AUSTRALIAN PLANTS SOCIETY Geelong

Correa Mail

Newsletter No 387 - December, 2022

NOVEMBER MEETING **Grafting Eremophilas**

Our speaker for the November meeting was Tony Hughes. Tony teaches horticulture and has been one of the growers at our plant sale for some years. At tonight's meeting he gave an excellent presentation and practical workshop on grafting Eremophilas.

***Eremophila* 'Pink Panther', a grafted hybrid**

Grafting Eremophilas has several advantages for gardeners in our climate …

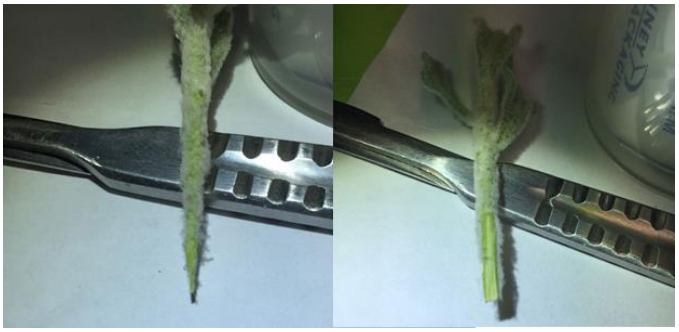
- Eremophilas don't like wet feet
- Eremophilas are notoriously hard to strike from cuttings
- You can get many plants from one piece of Eremophila material.

The tools required are simple – a cutting board, a clean, sharp scalpel and some Parafilm. Tony's preferred rootstock is Myoporum montanum, an easy to grow, bullet-proof plant well suited to local conditions. He prepares the rootstock as he would for any cutting, leaving two leaves and about 2cm above the top leaf for the graft site.

The scions (the Eremophila material to be grafted) need to have 3 or 4 nodes, and the leaves should be cut in half to help reduce moisture needs.

***Myoporum* rootstock prepared for grafting**

Cut the bottom of the Scion to a wedge to expose the vascular system on each side. It must be a wedge, not a point. If you cut to a point you will have removed all the vascular system.



The prepared scion from two angles

Cut a slit in the middle of the rootstock to 1mm longer than the wedge of the scion. Then gently slide the Scion into the wedge until all the exposed tissues are inside the slit.

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Parafilm is a laboratory tape that has a waxy coating and is used like cling-wrap to cover beakers etc. you can find it from laboratory suppliers or on eBay. Cut a 1cm wide strip of Parafilm from the roll. This one strip will stretch enough for 3 or 4 grafts. Peel the backing off the strip and hold it between your fingers to warm it up a bit. Then stretch out the first third of the strip to about 3cm. Start by rolling the Parafilm around the very bottom of the slit, go around once and let it stick to itself.

Continue up the graft in 5mm increments, keeping a slight tension on the Parafilm. Working upwards closes the wedge on the scion material, making for good contact of the tissues inside the graft union. Go to at least 5mm above the top of the graft to seal off the wound, and then go back down about half way before breaking or cutting the Parafilm. Roll the end until it sticks to itself. The aim is to have the wound nice and tight. This keeps the two lots of vascular systems in contact with each other, hopefully making the healing process quicker. It is also necessary to have the union waterproof, as the presence of water may encourage the wrong types of tissue to form.

Dip the cutting in rooting hormone powder (preferable to liquid for disease control) and plant in cutting pots. Remember to keep the stems moist, but try to keep the tops dry. Tony uses a Perlite and Peat moss mix with a ratio of 4 Perlite to 1 Peat Moss. He also uses capillary pots so to keep the tops of the grafts dry … they are watered from the bottom.

A ventilated hood over the plants keeps the humidity high, without condensation which will wet the scion and lead to failed grafts. When the *Eremophila* is ready for re-potting, you should see healthy new growth above the graft and probably some extra growth from the rootstock. You may also see roots from the bottom of the pot. Remove any growth from the rootstock, but leave the original leaves from your cutting. These leaves continue to supply energy to the scion and should not be removed until the top growth is the size of a tennis ball. Watch out for shoots off the side of the slit used to form your graft, these must be removed flush with the stem.

