

FERN STUDY GROUP - THE SOCIETY FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

NEWSLETTER NO. 5

MARCH, 1978.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: If your subscription is now due a note will be included with this Newsletter. Do not send any money unless you receive a notice. Any new subscriptions should now be sent to our Honorary Treasurer, Mrs. B. Low, 151 Raglan Street, MOSMAN, 2088. All new members will receive the last Newsletter. If anyone would like to have earlier copies they will be available for the cost of \$1.00.

FOR SYDNEY REGION MEMBERS: A Panel from the Study Group - Ray Best, Geoff Edwards, Bob Covney and Gerry Parker - will be presenting an Evening on Ferns to the Harbourside Group of S.G.A.P. at their next meeting on Friday 28th April at 8 p.m. at BIRRAHLEE KINDERGARTEN, 70 Burns Bay Road, LANE COVE. All members are welcome to attend.

VISIT TO GEORGE SONTER'S NURSERY has been arranged for Sunday 28th May - commencing at between 1.30 to 2 p.m. It has been suggested that we meet at the Hawkesbury Lookout on the road through to Springwood for lunch at 12 noon.

NEXT GROUP MEETING: At Les and Tess Taylor's, 4 Prospect Street, Blacktown (phone 621 5840) at 2 pm on 18th June. At this meeting we will discuss in detail two species of Adiantum - diaphanum and hispidulum which are similar in form. It is hoped to select various ferns for discussion at each meeting.

A WARM WELCOME IS EXTENDED TO ALL NEW MEMBERS SINCE THE LAST NEWSLETTER. It is hoped you will join with your fellow local members in various activities and that you will write to Steve about what you are doing. We in the Southern States would like to hear more about the beautiful ferns that grow in Queensland.

A LIST OF NEW MEMBERS is NOT being published with this Newsletter as it is hoped to have a revised list by the next Newsletter. Membership numbers are growing so fast it is hard to keep up with them.

OUR LEADER - STEVE CLEMESHA WRITES:

Membership of the Group has now passed 200 which must be a record for a Study Group. The Group could not continue without the help of Ray and Marie Best, Geoff Edwards, John and Addie Lee, Faye Low and Gerry Parker.

PLATYCERIUM SUPERBUM - In recent years the widely cultivated Staghorn Fern - long known as Platycerium grande - had its name changed to P. superbum. The reason is that P. grande was described from a plant collected in the Phillipine Islands and it was thought that our Australian plants were the same. Recently it has been found that Australian plants are different so the species name 'superbum' replaces 'grande' within Australia. P. grande is the correct name for the Phillipines species.

P. superbum has been cultivated for many years. It is found in North Queensland where it is much less plentiful than in northern N.S.W. and southern Queensland. It extends from south Queensland through northern N.S.W. south to about the Hunter River. It grows mainly in rain forests and does not appear to grow at as high elevations as P. bifurcatum. Over all it is much less common and more specialized in its habitat than P. bifurcatum, though even today can be locally plentiful.

The cultivated plants, almost without exception, have been wild collected. Today they often fetch high prices and I have seen them for sale from \$30 to \$40 each in Sydney. This is a bad situation as commercial collectors will go to any lengths to collect plants that fetch that sort of price.

The obvious solution is to raise them from spores. These are easily collected and raised to the prothallus stage on the usual way but they become more difficult when it is time to plant them out as they rot off easily round the size of a 20c piece and they dry out and die quickly if mounted too small. Most people lose them at this stage. The best way to overcome this problem is to pot the young plants. Put them in a peaty mixture and put them on an elevated mound in the middle. Water when needed and they will not rot off or dry out provided MODERATE watering is continued. When established this will be no more often than normal bush house plants. It is most important to keep the pots out of the rain and they must be under a cover or will rot off for sure if they are exposed to wet weather. In southern areas winter waterings will be needed only occasionally and the plants should be kept on the dry side. To avoid problems it is best to plant them out in spring as they will be established by winter. Grown in this way the plants can kept in pots until large enough to mount. If you still get rot off or drying out check to see they are not getting too much wind or are being kept too wet.

One of our members, Mrs. Pat Harris of Mosman, N.S.W., has been doing some interesting experiments with growing ferns from spores and a summary follows. What is especially good is the way she has recorded her efforts and made them available for other members. Thank you Pat for your efforts.

