs of *Epacris* species, with blank space inside for your personal message, are now available through the Study Group These are priced at \$2.50 each and will be posted at no extra cost to Epacris Study Group members.

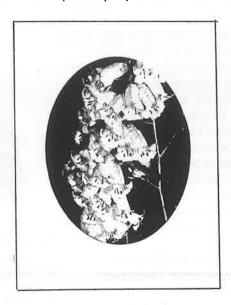
Five of the cards in this series are depicted in black-and-white below -

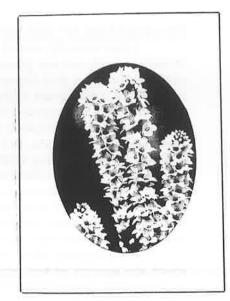
Top row: Lower row: Epacris microphylla, Epacris longiflora Epacris impressa,

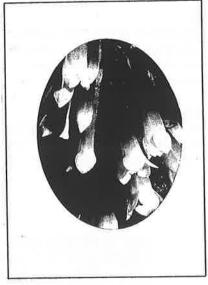
Epacris breviflora - Cabramurra

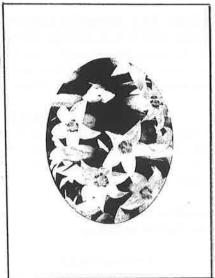
Epacris purpurascens var. onosmiflora











The cards currently available are listed below. An order form for your use if desired is printed on page 9 of this Newsletter.

#### EPACRIS STUDY GROUP GREETING CARDS

No 1 - Epacris breviflora - Cabramurra

No 2 - Epacris calvertiana var. versicolor

No 3 - Epacris coriacea No 4 - Epacris exserta

No 5 - Epacris grandis

No 6 - Epacris lanuginosa, Woolly Heath No 7 - Epacris longiflora, Fuchsia Heath

No 8 - Epacris impressa - Grampians Vic.

No 9 - Epacris impressa 'Cranbourne Bells'

No 10 - Epacris impressa - Double-flowered Pink

No 11 - Epacris purpurascens var. purpurascens No 12 - Epacris purpurascens var. onosmiflora

No 13 - Epacris microphylla - selection

No 14 - Epacris muelleri

No 15 - Epacris pulchella - Coral Heath

No 16 - Epacris reclinata - Sandstone Heath

It is anticipated that the range will be increased in the future if the current demand continues.

Recording the flowering times of Epacris impressa

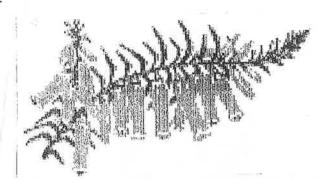
As the main flowering season for *Epacris impressa* approaches, Study Group members are urged to start jotting down the times when particular forms come into flower - in your gardens - or in local areas. A page for this purpose was included in our October 2003 Newsletter, but whether you use this page, your diary, a 2004 calendar, a fridge-magnet note-pad, a whiteboard, or anything else you choose and find easy to use - PLEASE do take time to start making a record of the flowering times of this species. It promises to be an extremely interesting exercise, with some forms flowering in flower at most times of the year - but in WHICH AREAS? We need YOUR help in this research activity.

#### Promotion of Epacris impressa in Vic.

I have recently needed to renew my Victorian Driver's Licence, and was pleased to see the current design which features the pink-flowered form of *Epacris impressa* on a pale green background. You do need to look fairly hard to recognise it's beauty on the plastic licence card, but it certainly is there to highlight the Floral Emblem of Victoria, and the licence is sent attached to the following additional information, which is included to the right-hand side of this note.

As a Driver's Licence is now current for 10 years, *Epacris impressa* may have been featured on Victorian licences for a few years now, but it is certainly the first time that I have received same.

It's a pleasant diversion from the Photo-ID which also appears on the card, and which I may even find relatively flattering in 10 years time!



In the background of the new style driver licence you will notice the common heath which was proclaimed as the floral emblem of Victoria on the 11 November 1958. It is a slender shrub usually 0.3 to 1 metre high, generally found in coastal heathlands, mountainous and sub-alpine areas. The common heath flowers through winter and spring.

