

ISSN 1039-9062

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS.



GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP
 NEWSLETTER No.46
 May 2004
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Dear Members,

Glorious Autumn, and it still seems unseasonably warm, in Sydney at any rate. We have had some rain but more would be most welcome. This newsletter, we continue to look at design in an urban context- in the year of the built environment - with thoughts guaranteed to inspire and inform us, from Michael Leunig and Chris Johnson. As well, more articles on the three "d's - daisies, dry shade and drought; I felt Jo Walker's article on daisies in this NL nicely complemented Jan Simpson's in the last - there is no excuse now - we can all attempt a beautiful daisy field with such a wide choice of species! Dry shade is a challenge a lot of gardeners face, especially us eucalypt fans and most of us are still drought affected to some extent so any help with water conservation in our gardens is very timely; I'm looking forward to the day when we can read articles on drainage or the effects of excess water on our plants and designs! Perhaps when the Greenhouse effect takes hold and a few of those icebergs melt?

The last word on lawns? A bamboo replacement and Diana's report of another great ASGAP conference and a trip to the Mallee: I hope you enjoy your May NL.

Thank you for your correspondence and feedback, please keep it coming.

NEXT MEETINGS

N.E. VICTORIA: May 15th at Paul and Barbara Kennedy's , Strathmerton.

MELBOURNE: May 16th at 2.00PM

SYDNEY: Sunday 9th May

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CORRESPONDENCE

It was lovely to receive the latest NL., **full** of interesting articles. The following comments include a few overdue from the previous NL [sorry!]

I think a website would be a good idea, as long as someone is able to prepare it and then keep it upto date. I would not like to receive my NL by email - I like a hard copy so I can read it whenever I like, relaxing in a comfortable chair with a cuppa. I also prefer a hard copy for my records.

Chris Larkin has already written about the creation of proper Australian grass lawns which are at least as attractive year round as exotic grass lawns and rarely need mowing or artificial watering. Chris highlighted the conspicuous popularity of border gardens [around the edges of a central lawn]. I agree that an important aspect is the planning and proportions of open space in a garden. I much prefer a garden which flows through a property, with open space provided in certain areas by a daisy lawn [or field], other ground covers, low plants, water, paving, decking, organic mulch, etc. This is so much more interesting than just one large, empty space surrounded by rows of shrubs.

I like the idea of six seasons in a year. So much happens in the garden in winter/spring or summer/spring etc. Maybe we need eight seasons, the usual four plus the inbetweens.

The article by Chris Johnson was inspiring - if only.....

I do think it is a good idea for the GDSG to list Ozzie plants as direct alternatives for popular exotics. However I think another approach is to suggest to people alternative strategies and not to be tied down to the concept of direct replacements. For example, instead of a *Buxus* hedge, why not use a less formal combination of a few beautiful rocks and "tufties", with some lovely small or medium shrubs, in not too straight a line? For heavy shade in summer, an exotic deciduous tree could be replaced by one Australian tree or else a group of them. A number of eucalypts give very good shade - *E. eximia*, *E. [or C.] ficifolia*, and many others. There are quite a few deciduous Ozzie trees too.

Diana Snape

I am a new member of the GDSG and was reading through the Feb. NL when I saw under Natural Alternatives that no-one has come up with a bamboo replacement yet.

I have studied and grown many grasses over the past few years and a friend gave me a pot of *Stipa verticillata* [Slender Bamboo grass.] This came from a nursery in NSW. It is a pretty grass with a definite bamboo appearance; it forms quite large clumps and germinates readily. I lived at Metung, Vic. when I grew this particular grass and unfortunately didn't bring seeds here to Emerald when we moved a couple of years ago. I think it would be readily available in NSW.

According to a reference I have "Grasses of New South Wales" by Wheeler, Jacobs and Norton, UNE Armidale, it is widespread in NSW and also occurs in Qld. Another grass

Stipa ramosissima [Stout Bamboo grass] has a similar distribution but I have no personal knowledge of this species.

Trish Tratt Vic

Here are some thoughts on my gardening efforts over the last six or seven years. At the beginning my knowledge of gardening was nil, I started with the idea of providing a habitat for the birds. In planning a garden for wildlife one has a great excuse to plant a wide variety of species and presently I have a Collector's Garden, put together with more passion than design know how. To date, in the garden and its surrounds, there are two local species of snakes, wombats, echidnas, kangaroos, blue tongue and frill neck lizards plus all the birds. These come and go with the Seasons, making my garden forays all the more interesting. In the evenings I now see the odd fruit bat, possibly encouraged by the fruiting figs, food for thought for me and food for tummy for the bats!

A garden is a reflection on the ability, knowledge, energy and passion of the gardener. It provides enjoyment and education in the Present and the Future. For me the habitat garden is a most worthwhile commitment to enjoy , a place of beauty where I have the opportunity to prolong a worthwhile life of living and learning.

Arthur Dench NSW

I thought you might like to add some humour to the Lawn debate!

God's Take on Lawns

GOD: Frank you know all about gardens and nature. What in the world is going on down there in the suburbs? What happened to the dandelions, violets thistle and stuff I started aeons ago? I had the perfect garden maintenance plan - these plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the longlasting blooms attracts butterflies, bees and birds, I expected to see a vast garden of colours by now. But all I see are these green rectangles.

St. FRANCIS: It's the tribes that settled there, Lord, the Suburbanites. They started calling your flowers weeds and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass.

GOD: Grass? But its so boring, its not colourful, it doesn't attract butterflies, birds or bees - do these suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

St.F.: Apparently so Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They fertilize it each Spring and poison any other plant which crops up in the lawn.

GOD: Spring rains and warm weather probably makes it grow really fast, that must make the Suburbanites happy.

St.F: Apparently not .As soon as it grows a little they cut it.

