

GROWING NOTES

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ONE of the most gratifying experiences a plantsman can have is to succeed where others have failed. Complete success in growing a difficult plant or group of plants is always the goal, but every successful step towards this goal is a milestone to be remembered.

Over the years, numerous attempts have been made to grow various members of the *Protea* family in Southern California. To date the failures have far outnumbered the successes. This family which occurs abundantly in Australia and South Africa contains shrubs and trees of great beauty. Some are valuable commercially for cut flowers. We have begun research at the Arboretum aimed at learning the secrets of successfully growing members of the *Proteaceae* in our area.

The research has been divided into two sections; experiments in each are being carried on concurrently: 1), the collection of all available data from growers in this group who are having some degree of success, and 2), experimentation at the Arboretum with various soil mixtures using several types of containers, and including field plantings with different soil types and exposures.

One of our first experiments, while far from being conclusive, has produced some very interesting results which are reported here for the purpose of making the information available to all who wish to experiment with this group.

Seeds of a *Grevillea* species (probably *G. banksi*) were planted, August 28, 1952, in a 4" pot. The sowing medium was Georgia Peat and Sponge-rok in equal amounts. Seed germinated September 18, 1952 (21 days). Eight seedlings of uniform size were chosen for the experiment. All were planted in a soil mixture composed of:

- 1 part soil (heavy loam)
- 1 part composted straw
- 6 parts Canadian Peat
- 4 parts decomposed granite

Four plants were potted in standard 4" clay pots September 27, 1952. On the same date the other four were planted in "Cultura" Peat Moss Seedling Pots. These pots are manufactured from natural peat turfs in such a manner, that the individual pots are separated by saw cuts, but still connected through a thin bottom plate, so that bars are created of up to twenty-four pots, which makes handling easy. An added advantage of the "Cultura" pot is being able to plant pot and all directly in the ground, thus, the plant roots are undisturbed in the transplanting, a condition which in itself may be of



Comparative growth of *Grevillea* species in "Cultura" peat moss pot, and in standard clay pot.

prime importance. For approximately two months the growth was more or less uniform for all eight plants. Following this period there was a very decided difference in the rate of growth and leaf color.

The accompanying photograph taken February 2, 1953, shows very well the differences. The plants in the "Cultura" pots were twelve inches high with good green color and straight stems. The four inch pots were only four inches high and lighter green. No definite conclusions can be drawn from this initial experiment but the results are obvious. It should also be noted in the photograph that the roots in the "Cultura" pots spread horizontally as well as vertically and because the tubes were contiguous the horizontal rooting was unimpeded as compared to the clay pots.

Reports on other experiments and on the progress of the field planting will be published in *Lasca Leaves* from time to time.



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