#### Another item for puzzle enthusiasts

Again we are able to acknowledge the Victorian Newsletter of the then, Society for Growing Australian Plants for providing us with a word puzzle including *EPACRIS*. The following item appeared in the December 1983 issue. (I knew there must be a good reason why we continue to keep and store Newsletters from many years ago!). The Editor at the time was Ross Field.

#### GENUS SEARCH

The 19 Victorian plant genera listed have all been hidden in this grid. They have been printed across (backwards or forwards), up or down, or diagonally, but always in a straight line without letters being skipped. You can use the letters in the grid more than once, but you will find 27 letters left unused. These make up a hidden sentence.

Mark each genus off in the grid and cross them off on the list as you go

**LAGENOPHORA** ∨ BRUNONIA CHAMAESCILLA **LEPTOSPERMUM** CORREA MELALEUCA MONOTOCA **VEPACRIS** EUCALYPTUS **√OPERCULARIA** √GAHNIA **✓ PLATYLOBIUM GLEICHENIA PULTENAEA** √GOMPHOLOBIUM SENECIO HOVEA **VIOLA IUNCUS** 

For EPACRIS STUDY GROUP members, \_ the genus *Epacris* has already been highlighted in the grid.

The solution, plus the hidden sentence will appear in our next Study Group Newsletter.



AUSTRALIAN FLORA ISGREAT

# ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS Inc. EPACRIS STUDY GROUP Plant profile

### Epacris tasmanica W. M. Curtis

tasmanica = from Tasmania Distribution - Tasmania

Epacris tasmanica is an attractive slender shrub to about 1 m tall, with rigid, erect branches.

The leaves are broadly lanceolate to ovate, to about 8mm long, usually with a prickly tip. The new growth is an attractive bright green.

Flowering is usually during late winter, although there is variation within this species

and some plants can flower in autumn, while others reach a peak in spring.

The flowers are white, with spreading lobes to 1cm across and are produced in the leaf axils, often appearing like small clusters on and near the branchlet tips. The floral bracts and sepals can sometimes be reddish.

The fruit is a capsule which splits when ripe to release the very small seeds.



Photograph @ Rodger Elliot

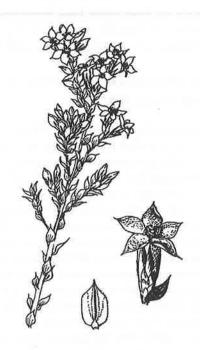


Illustration © Trevor Blake from the Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants Suitable for Cultivation, Vol. 4, Lothian Books, Melbourne

#### Natural Habitat

Epacris tasmanica is widespread and abundant in the south and east of Tasmania where there is considerable variation within the species.

It commonly occurs in sclerophyll forests and woodland. The soils are generally dry and stony, but plants frequently become established in damp pockets, seepage lines or other moist situations.

An Epacris which occurs on Flinders Island may also be a form of E. tasmanica

Illustration © Bill Gunn

#### Epacris tasmanica W. M. Curtis

#### Cultivation

Epacris tasmanica is not uncommon in cultivation, and is grown by several members of the Epacris Study Group. It likes cool, well-drained but moist soils and is suitable for growing in filtered sun, partial sun or even fairly shady spots.

Plants are tolerant of moderate frosts. They respond well to annual pruning, which is recommended for the development of bushy growth and ongoing vigour.

Epacris tasmanica can also be grown very successfully in containers.

#### Propagation

Epacris tasmanica is commonly propagated from cuttings of barely firm young growth, which strike fairly readily. This method should be used for the propagation of specific variants.

For propagation from seed, see Newsletter No. 7, March 1999. The article on seed propagation by Jeff Irons, in Newsletter 8 may also be helpful.

Names previously applied to Epacris tasmanica

In 1812 the name of *Epacris squarrosa* was given by the botanist Poiret, to plants which prior to that time had been known as *Dracophyllum squarrosum* R. Br.

Many botanists regarded this name as invalid and subsequent names used include E. squarrosa, J. D. Hook (1857), and E. serpyllifolia var. squarrosa (Hook.) Benth. (1868).