GOD: Cut it? Do they then bale it like hay?

St. F.: Not exactly, most of them rake it up and put it in bags.

GOD: Why? Is it a cash crop, do they sell it?

St. F. No Sir, they pay to take it away.

GOD: Now let me get his straight. They fertilize the grass so it will grow and when it does grow they cut it off and pay to have it taken away?

St. F.: Yes Sir

GOD: These Suburbanites must be relieved in the Summer when the heat slows the growth and saves them lots of work.

St. F.: You aren't going to believe this Lord, when the grass stops growing they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it.

GOD: What nonsense ! at least they've kept some of the trees. The trees grow leaves to provide beauty and shade, in the Autumn they fall to the ground to form a natural blanket to retain moisture and protect the roots and bushes, plus as they rot they enhance the soil - it's a natural cycle of life.

St. F.: You had better sit down Lord. As soon as the leaves fall the Suburbanites rake them into great piles and pay to have them hauled away.

GOD: No! What do they do to protect the tree roots and shrubs and keep the soil moist and loose?

St. F. They go out and buy something called mulch and spread it around in place of the leaves

GOD: and where do they get this mulch

St. F.: They cut down trees and grind them up to make mulch.

GOD: Enough, I don't want to think about this any more !!

Cheryl Maddocks talked about lawns in her gardening column in The Good Weekend last year. After rousing on those who wasted precious water keeping nature strips alive, she quoted from Michael Pollan's "Second Nature" - "lawn care was gardening aimed at capturing the admiration of the street, a ritual of consensus I did not have my heart in. I began to entertain idle fantasies of rebellion. Why couldn't I plant a hedge along the road, remove my property from the national stream of greensward and do something else with it?"

We mulched our nature strip years ago to the bemusement of our neighbours. It is planted with shrubs, low growing plants and tufted grasses. Somebody once complained to Council about its bushy appearance. The Council officer who came to inspect it told me he had always admired my garden - we were not asked to change anything.

Jennifer Borrell NSW

DESIGN**Self in the City****Michael Leunig**

Believe it or not, care or don't care, the year of the built environment has arrived [like unsolicited mail] and if we are to consider it with interest, may I recommend a few words by Hermann Hesse on the subject of what humanity has added to nature. I find this bunch of words a helpful little tool kit, or even a first aid kit, to cope with the massive, frightful and confusing reality of the built environment which presently besieges my imagination

At the end of World War 1, Hesse wandered and lingered in the countryside of Ticino, in southern Switzerland, where he wrote and sketched and made the following observations: " Here the sun shines more intimately, the mountains glow with a deeper red; here chestnuts, grapes , almonds and figs are growing, the human beings are good, civilized and friendly even though they are poor. And everything they fashion seems so good, so precise and so friendly as if it were grown by Nature itself. The houses, the walls, the steps up into the vineyards, the paths, the new plantings and the terraces - everything is neither new nor old, everything appears as if it were not merely contrived, imitated from Nature, but had simply risen as fields do and trees and moss. The walls of vineyards, the houses and the roofs of houses, they are all made of the same brown stone, and they all look like one another, they are all like brothers. Nothing seems alien, hostile or violent, everything appears warm, serene, neighbourly."

From the time we first see as Hesse saw, we dream of living more naturally, more personally, spiritually and humanely; affectionate not just to each other but to our artifacts, gardens, farms, landforms, structures and the natural world around. It's a vision of happiness. There are particular senses and impulses involved in the dream: feelings of human scale and pleasing, intuitive, organic measurement - the armslength, earshot, two or three paces - by such fundamental grasps of life we behold our world and thus witness, with repressed or overt grief, the modern city and its mighty suburban empire. Constructed according to the vast and abstract measurements of economics, the city, with all its pleasures, has become monstrous and traumatic. In spite of its diverse wonderments and vibrant passages and moments, urbanism has become a merciless mechanism which hurts and damages the spirit; it may flatter the triumphant ego but the heart cannot quite hold onto it, and the heart needs to belong otherwise we become ill, let it be remembered we are deeply qualified in our hearts to judge what has been constructed.

The great popular project of modern government and mass media is not primarily to heal but to normalize what is unhealthy and to make acceptable and exciting those soul destroying things to which we have been chained. Indeed the ongoing paving of remnant paradise and the putting up of parking lots perhaps seems more normal and proper these days. It's everywhere. The invasion is a success so shut your face .Protest about it to your pillow in the darkness of night if you must, but it's too late to grumble in public. That's futile isn't it? If Freud observed the calamity of sexual repression in his time, would he

now observe a modern madness which grows with the repression of the need for beauty? Eros denied yet again.

I've watched Australia's cities grow louder, faster, harder; backyards get smaller, shopping areas get tougher, roads get madder, fences get higher and stronger. It's uglier now. Television and the car have trashed much of the city's humane and sweet structure.

The conforming to global taste, efficiencies, building methods and materials did it too. We lost much of our peculiar authenticity in all its emerging truth and frailness: the identity that was surely arising from the land beneath us. We lost our nerve too, it was a vulnerable stage in our history. We abandoned human scale and decided to outgrow nature, culture and various civil values, and besides the developers were on a pre-emptive rampage, they wanted to grab it before someone else did - it happens. As compensation for our loss we have major glittering projects and award winning landmark architectural features on a colossal, frightening and vulgar scale. It would appear that the favourite gesture of the modern feted architect, the most deeply held principle, the most strongly held idea is the straight line. It follows and is obvious that the favourite tool is the ruler and the favourite workplace the ego [certainly not the soul too messy J. Sure it's all clean and earthquake proof but not schizophrenia proof by any means.

The built environment now tumbles through space, burrows beneath seas, overshadows all innocence: a vast machine tangled in freeways hurtling brutally and brilliantly onward to whatever, with us trapped inside like tourists, like hostages.