Insert Tab A into Slot B

The members then set about putting Tony's instructions into practice. A great deal of fun and hilarity ensued, and happily, a quite a few passing grade grafts were achieved. Thanks to Tony for a very informative and enjoyable evening.

PLANT TABLE **with Matt Baars**

Matt took control of the plant table discussion, which started rather late. Thankfully he was able to keep it moving otherwise we might not have been home until midnight.

I think by far the most striking plant on the table was a very deep crimson specimen of *Leptospermum scoparium*. (See 'Plant of the Month' article below.) There were two other specimens, both seedlings from Matt's garden that may be hybrids with *L. horizontalis* which is thought to be a semi-prostrate form of the local tea-tree, *L. continentale*. Both were pale pink.

One of the pale, possibly hybrid *Leptoespermum*

There were two species of *Lambertia* - *L. inermis*, a deep orange-flowered plant from the far south coast of W.A. and *L. formosa*, a red flowering plant known as Mountain Devils from the eastern NSW. It is the only species of *Lambertia* found naturally outside W.A.

Homoranthus darwinioides is a small shrub with pendulous yellow and pink flowers. It is found in central east NSW from around Dubbo to Denman. The flowers are said to have an unusual mousy smell.

***Homoranthus darwinioides* – Image M. Fagg, ANBG**

Melaleucas were well represented this month. *M. lutea* is a plant from around the Fitzgerald River National Park in southern W.A. It was renamed from *M. citrina*, to allow *Callistamon citrinus* to be moved into Melaleuca. The flowers are bright yellow and presented on an oval shaped spike. *M. spathulata* is a compact shrub from the far south west of W.A. it has small bright pink/purple flowers in spring. *M. filifolia* is a small shrub found in W.A. from Kalbarri south to around Geraldton. It has long, wiry foliage and lovely, spherical pink flowers. *M. violacea* is a straggly shrub from the south west corner of W.A. It has deep purple, and, to me, most un-Melaleuca-like flowers.

***Melaleuca violacea* - Image: Geoff Derrin**

A couple of people mentioned that the flowers on their plants were smaller this year than in the past, and wondered if perhaps the unseasonably wet winter and spring was a contributing factor. Among them were Waratahs, Grevilleas and *Banksia coccinea*. The smaller flowers were compensated by increased numbers of flowers. Curious.

Myoporum floribundum is a lovely plant, native to the coastal ranges of NSW and Victoria. It reaches a height of about 2.5 metres and has long arching branches with fine, sticky, pendulous leaves. Both the foliage and the tiny white flowers, which appear along he branches in spring, are fragrant.

Myoporum floribundum

PLANT OF THE MONTH - Leptospermum scoparium

We forgot to do a Plant of the Month choice, so I've made an editorial decision to write about Leptospermum scoparium. Ed.

Matt Leach brought along a remarkable specimen of *Leptospermum scoparium* – a rich, deep crimson that looked good enough to eat. Throughout my association with the club, I've heard this plant is spoken of, in a somewhat derogatory fashion, as a New Zealand weed. My investigations have been interesting.

Matt's *Leptospermum scoparium*

L. scoparium is native to south-eastern Australia and to New Zealand. In Australia its common name is Broom Tea-tree and it is found coastally from around Sydney to the Yarra Ranges, and in Tasmania. The flowers are white, rarely very pale pink. It's a hardy plant in the garden, but that's about all. In New Zealand, it is known as Manuka, and is the source of the incredibly expensive, but very tasty, Manuka honey.

***L.scoparium* in Victoria**

According to Wikipedia, recent studies have shown that the plant originated in Australia sometime in the last 20 million years. How seeds were transported to New Zealand is not known, but suggestion of cyclone winds or weather systems created by bush-fires might be the conduit. They seem to have arisen in areas where there are frequent fires as they have certain fire adaptive traits, like lignotubers. They probably became established in limited areas, but spread once the Polynesian settlers arrived and began fire-management of the land.

Studies are showing an evolutionary loss of lignotubers in the New Zealand populations in the South Island were fires are a rarity. There are also chemical differences between the Australian and New Zealand plants which suggests that a revision of the genus is in order.

