

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY AUSTRALIA

HAKEA STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER NO. 74

OCTOBER 2020

ISSN0727-7008

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Dear members,

I write this newsletter in most uncertain times. Here in Victoria we are not allowed to travel more than five klms from home unless it is to go to work, get medical attention or to buy food. It has been a great challenge to our members in not being able to go on botanical excursions or visit members gardens. At the beginning of September the Victorian situation is far from being satisfactory and it appears we will be in lock-down for quite a while yet and with border closures remaining into 2021. In other states the border closures have restricted interstate travel, so I suspect a lot of us will be looking forward to 2021 and hoping we can get around to doing things as it was pre coronavirus.

In having to stay home the benefits have been that the garden has been much more maintained than it normally would have been and the hot house has a lot more seedlings growing to plant out stage. Also it has allowed me to correspond with a lot of members by internet and keep up to date with their Hakea endeavors.

The Hakea Study Group page on facebook has been a great success. The number of people who put up photos and comments has been truly amazing. Some of the photos such as those of Hakea grammatophylla and Hakea francisiana have aroused considerable interest and encouraged those on the facebook page to try these and other species of Hakea.

The weather too at Elliminyt has been unpredictable. In the first seven months the rainfall average was about 25mm per month and then in August the clouds descended and 125mm of rain fell. So as I write the garden beds are quite moist and I hope September will be quite a bit dryer but the long range forecast is for above average rains. We are well down on the yearly rainfall of 700+ mm. A lot of Hakeas do not like prolonged wet feet and especially those which grow on deep sand. So far my losses have been minimal, a small francisiana, a constablei and a loranthifolia. All of these grow in very well drained conditions, so I will have to find a new location that fits this requirement.

August was also a very cold month with many days 13 degrees C or less. On one day it was so cold that snow fell in various parts of Colac and the surrounding hills, leaving a brief white cover. There have also been a number of light frosts, which seem to have done very little damage. I covered up Hakea clavata with a shade cloth over the top and then for extra safety put some plastic over that again when the forecast was for a frost at night. Some of the other frost sensitive native plants I did not cover and they have shown very little damage. However I have been comparing the temperature of Albany in WA against Colac and Albany seems to about four degrees warmer in winter, which is a big difference when it comes to cold tolerance. No doubt the higher parts of the Stirling Ranges would be cooler.

The Hakeas in the garden have flowered particularly well this winter. The dryer and more sunny days in the first six months have suited most of the species. Hakea bicornata flowered from April through to late June but despite all its flowers, no seed appears to have been set. Hakea verrucosa with its pinky purple flowers started a bit later but it too does not appear to have set seed. The three ssp. of petiolaris all flowered. Hakea megadenia from Tasmania has flowered very well

starting in March and now I can see plenty of seed follicles forming. Just finishing flowering at the end of August are *scoparia*, *marginata*, *chromatropa*, *lehmanniana* and *megalosperma*. Flowering in early September are *francisiana*, *anadenia*, *acuminata*, *pachyphylla*, *costata*, *neurophylla*, *gilbertii*, *cygna* ssp. *cygna*, *acuminata*, *macrorrhyncha*, *grammatophylla*, *sericea*, *pycnoneura*, *invaginata*, *cristata*, *rugosa*, *olivacea*, *epiglottis* ssp. *epiglottis*, *erinacea*, *longiflora*, *trifurcata*, *varia* and *brownii*.

I have mentioned *Hakea chromatropa* in previous newsletters and how vulnerable it is because of its roadside planting. I have been informed that another population has been found where there are some on a roadside but also plants inside the fence. Here at Elliminyt it has been a very floriferous plant with white perianths and pink styles which are quite attractive. The good news is that seed follicles appear to be forming.

Another very rare species from WA, *Hakea acuminata* has also done well here at Elliminyt. It looks like a cross between *Hakea petiolaris* and *victoria* but is described as a species. Its lime yellow flowers are quite visible in the shiny green ovate leaf axis. The two plants set four seeds last year, so I am hoping for more this year.

Propagating.

I propagated some 25 *Hakea* species using the saucer method in the autumn and then transferred them into tubes when the first leaves appeared. Some already had roots over 3cm long. Most have been kept in the hot house over winter where they have continued to grow and will be planted out in late September. I have cleared some more of the old wind break on our property and will have no trouble filling it up. I also did a clean out of all my old seed of *Eucalypts*, *Melaleucas*, *Allocasuarinas* etc. I threw it into a number of punnets filled with vermiculite not expecting to see much germination as most was some ten to 15 years old and had not been stored against heat and cold. To my surprise I had a high percentage of germination. So perhaps old seed may not be infertile as we think.