Yet in its midst some humans fall in love and court each other with innocent hope, they compose music and paint, they prepare beautiful food. They read Hesse and see the great molecular cloud of poison built over the city [pollutants are constructions too].

When Hesse wrote his beautiful words in Ticino, whole swathes of country elsewhere in Europe lay covered in the stench of death and the rubble of war. There is a cruel world and a kind one, a mad one, a sane one, an ugly one, a beautiful one and there they are, there it all is, mixed up around you - building itself!



Grave New World" mixed medium on canvas by Matt Smith

Rotary Club of Sydney

Towards a sustainable future

**Chris Johnson's presentation
15 July 2003**

A number of images have recently appeared in Sydney newspapers that demonstrate the fast disappearing suburban backyard. Looking across the large suburban houses crammed closer and closer together it is hard to spot the occasional leaf or small bit of grass.

The ideal that drove the concept of the 'Garden City' over the last 100 years is clearly disappearing as environments across Western Sydney in particular are now mostly made up of hard surfaces.

If we go back to 1898 the 'Garden City Movement'¹ (which began initially in England) we see Ebenezer Howard championing a combined world that was not only country. Howard published a powerful image with three magnets with the people located in the middle. The magnets represented the town; the country; and the combined town/country.

The town magnet listed the closing out of nature, the isolation of crowds and foul air. The country magnet set out the lack of society, of work and of public spirit. The town/country however boasted the beauty of nature, plenty to do, pure air, pure water and bright homes and gardens.

The magnets were translated into Howard's famous diagram that demonstrated an ideal city where buildings and landscape were intertwined. It incorporated the best elements of nature with the best elements of urbanity in a new concept that would improve people's lives. There was behind Ebenezer's vision a sense of enlightenment and of improving conditions for ordinary people.

The 'Garden City' movement was adapted enthusiastically in Australia. On the 28 August, 1911 the Sydney Morning Herald stated that "The Garden City Movement has as its

essential foundation a desire to establish inhabitants of towns and suburbs in wholesome and beautiful surroundings... it will be well for Australia if the Garden City idea be similarly expressed upon ourselves. ... Well will it be for them if Garden City Associations, or any other agent, could replace the bad old ideas of huddled, unhealthy dwellings and sprawling streets with the new idea of cities nobly planned and suburbs housed airily wholesome in adequate surroundings."

Daceyville was one of the first garden suburbs, planned in 1912 designed by Sulman and Fitzgerald. Here the Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, J H Maiden was involved in planning landscape as part of the environment.

Sydney suburbs responded well to the philosophy of the Garden City Movement and many leafy areas of the North Shore for instance, feel like a garden as much as they do urban housing. This view looking over Beecroft gives a very clear sense of a garden city in Ebenezer's terms.

Associate Professor Winston Barnett in his book 'Redefining the Australian Dream' goes back to the original quarter acre block with its large amount of space epitomizing the garden. He then looks at a series of other models, which show how project homes are becoming bigger, lot sizes smaller and the amount of space less and less around our buildings. The image is now becoming one of many buildings with little greenery.

I have done my own assessment of just how lot sizes have diminished over the last 100 years while house sizes have been increasing. Car numbers are also increasing in each housing lot while the average number of people has diminished. The big loser in all of this is the amount of usable landscape space.

This chart shows that in 1900 a lot size of 1200m² had a house of 150m² with probably one car. With 5.3 people average in each housing unit there was a large amount of useable landscape - around 1000 m². By 1950 the house size then moved up to 200 m² with probably still a single car but the number of people dropping fast to about 3 per household. But with 900 m² plot in this average housing unit we had 600 m² of useable landscape.

By 1990 lot sizes had dropped to about 600 m², house sizes have increased to about 250 m² and the average number of cars have probably increased to around 1.5 with the average number of people now down to 2.5, and the useable landscape area now down to about 250 m².

In some of the examples we are building today will have reduced lot size down to 450 m², with house sizes of around 350 m². Car numbers up to 2.2 average and the number of people about 2.3. By the time you take out the impact of driveways, side alleys, we get a usable landscape area of about 50 m² - a far cry from the 1000 m² set up in the days of the garden city ideal.

Winston Barnett has taken his approach to redefining the Australian dream to look at how we can still maintain greenery within these densities. His answer comes not from changing the housing unit but from public space with public gardens, squares and street trees.

He develops a pictogram for an ideal town. A 100-hectare site divided into 1-hectare plots with 20 metre wide strips for roads. By getting a checkerboard pattern of parks and housing he is able to accommodate 680 dwellings with an impressive count of 18,472 trees. 11,560 of these come from the 40 planted squares as public spaces dotted through the community.

I am not proposing this as the only answer but this is at least looking at how to balance the landscape environment and built environment.

Sydney architect Peter Meyers has developed a thesis about Sydney's third city, he looks at Western Sydney in terms of its heritage. The heritage according to Meyers is not the buildings of suburbia but the landscape, essentially gum trees, planted in front and back gardens - much of it provided by the Department of Housing or the Housing Commission. The significant heritage we now have according to Meyers is this green layer throughout Western Sydney.

Peter Meyers proposes that if densities are increasing we should replace these buildings with five or six storey apartment blocks carefully located between existing trees so that our

landscape is retained. Essentially the buildings relate to the height of the trees. He further proposes that if they are located on screw piles they can always be moved off at a later date.

Around the world there is a new focus on how our landscape and buildings interact. Even dense cities like New York have a 'Greening Gotham City' program to encourage gardens on the rooftops of city buildings. This is partly being encouraged by what is termed the 'heat island effect' where cities are getting much hotter than surrounding areas due to the hard surfaces that absorb so much heat. As well as New York, cities like Singapore and Tokyo are now requiring roof gardens within the urban areas of the city to lower temperatures.

