ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF BIODIVERSITY

WHAT'S IN A NAME? - A MARKETING DILEMMA

John Day

IN the last issue of Western Wildlife Penny Hussey wrote about the imminent name change of some species of *Agonis* (those with ten stamens) to the genus *Taxandria*. This includes *Agonis fragrans*, which, for the last three years, we have been cultivating to extract its essential oil. The name change was of some concern to us as we (Paperbark Essential Oils) had already commenced the lengthy process of introducing the oil derived from this plant to the public. We had applied the name Fragrant Agonis to this oil, and labels and marketing literature all used the name *Agonis*.

Harvesting Fragrant Agonis at Albany.

I contacted Chris Robinson who has been working with us in the commercialisation of this oil and was involved with Judy Wheeler and Neville Marchant in ascribing the species name *fragrans*. Chris's advice was that although the 'new' name *Taxandria fragrans*, will be botanically correct, the oil name *Agonis fragrans*, can still be used as it still refers to the oil from the same species. In other words *Agonis fragrans* can be traced back from (and is an outdated synonym) for *Taxandria fragrans*. I guess this is much the same as when some one marries and changes their name: the new name becomes legally correct although that person may still be identified by their previous name!

Chris quoted the pragmatic approach of emminent WA taxonomic botanist Greg Keighery from CALM, as follows: "There is no problem in using *Agonis* as a common name in horticulture or commerce, since *Rhodanthe* was used in Horticulture for years after it was submerged in *Helipterum* and *Leschenaultia* is still the common name for *Lechenaultia*. In fact there is no scientific problem in using an alternative generic name in any sense, viz *Eucalyptus* vs *Corymbia*, since both are valid, and both are not 'real' biological entities like a species: they are constructs by taxonomists and both relate directly to the taxon in question.

To update on latest developments, we undertook two harvests in about March this year, one at the Water Authority site at Albany, and the other at our Harvey essential oils farm.

The Gas Chromatograph Mass Spectrometry (GCMS) analysis of these oils confirmed minor differences in the percentages of constituents of the oils, as expected, as the seed for each planting came from different genetic stock. We applied the constituents to functional groupings, and in conjunction with Mark Webb (Clinical Aromatherapist, Sydney) it was postulated that not only did the oil have antibacterial properties, but very likely could have effective anti-inflamatory properties. Anecdotal evidence to date seems to strongly support this theory. And the good news is that we may now be able to apply some scientific basis to the theory. Chris worked hard last year to submit an application to RIRDC for a grant to further study this oil, and that application has recently been approved. Expenditure will be administered by Great Southern Development Commisssion, Chris will manage the study and carry out field population collections, UWA Microbiology Department (Tom Riley) will conduct anti-bacterial and anti-inflamatory testing, GCMS analysis will be by Wollongbar Agriculture Institute (Ian Southwell), degradation and comparision testing and clinical trials by Mark Webb, and industry participation by Paperbark Essential Oils. A Curtin University honours student under Professor Luis Evans will investigate the immuno-stimmulatory properties of this oil on aquaculture (marron).

Keep and eye out for this new and exciting Western Australian essential oil!

Paperbark Essential Oils is also developing another new WA oil - a 'citral' chemotype of *Melaleuca teretifolia* or Marsh Honey Myrtle, found growing naturally at our property at Harvey. This oil was the subject of a joint research project (*Melaleuca teretifolia* chemovars: Australian Source of Citral and 1.8Cineole), between Wollongbar Agricultural Institute, UNSW School of Chemistry, and ourselves. Now recognised as the highest 'citral' *Melaleuca* yet discovered in Australia it is a wonderful aromatic oil, and has considerable anti-microbial potential. Commercial quantities of this oil are now available under our applied name 'Honey Myrtle oil.'

These oils, and others we are investigating, have huge potential and are a vast untapped Western Australian resource.

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