Tony Hughes from Winchelsea in Victoria has done some propagating of *Hakeas* by cuttings. He has built good propagating houses which with his expertise in horticulture has enabled him to achieve quite good results. The *varia* group does strike well from cuttings and trials of *Hakea linearis* have been very successful. *Hakea bicornata* also propagates well from cuttings.

Phil Trickett has grafted onto *Grevillea robusta* rootstock *Hakeas clavata*, *laurina*, *petiolaris* x *laurina*, *victoria*, *bucculenta*, *francisiana*, *pycnoneura*, *fraseri* and *grammatophylla*. There is probably a lot more we can graft onto *Grevillea robusta*. Phil had high wind exposure and the *Grevillea robusta* rootstock is less inclined to be blown out of the ground or sheared off at the base and is also much hardier to the climatic elements and soils types. I must start putting together a list of what has been grown from cuttings and grafted as this may be the way to go with certain species of *Hakea*.

I have not been able to germinate *Hakea lissosperma* from Tasmania and sub-alpine parts of Victoria and NSW successfully. Even though the seed is fresh and given the cold treatment before germination it still does not respond. Fortunately native plant nurserymen in Tasmania are able to germinate it and hence I have been able to procure plants. It does not like our hot summer days when the temperature approaches 40 degrees C.

Tony Crawford is wondering why his *Hakea rigida* seedlings are dying in the hot house. I suspect it is from damping off. *Hakeas* that grow in deep sandy soils probably need a mix of three parts coarse sand to one part potting mix when propagating them.

Notes from members.

Phil Trickett and Catriona Bate from Milton have been pruning and replanting their garden after the disastrous bush fires in February. They received welcome rains in April- May but

did not need the 610mm that fell in two weeks in early August. Luckily they live on top of a hill and have good loamy soil that mostly drains well. Although they are frost free and warmer than southern parts of NSW the wind and large falls of rain make it difficult for Hakeas to grow on their own roots. Fortunately Phil is a master at grafting and once on rootstocks such as *Grevillea robusta*, Hakeas seem to do well.

Neil and Wendy Marriott have sent me their list of Hakeas growing at Stawell in granite country. With 120 species in the ground they are continuing to plant more as they are propagated. Whilst they do receive frosts they can plant frost sensitive species up against north facing boulders which radiate some heat at night. Across the road from them is a property once owned by the late Ian Michell whom I knew quite well from attending meetings of the Maroondah group some forty years ago. Ian planted quite a few Hakeas in the bush and some are still going well today. I plan to visit the property soon and note the Hakeas that are still alive.

Tom Constant, Jennifer Young and Jean Sloane have had a trip to the Stirling Ranges to view the damage done by the bush fires and to see what Hakea species have survived. They also revisited some of the Hakea species around Kondinin which they had seen before. One in particular is a roadside planting of *Hakea pendens* which was in full flower. Altogether they observed 28 Hakea species. Not bad for a two day trip.

The burnt out areas of the Stirling Ranges will take some time to recover. In the unburnt areas they observed Hakeas *pritzillii*, *platysperma*, *strumosa*, *denticulata* and many others. I would have loved to be with them as they are great company and so enthusiastic in looking for Hakea species.

Peter Thomas from Townsville has been growing some of the subtropical and tropical Hakea plants of Queensland. He has Hakeas *trineura*, *benthamii* (known as *plurinervia* in other states), and *persiehana* growing in his garden. Townsville in summer has a hot humid climate which does not suit many Hakeas. Recently he has done trips up to the Atherton tablelands and out towards Mount Isa looking at flora including Hakeas.

Laurie Baglin from Shepparton shows off some of his showy Hakeas such as *grammatophylla* on facebook and creates a lot of comment. He resides in a retirement village in Shepparton in northern Victoria but has convinced management to give him a special bed to grow his cherished native plants. He has used his past experience as a nurseryman to build up the soil which was once fruit orchid clay loams.