# **Epacris tasmanica** was named by the Tasmanian botanist **Winifred Mary Curtis**

Winifred Mary Curtis AM, Ph.D., F.L.S., was born in England in 1905 and travelled to Australia in 1939 where she began teaching at the University of Tasmania.

Through her extensive work on Tasmania's flora, Winifred Curtis has contributed to the introduction of many plants into horticulture. Her revision of Rodway's Tasmanian Flora (1903) expanded into the authoritative Student's Flora of Tasmania (1956-94). She also prepared the text for the magnificent six-volume series, The Endemic Flora of Tasmania (1967-78) illustrated by Margaret Stones, commissioned and sponsored by Lord Talbot de Malahide and published by Aerial Press, London.

Winifred Curtis received a doctorate of philosphy in 1950, and of science from the University of London in 1968. As University of Tasmania Honorary Research Fellow, she continued her taxonomic work long after retirement in 1966.

Several Australian plants have been named in her honour including Epacris curtisiae.



Photo: Winifred M. Curtis from *The Student's Flora* of *Tasmania*, Part 4B, St. David's Park Publishing, Hobart, 1994.

This space is for additional comments relating to Epacris tasmanica

# ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS Inc. EPACRIS STUDY GROUP Special profile page

## Epacris franklinii - A new life for an old name

The following is reprinted from the October 2003 issue of The Australian Plant Society, Tasmania Newsletter, 'EUCRYPHIA' with kind permission from Dr. Ron Crowden, founding leader of our EPACRIS STUDY GROUP.

"The earliest botanists to visit Tasmania recorded 3 species of *Epacdris* occupying riverine habitats.

Epacris exserta R. Br. on the South Esk river system in the north of the state,

Epacris mucronulata R. Br. on rivers in the south emptying into Recherche Bay, and

Epacris franklinii Hook. f. on the Gordon River system of the west coast.

E. franklinii was later adjudged to be identical with E. mucronulata on the basis of a comparison of some R. Brown specimens of E. mucronulata with a specimen collected by R. C. Gunn from the Gordon River and nominated by him as Epacris franklinii.

Bentham's description of *E. mucronulata* in his Flora Australiensis (1868) carries the footnote - 'Brown's specimens (*E. mucronulata*) are in young bud. Gunn's (*E. franklinii*) are past flower, but both appear to belong to the same species.' Thereafter all *E. franklinii* specimens have been referred to as *E. mucronulata* in Tasmanian literature. The name *E. franklinii* is listed as a synonym for *E. mucronulata* in the floras of both Rodway and Curtis.

Recently two riverbank *Epacris* have stimulated interest. To one of these I gave the interim identification tag - E. 'Union Bridge', after its first found location on the Mersey River. At the time I regarded this plant as closely resembling *E. mucronulata*.

Some 10 years later another taxon was located on the Meander River and the collector lodged a specimen of this taxon in the Tasmanian Herbarium as *E. exserta*. From my initial examination of this plant I concluded that it was not *E. exserta* as it lacked the characteristic exserted anthers and stigma. Rather, both the anthers and the stigma are fully enclosed within the corolla tube. In my view the Meander plant was identical to *E.* 'Union Bridge' and therefore it too was best referred to as *E..* aff. *mucronulata* until subsequent work would determine its true relationships.

Despite the obvious identification anomaly, the name *E. exserta* or *E. aff. exserta* stuck with the Meander plant and indeed this name has also been incorrectly assigned to some later collections of *E.* 'Union Bridge' made from other locations along the Mersey River.

The controversy associated with the proposal to build an irrigation dam on the Meander River, and the part played in that argument by the 'Meander Heath' prompted me to look again at the Mersey and Meander River plants, either to confirm or debunk my notion that they were more closely alligned with *E. mucronulata* than to *E. exserta*.

Accordingly, earlier this year I arranged with the curator of the Tasmanian Herbarium to undertake a detailed examination of all the relevant herbarium material, including the type specimens for each of these taxa. I have been able to also visit and carry out some 'on site' studies at pertinent locations.