Dutch architects MVRDV have developed an approach that incorporates gardens and buildings in a vertical sense they take the garden city ideal and reinterpret it with high densities that put the garden up into the air.

I have adapted this principle in a scheme that I have worked up called garden apartments - buildings of five or six storeys with large outdoor terraces 35 m² or so which have their own landscape, their own watering system with recycled water, landscaped roofs, landscaped courtyards. By thinking carefully about landscape I think we can get the ideal of the garden city back.

A number of councils are now requiring much more definition about landscape and I believe this is where we need to go.

We can also retrofit older areas of Sydney with a network of first floor terraces and gardens set in a treed landscape. New thinking is required to ensure that the backyard ideals are translated into new urban environments.

PLANTS

Daisies - Delightful and Durable. Jo Walker ANPS Canberra
Rhamnaceae S.G. Leader

In mid winter last year, my piece of the countryside at Wamboin was a dismal sight. The drought still had us firmly in its grip; the dam had shrunk to a shallow muddy pond and even the tough old eucalypts looked decidedly stressed and droopy. Every skerrick of grass, plus the peas, daisies, herbaceous plants - and anything in the garden that wasn't completely inedible - had been consumed by the desperate kangaroos. Looking around, and feeling much like the eucalypts looked, I wondered momentarily if I should just move back into town. And then, in August, we had a bit of rain - and then a little bit more, enough to get the creek trickling. Better rain in Sept. and Oct. filled the dam and put moisture back into the soil. The regeneration of the countryside was truly amazing! Billy Buttons [*Craspedia variabilis*] were the first to appear after the rain. Little clusters of bright green furry leaves came up everywhere - along the creek and in damp areas where you'd expect them but also scattered high on the drier hillsides, just about every plant adorned with swaying heads of lemon yellow. Later Scaly Buttons [*Leptorhyncos squamatus*] put on a good show along the creek and other moist areas, especially in the swards of Weeping Grass [*Microlaena stipoides*]. In a seepage area near my fenceline there was a really good display, a miniature meadow of golden Scaly Buttons.

Another yellow daisy that came up everywhere this year was the tiny annual Austral Sunray [*Triptilodiscus pygmaeus*]. This is the only *Triptilodiscus* species in the whole world and we have it in abundance - a lot of people think it's a weed it is so common! It did a good job this year of holding back the soil where the grass had died out. In damper areas it was in competition with *Solenogyne gunnii* a common but often unnoticed little daisy with small, bright green hairy rosettes as flower heads. I had been naturalizing the Hoary Sunray [*Leucochrysum albicans*] on my place for years and had some sizeable patches established. Although it is often treated as an annual in the garden I had several large clumpy plants that were three or more years old. I cared for these plants tenderly as the drought took hold but to no avail. Very soon every last one had disappeared. But, when the rains finally came, little grey *Leucochrysum* seedlings popped up everywhere. They grew very fast and made a magnificent display of white papery flowers, particularly beautiful growing amongst bright patches of *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* of which I have several of the local forms growing, all survived the drought and came back strongly. The Spoon Daisy [*Brachyscome spathulata*] did likewise, purple-green rosettes of leaves came up soon after the first rains and soon the lovely blue flowers were swaying on their long stems in the breezes. It seems to like a bit of dappled shade and is doing best in an area of heavy clay soil - wet in a good season and rock hard and dry at other times - scattered amongst *Kunzea ericoides*.

Perhaps the most spectacular daisy here this year was *Xerochrysum viscosum* - previously small patches have coalesced into large expanses of golden flowers and the big white cauliflower-like heads of *Cassinia longifolia* flowering at the same time provided the perfect backdrop.

I'm attempting to naturalize several other species of local daisies, *Calotis lappulacea* [Yellow Burr daisy] a small, round, spiky and bright green little plant, covered in small golden button flowers all summer which ripen into burrs - it has discovered my pavers and is growing in apparently minimal soil. *Calotis glandulosa* [Mauve Burr daisy] is a beautiful plant forming a matt of bright green foliage . In a good spot it is covered in mauve, pink or white daisies for a long period. It also has hooked burrs and is spreading nicely in the garden. *Calotis scabiosifolia var.integrifolia* [Rough Burr Daisy] suckers to form a mat of dark green foliage and has striking mauve-blue flowers. Right now, little colonies of *Chrysocephalum semipapposum* are sporting heads of golden buttons and *Cassinia quinquefaria* will soon be covered with drooping racemes of silky brownish green flowers.

Larger daisies that I've planted and proved hardy are *Ozothamnus diosmifolius* and *Oleariaphloggopappa*, *O. tenuifolia*, *O. microphylla*, and *O. myrsinoides*.

Daisies really are good value, whether you are planting a suburban garden, a larger property or doing revegetation work. They are fast growing, propagate themselves readily and add colour over a longer period than most other plants. We are lucky to have so many local daisies from ground covers to small trees displaying a whole range of colour and forms. I will certainly be planting more of these delightful and durable daisies.

Coping with the Drought - Leigh Murray, ANPS Canberra

Here are a few notes on the effects of the drought on our rocky ,hilly land in Queanbeyan and our holiday place at Tuross Head. At Queanbeyan, the poor shaley soil retains little moisture. At Tuross, the slope is less and the granite soil much better, but there are other difficulties: frequent strong winds to suck out moisture and large Norfolk Island Pines which have the water rights. When there are no water restrictions we use drip irrigation topped up with hand watering of new plants until they are established.

Water Restrictions: At Queanbeyan the level 1 water restrictions didn't cause many difficulties. We don't use sprinklers but hand watering is unrestricted. It was a different story at Tuross. On level 3 drip irrigation was banned and half an hour of hand hosing allowed every second day; in early February, restrictions got to level 4 - buckets only. It was a huge relief when the rain came at the end of February and restrictions were eased to level 2.