Spores were obtained from Ray Best and experiments carried out with bush sand, peatmoss and spaghnum moss as growing mediums but the sand was most successful. Pat sterilises it in the oven, together with terracotta pots, crocks, and washes plastic pots very well with hot water and detergent. She uses hot tap water (cooled) to water for the first month but her bush house is fairly open and she doesn't continue with this. So far she has had no problems with algae or fungus but gets the usual ring-ins. Her garden is becoming increasingly shaded by trees and this, with its aspect and wet summers made her decide to concentrate on ferns. As soon as the sporelings are big enough they are planted out. Losses so far are mainly due to cats and dogs. Her other main losses are in transferring very small plants from the first pot to the next.

(AS THIS IS A PRETTY COMMON PROBLEM COULD WE HAVE COMMENTS FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER ON HOW MEMBERS OVERCOME THIS).

Whilst she was away for 2 months last year, although minimum care could be given to the ferns, only very few were lost. Rumohra adiantiformis, Cyclosorus truncatus, Cyathea cooperi, Blechnum cartilagineum, Polystichum proliferum were all transferred to old fish tanks and covered with glass terrarium style. They did very well under these conditions, kept indoors, and receiving no attention whatsoever. The others were also kept indoors being topped up with water in the containers in which they sat. Some dried out from insufficient water but most were o.k.: Summary follows:

Fern	Spores sown	First Signs	Potted On	Planted Out
Cyclosorus truncatus	15.11.75 (Now growing very well in shaded parts of garden.	7.12.75	3.3.76	Dec. 76.
Blechnum cartilagineum	22.2.76 All growing well, even in drier parts of the garden.	6.3.76	Oct. 76	By Feb. 77 most planted out.

Fern	Spores sown	First Signs	Potted On	Planted Out
Rumohra adiantifor- mis	19.11.75	10.12.75	May 76. Some planted	Dec/76. hanging baskets.
	Some doing very well in baskets .. others probably dried out.			
Cyathea cooperi	22.2.76 (100's of plants)	6.3.76	Jan.77 out	Spore planted June 77.
Cyathea australia	22.2.76	July 76	By Feb. 77 all potted on, but xxxxxxx not	very successful: xxxxxxx only a few left.
Cyathea robertsiana	15.11.75	8.2.76	By Feb. 77 all potted on, but by April 77 only 1 left and could be ring-in.	
Cyathea rebecca	not successful			
Polystichum proliferum	22.2.76	13.3.76	April 77	
Blechnum nudum	9.11.76	30.11.76		
Lastreopsis acuminata	9.11.76	19.12.76		
Todea barbara	30.10.76	19.12.76	Spores collected	23.10.76 as previous attempt spores too old.
Pellaea falcata	9.11.76	19.12.76		

MEMBERS: Will you please write about ferns of your own areas - how you are growing particular ferns - especially difficult or unusual ones.

MELBOURNE GROUP - Could some Victoria members form a Group similar to the Sydney one?

FERN EXHIBIT: The Fern Study Group had an outstanding exhibit at the 1977 Exhibition at Kings School, Parramatta, N.S.W. in September. Once again, Geoff Edwards, with the help of a few members of the Group, produced a pleasing and interesting display.

The Group was allotted a large L-shaped area of the main hall and Geoff designed a substantial framework of green treated poles and cross pieces which supported hanging baskets. A wide variety of ferns carpeted the floor which was landscaped with logs, moss-covered rocks and pine bark chips. George Senter loaned special ferns from his collection and members contributed specimens large and small to fill the gaps. From the size of the Blechnum cartilagineum and Asplenium australasicum specimens on display members' gardens must have looked somewhat sparse during the Exhibition. The interest of the visiting public in our display was confirmed by the number of new members enrolled.

A very special thanks must go to Geoff Edwards from all members for the work he put into this wonderful display, especially at a time of the year when ferns are not at their best.

MINNAMURRA FALLS: Our trip to Minnamurra Falls on Sunday 27th February (1977 - apologies for belated reporting) was after a period of extremely heavy rain. This had caused tremendous damage to bridges and pathways and for this reason we were prevented from climbing to the upper part of the falls. However, the area we were able to see was most impressive and the effect of the flooding with great boulders and trees, together with parts of the damaged bridges, washed down the River was quite dramatic.