The deep red cultivars seem to have all originated in New Zealand, and this might account for the less than enthusiastic attitudes to those plants on our specimen table.

And, as an aside, the plant and honey name is pronounced maNOOka. The suburb of Canberra, named indirectly after the plant, is pronounced MAHnaka. I just thought you'd like to know ☺

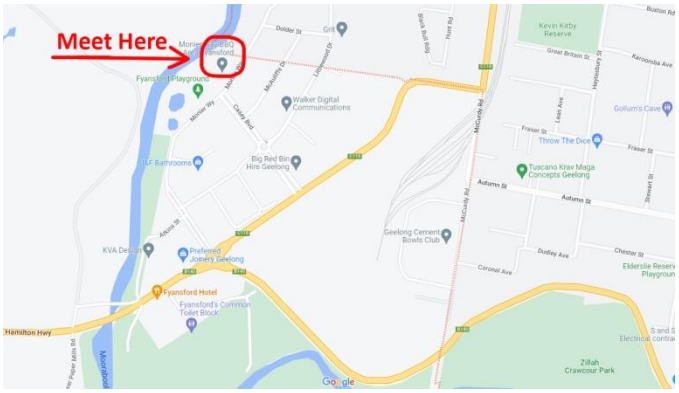
DECEMBER XMAS BREAK-UP December 4th

After much discussion and research into boggy possibilities, we've decided to hold our Christmas Break-up this year in Fyansford. We'll meet at the BBQ area opposite 58 Monier Way, at 11.00 am.

This is the extension of Deviation Rd, on the other side of the roundabout at the bottom of the hill. There are BBQ facilities, undercover seating and a great playground for the young at heart. We may not be the only ones there, so be prepared to sit in the open.

BYO chair, crockery, cutlery, salads, dessert etc. The club will provide meat, bread, wine and soft-drink. Please let our secretary, Peter, know if you are planning to come so we can cater accurately. Hope to see you there.

We may resort to a meal at the Fyansford pub if the weather is as wet as it has been.



2023 MEETINGS and OUTINGS

Jan 26 – 29? Victorian High Country
April 1, 2023 2023 Plant Sale

HIGH COUNTRY CAMP-OUT - January 2023

The plan was to make a trip to Falls Creek over the Australia Day public holiday and subsequent weekend. So we'd travel up on January 26th , and home on January 29th (or perhaps another weekend?)

However, reports suggest that the road to Falls Creek, now closed because of land-slips from the very wet weather, may still be closed come January. So we are looking at Mt. Hotham instead.

Please let Ade know before the end of November if you might be interested in attending. If we have sufficient interest, we can look at accommodation and get back to you with prices etc.

WEEKDAY WANDER - Thursday November 10th

Our weekday wander was to The Brisbane Ranges, to check out the firebreaks along Ballan Rd and Butcher's Rd. The weather was not promising and just a few hardy souls braved the conditions. Matt brought our last Weekday Wander garden host, Ros, in her off-road wheel-chair. Ros's Mum, Merryn and Dutch visitors Finn and Esme joined Bruce, Penny and me for what turned out to be a bit of a Wet Weekday Wander.

The majority of the undergrowth and a few of the larger trees have been removed long a fifty metre wide strip bordering the roads here. This is a safety measure to keep the roads open in the event of a fire. But the resultant extra light has created wonderful habitat for the smaller plants and they have thrived.

Most of the flowers were white – *Argentipallium* and *Burchardia* - or yellow – *Chrysocephalum, Coronidium* and *Goodenia* - with the occasional flash of blue from *Brunonia* and *Dianella*.

***Chrysocephalum semiapposum* – Clustered Everlasting**

Despite it being late in the season, there were a few orchids. The Notched Onion-orchid, *Microtis arenaria* was fairly common. There were a couple of donkey orchids, *Diuris orientis* and *D. sulphurea* and a few straggling blue Sun-orchids reluctant to open in the cold and overcast conditions.

***Diuris sulphurea* – Tiger Orchid**

SPEAKERS for 2023

If you know of anyone who might make an interesting speaker for our 2023 meetings, or if you'd like to present yourself, please let us know as we are preparing the calendar now. Thanks