Helpers: Lately I've been planting a watering pot [a tubestock pot] near each new plant to direct water down to the roots. And I build crescent beds - an arc of soil to create a well around each plant — both strategies helped our plants survive the drought by making more effective use of the water. Also, I pruned off new growth on most of the plants to

reduce their water needs. Our gardens are mulched heavily with hardwood chips or gravel. At Tuross I watered some areas solely with grey water for six months.

Drought Effects: At Tuross the tough cookies included *Rhagodia spinescens*, *Allocasuarina verticillata*, *Eucs. Tetraptera*, *lehmannii* and *lansdowniana*, *Templetonia retusa*, *Dianella revolute*, *Banksia marginata*, *Acacia implexa* and *Grevillea arenaria*, these plants received hardly any of the available water and they didn't blink. Of the indigenous plants at Queanbeyan the following suffered little effect - *Eucs. goniocalyx*, *Polyanthemos .melliodora* ,*rossii*, *bridgesiana*, and *Acacia rubida* and *implexa* ditto the *Dianella*, *Lomandara* and *Bursaria spinosa*.

Recovery: Most plants have made a good recovery. When the drought eased and I had more time, I used deep watering granules, the problem with these granules is they can be harmful to frogs so they must be watered in very thoroughly. Not only the plants and wildlife suffered during the drought - I found the going pretty tough too, but we're all recovering now.....

Planting Under Established Eucalypts - Jan Simpson ANPS Canberra

One answer of course is not to plant at all. Its perfectly possible to develop an attractive garden space by making an open clearing carpeted with mulch and gravel, adding a seat and /or a bird bath and/or pots or a small wet patch. If however you want to plant a garden and there is a metre plus trunk height before the first branches, the area under the canopy, ie: from the drip line to the trunk, is where it is possible to find pockets of soil for growing individual plants. Do not, under any circumstances, raise the soil level around an established tree more than 5cm., doing so changes the drainage, decreasing the amount of air and water reaching the old ground level.

Now what type of plants? It is probably a good idea to stick to smallish plants and let them find their own way through the competition. Pea family plants are useful as they provide some of their own food needs through nitrogen fixing nodules on their roots. Sennas [Cassias] with yellow golden cup flowers in Spring are a traditional item. Any of the smaller egg and bacon peas also work well, starting with prostrate *Platylobiums* and *Oxylobiums*. Think of the banks of orange and golden peas mixed with boulders at the base of *Euc. pauciflora* in the Brindabellas. There are *Davesias*, *Pultenaeas* and *Dillwynnias* .Try *Brachysemas* and *Hardenbergias* and of course don't forget that wattles belong to the pea family as well, but will need plenty of sun to flower.

Take a leaf from nature and think of the dry hillides you have seen. The Victorian goldfields give you *Correa reflexa* and *Grevillea alpine*. Canberra, *Bracteantha viscosa*, *Acacia gunnii*, *Grevillea lanigera*, *Hakea microcarpa*, *Gompholobium huegelii*, *Persoonia chamaepitys* and *Cryptandra amara* where there is some full sun. In the Southern Highlands *Banksia spinulosa* happily coexists with eucalypts. From the damper Brindabellas comes *Gravillea diminuta*. *Jacksonia scopara* is a widespread lightweight tree with yellow scented pea flowers. The silver leafed, orange flowered form of *Grevillea arenaria* has proved hardy locally, but is more of a sunny clearing plant. For

the well drained spot you don't have *Prostantheras phyllicifolia*, *gilesii* [from the side of Mt. Canobolas at Orange] and *scutellarioides* should do the job

Several of the Society's members have established very attractive and successful gardens under and around eucalypts. Morrie Duggan grows the lovely *Dodonea siuolata* that has soft, ferny leaves and showy pink seed cases for long periods of the year. Al Bywong Hilary and John Merritt have a collection of Protantheras and Westrigias that thrive in the dappled light under a variety of eucalypts, and some long flowering showy *Phebalium stenophyllum* in deep leaf litter under *E. cinerea*. Barbara Daly has a lot of success with Prostantheras and Thryptomenes . Lyndal and Tom Thorburn have many Eremophilas interplanted in their hillside at Queanbeyan, while Glenn Pure has *Brachysema lanceolatum* under his Eucs.and Carmel Statham has Myoporum, Prostantheras, *Correct glabra var turnbullii*. *Acacia leucoclada* and *Darwinia citriodora* under her trees.

The real secret to gardening under established trees is to think of it not as a challenge but an opportunity. Draw lessons from natural woodlands and other gardens and experiment with some of the plants listed above.

SNIPPETS

Some ideas from the ASGAP Conference in Tasmania

Diana Snape

This 2003 Conference was held in January 2004 in Launceston and, as usual, gave a fascinating glimpse of the world of Australian plants in one particular State. Each time the Conference is held, it develops a character of its own, quite different from the previous one (and doubtless from the following one to be held next year in Perth).

Tasmania is blessed with such an array of indigenous (and endemic) plants that Australian Plant Society members there have for many years recognised the opportunity to base their gardens on the growing of these indigenous plants. Graham Roberts described the current creation by a group of APS Tasmania members of a regional botanic garden (called the Tasmanian Bushland Garden) featuring their indigenous dry sclerophyll flora. Work is still in progress but when Brian and I drove down to see the area we were impressed by the magnificent natural site. Near the entrance is a large, previously cleared area where a garden is being planted, with three shaped pools already in position. Graham did not mention any details of the design of the planted area - it will be interesting to see this develop.