The results of these studies showed:

Epacris exserta does not occur on either of the Meander or the Mersey Rivers. Rather it is very restricted in its (present day) occurrence to only 3 or 4 sites on the South Esk. Whatever its past distribution may have been, E. exserta nowadays is a very rare plant indeed. There were a number of other collections in the Herbarium which had been improperly named by the collector(s) as E. exserta, coming from widely diverse locations and habitats ranging from mountain summit, through a variety of heathland and forest vegetation types, as well as riverine. Most of the riverbank specimens, in fact, were the riverine forms of either E. tasmanica or E. virgata. All of the relevant herbarium sheets have now been correctly redetermined.

The examination which I made of the *Epacris mucronulata* sheets and all the sheets containing Meander and Mersey River specimens gave evidence of two taxa.

Taxon 1 contains specimens mainly from the Huon River system, but includes several Gordon River collections as well. It appears identical with the type specimen of *E. mucronulata* R. Br. (obtained on loan from the British Museum.)

Taxon 2 contains plants from the King, Gordon, Franklin, Maxwell, Pieman, White, Mersey and Meander River systems. I believe, too, that Taxon 2 occurs on the Leven River, but I have not seen a specimen and to date none have been lodged in the Herbarium.

#### Epacris franklinii - A new life for an old name

In many respects the two taxa are very similar, particularly the vegetative characteristics, indicating a close relationship. But there are some differences which appear to be fairly consistent.

- Taxon 1 young stems pilose to a degree, leaves often distinctly 3-nerved underneath, the apex usually drawn out to a point. The coroola tube longer than the calyx, the style bulbous near the base, the style is short, the stigma below the anthers.
- Taxon 2 young stems glabrous or barely pilose, the leaves with only the midrib prominent underneath, the apex acute but blunt, often with an in-turned mucro. The corolla tube is about equal with, or slightly longer than the calyx, the style is long, tapering from the base, or with a slight central bulge, the stigma near the top of the anthers.

Thus in my view there are two clear groups of plants, each with a consistent set of characters and with the difference in style length and position of the stigma, a significant character allowing for easy separation and identification.

Drawings of the flower of E. franklinii Hook. f. on a Gunn collection sheet (obtained on loan from Kew) is an exact match to the flower of Taxon 2.

Accordingly I have proposed that the name Epacris franklinii Hook. f. which was originally applied to plants growing on the west coast rivers, be resurrected for all the Taxon 2 plants (including those from the Mersey and Meander Rivers) and that Epacris mucronulata R. Br. refer in future to the Taxon 1 specimens (primarily from the Huon).

These redeterminations have been annotated to all the relevant herbarium sheets."

Ron Crowden.

#### The Reinstatement of Epacris Franklinii Hook. 1. is officially published in 'MUELLERIA' Volume 18, 2003 from the National Herbarium of Vic.

#### Here Dr. Ron Crowden has provided the following KEY TO THE SPECIES

Filaments longer than anthers: anthers and stigma exserted

1 E. exserta

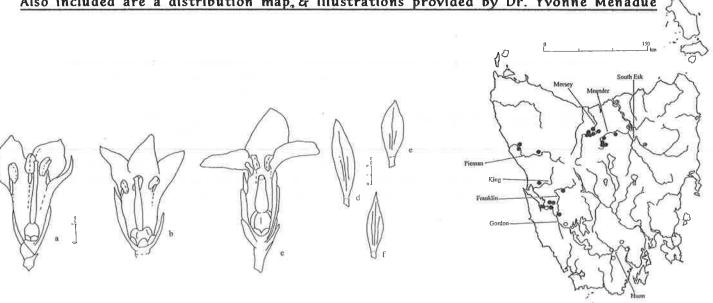
Filaments shorter than anthers: anthers and stigma enclosed 2

2

- Leaves tri-nerved underneath, apex acute or acuminate, stigma below anthers 2
- 2 E. mucronulata
- 2 Leaves with only midrib apparent, apex acute with inturned mucro: stigma amongst anthers

3 E. franklinii

Also included are a distribution map, & illustrations provided by Dr. Yvonne Menadue



Half flowers of a) E. exserta, b) E. franklinii & c) E. mucronulata Leaves of d) E. exserta, e) E. franklinii & f) E. mucronulata

Map showing collection sites in Tasmania of Epacris exserta R.Br. (19). E. franklinii R.Br. ( ), and E. mucronulata Hook.f. ( ).