Tony and Anne Crawford from Tinderbox in southern Tasmania write that at the beginning of August they had Hakeas *macraeana*, *lissocarpha* and *laurina* in flower. Of the four large plants of *laurina* two partially flowered and two did not flower at all. Tony has built a new hot house in 2019 and from it he planted out earlier *longiflora*, *bicornata*, *kippistiana*, *meisneriana*, *candolleana*, *dohertyi*, *gilbertii*, *horrida*, *ilicifolia*, *hastata*, *incrassata*, *laevipes* ssp *granicola*, *linearis* and *scoparia*. Tony and Anne probably have nearly 100 species, which is fantastic.

Hans Griesser from Gumeracha in the Adelaide hills writes that they have had good winter rains and in early August Hakea *horrida* (3m tall) and *nitida* are in full flower. A three and a half year old Hakea *erecta* is also coming into flower for the first time. Others in flower are *rostrata*, *macraeana*, *decurrens*, *verrucosa*, *dohertyi*, *propinqua* and *platysperma*. Just finished are *erinacea* and *lissocarpa* which had masses of fairy floss pink flowers. The latter had resprouted from a lignotuber after the 2015 fire. His two young plants of Hakea *chromatropa* are growing satisfactorily. Hakea *obtusa* died from the frosts and maybe *auriculata* too. Hakea *cucullata* survived the frosts along with some fifty other Hakea species in the ground. Hans also propagates some Banksias but considers Hakeas are a lot easier. *Editor*: Wimmera growers of Hakeas in Victoria have successfully grown Hakea *obtusa* for many years where frosts can be as low as at least minus 3 degrees C. Young plants may need protection. This species does not have resprouting capabilities.

Financial

Balance 30 th June 2020	\$3633-49
Income, subscriptions	15-00
Expenditure, Printing and posting newsletter No 73	63-05
Balance forward, 30 th September 2020	\$3585-44

I will advise shortly those members whose subscriptions are due.

Hakea Books.

Jennifer Young has updated her book on Hakeas of WA including Hakea chromatropa details. Her previous editions, the three handbooks on Hakeas of botanical areas of WA, and then the two editions of Hakeas of WA have all sold out. It is a credit to her enthusiasm and artistic work that they have been so popular. You can obtain a copy by writing to Jennifer at PO Box 576 West Perth, 6872. The book costs \$25 plus postage which is very good value for the information in it.

The proposed book on Hakeas of Australia is progressing slowly. I have done some 85% of the species description and then will have to be double-checked for accuracy. I am now much more appreciative of the input authors have put into books.

Hakea crawl 2021.

Assuming that the coronavirus is well and truly under control the intention is to have an excursion in the first week of October in 2021. It will be concentrated on the area of WA from Bremer Bay, to the west of Lake Magenta and to the eastern area of the Stirling Ranges. It is an area I have not seen much of, so we might make some interesting discoveries of Hakea species. If you are interested, please let me know so I can keep you informed as further details are worked out.

In the last newsletter I included descriptions of Hakeas in the petiolaris group but it was not complete as I still had to include Hakea obtusa which I will do now.

This is a lovely soft textured plant from the Fitzgerald NP and Ravensthorpe area of WA. It grows in a variety of soils from sand to gravelly clays where the rainfall is of more a winter occurrence of above 400mm. It can grow to 3 m high but generally tends to be more spreading. The leaves are a light green oblong-elliptic to 10 cm long and up to 2cm wide. There are three longitudinal veins and the apex acute or obtuse.

The flowers are of a reddish color, which form in semi globular clusters on nodes of old wood. The styles are creamy white and the perianth reddish which gives a very attractive flower. Hakea obtusa usually flowers over winter and early spring. The follicles are elliptical with some warty protuberances and are tightly attached to the branch or stem. In cultivation it has proved to be a hardy plant provided it is planted in well drained soils where there is reasonable rainfall. In warmer climates it prefers a semi shaded location. It will probably tolerate frosts down to -3 degrees C. At Strathmerton in northern Victoria it did particularly well in deep sand with some summer watering and at Elliminyt it is flowering now in sandy loam in a built up bed.

The photos of the black cockatoos and split seed follicles are from Alex George in WA. Despite the damage they do to his Hakea multilineata and orthorrhyncha, some seed follicles are still left on the bush and not all seed gets eaten despite the follicles being opened. The other photos are from John Boevink of Hakea cucullata and corymbosa from his garden in northern Tasmania.

With the end of the main flowering season it will be time to look at doing some pruning and preparing for the summer months ahead. It will also be time to begin propagating again. Remember the seed bank has seed available for members to access. I hope we all have a lot more freedom to get around in 2021, and stay healthy.

Cheers, Paul

