

WHEN IS A WATTLE NOT AN ACACIA - WHEN IT'S A RACOSPERMA!

BRUCE MASLIN, the wattle man from the Herbarium, reports that in the near future the worldwide genus *Acacia* is likely to be split into at least five distinct genera:

- ▶ Group 1 has about 160 spp, mostly in Africa, the Americas and Asia, with 9 in Australia.
- ▶ Group 2 has 231 spp, mostly in the Americas, Africa and Asia, with 2 in Australia
- ▶ Groups 3 & 4 have about 15 species each and are confined to the Americas
- ▶ Group 5 has 960 species, all in Australia except that about 20 extend to islands from Madagascar to the Philippines and Hawaii.

This move has been discussed by taxonomists for about 20 years and now no-one seems to doubt that different entities exist within *Acacia* as presently defined. The genus must therefore be split. The current concern is: which one of the five groups should retain the name *Acacia*? The *International Code of Botanical Nomenclature* provides a set of rules that govern the applications of plant names. If the normal provisions of the Code are applied, then the species in Group 1 would be called *Acacia*, those in Group 2 '*Senegalia*', Group 3 '*Acaciella*', Group 4 'a new genus' and Group 5 '*Racosperma*'. Thus, most Australian wattles would change their name! In special cases, however, the Code does allow an alternative approach to applying names. Such cases apply particularly in situations (like that which exists in *Acacia*) where changing names is likely to cause extensive disruption. To enact these special provisions of the Code a case must be prepared and submitted to an international committee of specialists for adjudication.

So we change all our wattle names - or do we?

Bruce and his co-workers have put together a case to keep the name

IN BRIEF

Acacia for the largest group, the Australian wattles, as changing this would involve the biggest hassle. When their case has been published, a judgement will be made by the appropriate international committee.

Comments, anyone? You can reach Bruce Maslin by email: brucem@calm.wa.gov.au

(For a detailed discussion, read *Wildflower Society of WA Newsletter*, May 2003, pp7-11 or visit the web at: <http://farrer.csu.edu.au/ASGAP/APOL29/mar03-2.html>)

YELLOW CRAZY ANT - NOW FERAL IN THE NT

NORTHERN residents should watch out for Yellow Crazy Ants (*Anoplolepis gracilipes*), an introduced species that is one of the world's worst ant pests. This is the animal that has had such a destructive effect on the famous red crabs on Christmas Island. It has been found at Gove and other sites on Arnhemland and may soon spread to Darwin.

Yellow Crazy Ants are medium sized (about 3-4 mm long), yellow, and fast-moving. They are quite distinct from most native ant species.

These ants can occur in extremely high numbers, forming 'supercolonies' that cover many hectares. They outcompete native fauna and seriously disrupt ecological processes. Their presence may lead to outbreaks of sap-sucking insects, harming plants, and they can be a serious pest around the home. They readily nest in all kinds of materials, from potting mix to packaging, making it very easy for them to be accidentally transported by people.

Please be very careful if you are bringing anything back from the NT that might contain ants. We don't want them in WA!

For more info: www.issg.org/ database and type "yellow crazy ant" under species name.

POPULATIONS OF VICTORIAN TEATREE AND AUSTRAL BLUEBELL WANTED

ANNA TRAEGER is a PhD student at UWA who is just starting work on a project "Biological control of Australian native weeds". She has chosen two plants to study, Victorian Teatree, *Leptospermum laevigatum*, native to the East Coast but a very bad weed in WA, and Austral Bluebell, *Sollya heterophylla*, native to WA but an increasingly worrying weed in Victoria. She will be looking at the plants' natural enemies in their home States and also where they are introduced, and seeing if there is any potential for biological control.

She asks: "If either of these plants are present in your area, could you please let me know, so that I can get an idea of their distribution? I am also looking for potential field study sites." You can contact Anna at: School of Animal Biology, UWA, Ph: (08) 9380 2976

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COARSE TEA-TREE - BY ANOTHER NAME - THE SAGA CONTINUES!

IN April 2000 (WW 4/2) Chris Robinson, Development Officer at AgWA, Albany, introduced readers to Coarse Tea-tree, a south coast native shrub with potential for essential oils, giving an update on cultivation trials in Jan 2002 (WW 6/1).

We reported that the species had been given the scientific name *Agonis fragrans* in April 2001 (WW 5/2). Well, that's changed. It is now *Taxandria fragrans* ms. as Judy Wheeler and Neville Marchant have decided that the genus *Agonis* contained two entities. (For the trials of being a taxonomic botanist, read Judy's article in WW 6/4, Sept 2002.)

Amend your ID books accordingly!