The title of the Conference (and the Keynote Address by Alan Gray) was 'Garden in Isolation', emphasizing Tasmania's isolation from the rest of Australia after the last Ice Age, 17,000 years ago. During this Ice Age, because of lower sea levels, it was connected to the mainland by a land bridge. Early talks concentrated on the geology and geological history of Tasmania and its close relationship to Antarctica, resulting in its large number

of Gondwana plants. Rocks and the soil they produce are the basis of the life of plants, which depend on having the appropriate pH and mineral range - and the soil micro-fungi, discussed in an absorbing lecture later on. You might say this is a long way from garden design but I think an awareness of geology can influence how we use plants (and rocks) in designing our gardens. We were told we had to learn to recognise the widespread dolerite rock; like basalt, dolerite is a basic rock but a little coarser-grained, so I suppose it breaks down (rather more slowly) to a similar rich soil. Masses of dolerite can form huge, spectacular columns, for example on cliff faces.

Another early talk was on climate and the complexity of the factors determining the climate of Tasmania (and the rest of Australia). Our garden design must also take note of climatic conditions - some plants are tough and survive almost anywhere but others are fussier, remaining true to their origins. We can create microclimates and we can experiment but I think it is wise to at least make the framework plants of our gardens appropriate ones we can rely on.

Christine Corbett gave the Swaby Address on 'The Best Garden of All - Tasmania's Wilderness World Heritage Area'. We heard about plants of Tasmania's Wild West and South-West; Tasmanian rainforests and conifers; epacridaceae, correas and coastal plants. Talks on the flora of the Sub-Antarctic Islands and of Bass Strait Islands introduced us to unique, limited worlds where plants had to be tailored to specific conditions and constraints. Lessons for garden design? Just the fascination of a very limited selection of plants each uniquely right for its situation. If only we could manage something like that. Another conservation lesson was the need for care to preserve unique island ecosystems, which can be all too rapidly destroyed by human intervention.

One of the most fascinating lectures was one by Sapphire McMullan-Fisher on Fabulous Fungi. She discussed the vital and varied roles fungi play in terrestrial ecosystems. We are aware of the conspicuous fruiting bodies of many fungi but can easily forget the extensive underground mycorrhizal fungi on which terrestrial plants depend for efficient nutrition. Australia's distinctive flora have evolved in partnership with these hidden helpers. Again this is not directly connected to garden design but it is background knowledge which can help us understand some gardening successes or failures.

Excursions included one to a marvellous indigenous plant nursery called Habitat Nursery, with a wide and tempting range of Tasmanian plants, beautifully presented. On another occasion we were lucky to have a clear and sunny day to visit Ben Lomond, the second highest mountain in Tasmania. It is always a treat to be among alpine flora. We did visit the gardens of two APS members, both large 'walkabout gardens' and both established but still expanding. One had a superb extensive river view which necessitated careful positioning of trees. They reminded me of the importance of repeating some plants to achieve a satisfying, harmonious feel in a garden. I think this applies in different ways to both naturalistic and formal gardens.

Over 200 people attended this stimulating, friendly conference. I have mentioned just some of the talks and activities we enjoyed. We did not go on the Pre- or Post-

Conference Tours, which were also very popular, but I would recommend any APS member who has never been to an ASGAP conference to go to one in the future if they are able.



The Victorian Mallee is in the semi arid zone of Australia and contains about half of Victoria's rare and endangered species. The region is 4 million hectares in area, with some 500,000 ha. Used for irrigation scattered along the Murray River. Rainfall varies from 14" in the South to 10" in the North. Soils in the Mallee are generally calcareous [high in lime] and therefore alkaline and sandy in texture. The main land degradation issues are salinity, rabbits and vegetation decline, with fragmentation of remnants. The Victorian APS are holding their quarterly meeting at Mildura June 5/6 - Australian Plants Coping with Dryland.

The Mallee, Mildura and Mungo

Sue Clabburn

On Anzac Day 46 enthusiastic AGHS members set off from Melbourne with Rodger and Gwen Elliot as guides. Rodger and Gwen's expertise on Australian flora, their wide knowledge of history, geology, an ability to ferret out local people doing extraordinary things and their endless patience in answering endless questions makes a journey with them a memorable event. This was a five day adventure, traveling through Mallee country. We visited Walpeup Dry Country Memorial Garden - a celebration of the knowledge that a park is beautiful with eucalypts, grevilleas, eremophilas and dry or salt tolerant plants chosen for their adaptation to a harsh environment. Then to Pink Lakes National Park - dry, salt encrusted lakes shining in the sun, fringed with salt tolerant melaleucas and saltbush; beautiful - and we vowed to return. The bird life was too good for such a short stop. On to Ned's Comer, a degraded property once part of the Kidman empire but recently acquired by the Victorian Trust for Nature and now awaiting revegetation. It has a 35km Murray River frontage and is a precious resource now in good hands. Next, the Millawa memorial Garden and Heritage Village at Meringur, where families had planted frees to commemorate their forebears. All work was voluntary and farmers donated early buildings and farm machinery, showing early pioneers heroic efforts to settle the harsh environment. A near dawn walk to the Mildura sewage ponds

kept us all glued to our binoculars. The diversity of water birds and raptors was astounding, and it was very beautiful with the early morning light on the billabongs.

We went to Mungo National Park via the Australian Inland Botanic Gardens, the Gardens include a range of native plants from both arid and higher rainfall areas as well as exotic plantings suitable for the climate. We rode in a tractor train, the driver, a founder of the Garden driving us with passion - so many people we met on the trip were passionate about their projects.

Then, Mungo National Park, part of the World Heritage area of the Willandra Lakes, selected in recognition of its Aboriginal heritage and evidence of past climates preserved in its landscapes. And what landscapes! Extensive dry lake beds 20 — 30 km. long, ringed with sand dunes in which the burial sites of Mungo man have been found — the oldest recorded cremation in the world. Plants cling to extraordinary dune shapes, sculpted by wind and weather. Ancient hearths, middens of shells, bones and fragments of emu eggs, unearthed by wind or rain are easy to find. It is indeed a special place, a photographer's or an artist's delight.