Profile Sheets on Epacris exserta, E. franklinii and E. mucronulata will be prepared for future Newsletters. If you are growing these species or have grown them in the past, your comments for our Profile Pages would be very welcome.

Epacris Study Group - Membership information.

Membership of The Epacris Study Group and other Study Groups of the Australian Plant Society / Society for Growing Australian Plants is available to all members of the A.P.S. / S.G.A.P.

Membership of any Australian state group, not necessarily that of the area in which you reside, entitles you to membership of one or more study groups.

You can join the EPACRIS STUDY GROUP for just \$5.00 for 1 year or \$10 for 2 years renewable in June. Overseas subscriptions - \$10 Aust. p.a.

Membership renewal date is shown on address label of current Study Group members.

Memberships should be sent to P.O. Box 655, Heathmont 3135.

Please make cheques payable to The Epacris Study Group.

Sender: Association of
Societies for Growing Australian Plants
EPACRIS STUDY GROUP
P.O. Box 655, Heathmont Vic. 3135

A further note on Epacris franklinii

Further to the above, the following item, with further information on this *Epacris* appeared in the January 2004 issue of 'EUCRYPHIA', submitted by Dick Burns.

'In the October issue Ron Crowden assigned the old name of *Epacris franklinii* to what we have known as *Epacris* sp. 'Union Bridge'. He mentioned a report of it being on the Leven River,

I found two populations some years ago at the water verge, downstream from Gunns Plains. Ron identified it for me as E. 'Union Bridge'.

Having located what is now *E. franklinii* on the Leven and knowing it was on the Mersey, logically the same plant should be on the Forth at the same altitude and in the same rock.. Unfortunately the Paloona Dam is at about the right spot. But after some years of sporadic searching, a small population was located downstream from the dam.

This year I have collected flowering specimens from both rivers and will lodge them with the Tasmanian Herbarium.

On one trip to Cradle, I found one plant of what looked like *E. franklinii* at the turnoff to Lemonthyme Lodge. This was strangely way out of place, a long way to the nearest river. But the roadside slasher has recently solved that difficulty, and I cannot find another plant there.

Some years ago the North West group found a few epacris plants near the Paloona Dam wall. We keyed them through as *Epacris exserta*. Last time I went there I couldn't find them.

I guess a trip to the Don River is warranted.'

Dick Burns.

Contributions for our Spring NEWSLETTER

Contributions for our EPACRIS STUDY GROUP Newsletters are always very welcome. It may be some information regarding plants you have grown - or even *Epacris* which have failed in your garden. It may be a comment regarding plants you have observed in their natural habitat. It may be a query which other members of the Study Group may be able to answer.

The Newsletter is our avenue of communication. Do feel free to use it - often!

If you would rather send a comment or query via email, simply send to rgelliot@netspace.net.au

As Rodger and I will be in Western Australia for most of October, I will be aiming to post our October

Newsletter in late September. Contributions would therefore be appreciated by the end of August this year

We will also be away from home during most of April, so I must ask for your patience if you write during these months and do not receive a reply immediately.

#### ORDER FORM for EPACRIS STUDY GROUP GREETING CARDS

	No. required		No. required
Epacris breviflora - Cabramurra Epacris calvertiana var. versicolor	N	Epacris impressa 'Cranbourne Bells'  Epacris impressa - Double-flowered Pink	
Epacris coriacea Epacris exserta Epacris grandis Epacris lanuginosa, Woolly Heath Epacris longiflora, Fuchsia Heath Epacris impressa - Grampians Vic.		Epacris purpurascens var. purpurascens Epacris purpurascens var. onosmiflora Epacris microphylla - selection Epacris muelleri Epacris pulchella - Coral Heath Epacris reclinata - Sandstone Heath	
Amount enclosed @ : Please forward cards to NAME	\$2.50 per card (	postage free) <u>\$</u>	
ADDRESS		Postcode	