The journey home was via Piangil where another passionate plantsman, a farmer who had fallen in love with eremophilas and learned to propagate them, holds the OPCA Eremophila collection. Finally, a stop at Marilyn Sprague's Goldfields Revegetation Nursery near Bendigo - a fitting way to round off the trip.

Sue Clabburn gardens enthusiastically in Daylesford's a regular participant in AGHS working bees and a Friend of Wombat Hill Botanic Gardens in whose NL this account first appeared.

Historic woolshed, Lake Mungo



**** Australia Speaks"**

Every so often I come across, as I'm sure you all do, opinions, philosophies, thoughts, descriptions and narratives from a wide range of literature which inform and inspire with their insight and literary skill. I invite you to share with us any passages that you may find particularly apt. I'd also like to include in this section, fragments of GDSG members' writing I've collected from past Newsletters, I'm sure you'll agree they are quite wonderful for many reasons. Let me know if you enjoy "Australia Speaks". J.H.

"One of the greatest essentials in landscape gardening is the variety of foliage and disposal of trees. Nothing can excel the glimpses afforded by the openings between naturally forming clumps of trees and shrubs, whose height and contrast of foliage have been studied."

William Guilfoyle 1873

"Each death in my circle, and particularly the going of those who have known or shared my childhood, drenches me with chill terror of this strange isolated land. It is as if I felt the tremors of the first exiles. We took it from the Aborigines. We do not yet possess it spiritually. We destroy, deface, insult, misunderstand it - whack it - but it resists. In the shock of bereavement - the thinning of family support - I see a dark spirit running over the land, a spirit akin to a sardonic smile, with the same mockery that is the laugh of the kookaburra - that laugh which is loud, robust, hilarious, but aches with a mystery so baffling it is tragic. That dark smile that runs over the land as if all the nostalgia for oblivion lay there unquenched and unforgiving. I must not again go there alone. The gone-awayness is too sapping. The sunlight caresses the gravestones and the wind sweeping over them intones the very essence of that oblivion from which we came and to which we go."

Miles Franklin 1943

Some amazing things out there in the desert - marble gums and triodic species in the red sand dunes highlighted by the back lighting of the setting sun; and so many silver foliaged trees and shrubs. Then the contrast of a ridge covered with *Callitris verucosa* or casuarinas, with the colour of various sennas, wattles and the deep red and bronze of dodonea species. It is a privilege to experience these unspoilt and remote areas.

Jan Hall GDSGNL

BOOK REVIEWS

"Australian Plants for Mediterranean climate Gardens." Rodger Elliot, Rosenberg publishing.

The introduction provides background information on the Australian landscape, including its past history and its present plant life, as well as the Mediterranean regions of the country. Under various headings just 100 very choice plants are described, requiring in Rodger's own words "disciplined selection and very hard decisions". The book concludes with a Quick Reference Plant Selection Guide, especially useful as it lists plants suitable for a range of soil types and climate conditions as well as listing specific attributes and uses. I was very taken with the whole concept of this book and with the amount of practical information it contains - all growers should have it - highly recommended.

Tony Cavanagh APS Vic.

"Across the Top. Gardening with Australian Plants in the Tropics". Compiled by Keith Townsend, SGAP Townsville Branch Qld. Publishers.

A check through the well written plant descriptions will help many growers of Australian plants make a further selection of tropical species to try in their gardens. Before the species description section there are a number of chapters covering landscaping, soils, nutrition, mulching, watering, propagating, pests and diseases and attracting wildlife to your garden. All told, a most useful book for anyone interested in growing Australian plants in their garden. It is clearly written with descriptive notes including the species' size, distribution, leaves, bark, flowers and fruits. This book is a very suitable addition to any library, public or private.

Noel Lothian APS S.A.

Report on last Melbourne Meeting - March 14

At last I was lucky enough to have a lovely sunny, not too hot, afternoon here for the last Melbourne meeting. Before the meeting started I dragged everyone up the hill to look at my latest, newest garden and to look at some of the changes that I've only just made to a section of one of the original beds. Despite a lack of rain in Feb and March the garden

has dealt with summer reasonably well because of mild temperatures, few windy, drying days and good rains in the second half of last year.

Members who attended discussed the strengths and shortcomings of the "Criteria for a Descriptive Assessment of a Garden's Design" without really putting forward any changes. I know that the Sydney and North East Branch have also spent time in their respective last meetings on this topic so eagerly await their reports so that this tool can be finalized. Our branch previously mentioned that a tool like this could form part of a 'Welcome Pack' when new members join the group so we then went on to discuss what other things might be included - e.g. covering letter for the tool, the Group's aims, relevant websites, a state listing of nurseries and indigenous nurseries. I have agreed to collect websites and nurseries from Melbourne members

Thanks everyone for bringing along a lovely afternoon tea. Thank you also to those people who forwarded their suggestions to me on what to do next in a part of the garden I will renew when the rains of autumn make it feasible to once again disturb the soil.

Next Melbourne Meeting - May 16 at 2pm

The next meeting will be held at the home of Betty Denton,

Betty has lived at this address for the last 20 years. The property, which was bought as an existing house and garden, is half an acre (0.2 hect). Nothing remains of the original garden except for the indigenous trees. Betty is a long-term member of APS (possibly an original member) who says she has been more serious about her gardening in the last 10 to 12 years.

Could members please bring a folding chair, mug and a contribution to afternoon tea. Please let either Betty or myself know if you intend coming to this meeting. Hope to see you there.

Melbourne Future Dates

The following dates are proposed for the last 2 meetings of the year. Please note them in your diaries - August 22 and Nov 14.

GDSG NORTH EAST BRANCH

Report of meeting on Mar 20 2004 postponed from February

Only a few members managed the altered date, there did not seem to be a reduction in chatter, sorry, discussion.

The next meeting was set for **May 15th at 1030 at Paul and Barbara Kennedy's**

The major topic for discussion will be the proposed publication. The current suggestion is that several say 6, gardens are selected for the range of size, climate, situation, style, soil etc. and described for what has been done, what could be done, plant choices, planting times, watering and general maintenance. The idea is to base our recommendations on what we know personally as far as is possible, e.g. when to prune, when, or if, to remove drought or frost affected plants, and of course our plant combinations. What do **you** think, is this the best way to cover our area? Jenny may be able to tell us about small scale publishing options. Whatever way we go we need to accumulate data and photos. I hope you are better than I am at record keeping, but keep trying!

Apart from that we can see how the Kennedy garden has developed and look at it as an example for including in our booklet.

Also there are several new members of Wang APS who would welcome help in designing their gardens. At least two couples are building on acreage with their house their first priority so there is no great urgency but I would like to arrange visits for them. We are trying to organize reverse visits, i.e. for the new members to see existing gardens.

Two members had assessed their gardens by the 'criteria' and found them generally useful, with the usual caveat that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. One suggestion is for the addition of an 'immediate impression' section. There is also the money factor, one could do lots of extra things with unlimited funds, the criteria help sort out priorities for such funds as are available. Linked to money is manpower availability, however a fit young couple can do things their elders cannot tackle. Maintenance standards also depend on manpower and it may be necessary to choose a much simpler garden than one's ideal. While there was agreement on the need for seating some considerations in positioning this range from time of day, season of year, and growth of garden and changes in shade patterns. Either lots of seats or light ones easily moved. Any judgment on environmental concerns will depend on individual awareness, which we hope grows, as ours has with our years of gardening.. We also considered walk through and glance at gardens. And Helen has a problem; she is torn between a display garden for Australian plants, which hers has become, on a fairly prominent corner in a conservative country town and thus keeping it neat to fit conventional garden concepts or letting it grow relaxed and a bit wild, which would be her natural tendency.

Overall the feeling is that as long as the criteria are recognized for what they are, a guide, and not something set in stone they are a useful tool and I propose to copy them for the newcomers mentioned above.

Mike Burston's garden is quite close to ours as the crow flies but on the opposite side of the creek on the valley floor with various bands of soil, all more sandy than ours and old watercourses with bands of waterworn stones. There are also good springs and Mike does not have the water shortage problems that I do. One object in his planting is to leave views to the north unobscured which gives a somewhat English appearance, a few low plants close to the house with a wide stretch of "lawn" (mown paddock) before belts of shrubs. One of these to the northwest is a purple border with the aim of using low evening light to show up the flowers. The north east corner of the house has a patio sheltered by a pergola with a deciduous creeper, one of the many exotics Mike has used. The edge of the patio is marked by a wall Mike has built using the round rocks from the old creekbeds concreted in place and holding back a garden bed. Many of the rocks came from the hole excavated for the pool which has a waterfall edging the bed made from larger rocks salvaged from road cuttings a little further up the hill.

More of these rocks have been used to create, rock piles? rockeries? based on one very large boulder which was hand made after a workshop by Geoff Sitch and Mike called for suggestions for planting around them. A small distance to the south of the house is a mound based on a tank with a cellar too, with the face of the mound held by hexagonal basalt blocks (as in the Giant's Causeway) which came from the top of the hill. The ground slopes away steeply to the south and west and so is just right for a haha to keep the sheep out. We were charmed to find an antique metal seat Mike and Carol had found, while some of the other antique ornaments came from Mike's family home.

Most of the decorative native plants are in a broad band parallel to the road just in from the entrance. As in my garden there are no beds here, the plants just go in to holes in the old pasture which can create severe weed competition but most thrive. Until the plants thicken up and close the gaps weeds are quite a problem. There are gaps due to unexpected deaths especially after so many dry years and because it is still matter of finding out what does do well and building on them. I think because his site is still more open than mine, Mike can grow plants that I can't and vice-versa. There is also the soil difference and his superb drainage. It is funny how the plants that we can't grow and our neighbours can that impress themselves, not the vice-versa ones. As yet there is little shade, but it is coming. If only we could get back to our normal rainfall pattern the shade would come all the quicker.

Mike also has a huge shade tunnel in which struck cuttings can be grown on but also tree and other ferns and rainforest type plants are planted. A further outdoor rainforest is establishing across the haha. There is an orchard and vegie garden, various deciduous trees and a tall screen covered with climbing roses so that it is very much a mixed garden. It is still very much a developing garden, planned and planted for the long term using ideas distilled from extensive world-wide travel, years spent working in the RBG South Yarra, Burnley training and an Eltham boyhood.

SYDNEY MEETINGS

Sunday May 9th Mount Annan Botanic Gardens 11.00 am

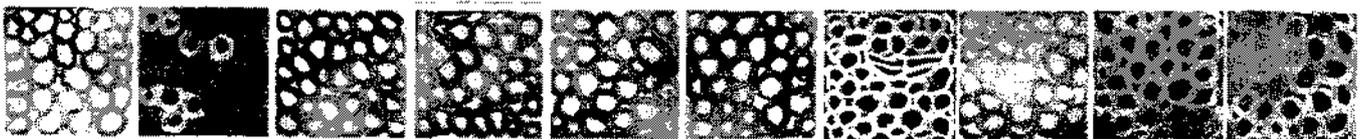
Let's meet and see what has happened in the Gardens since the last time we visited, I think about 6 years ago. Peter Cuneo is arranging for someone to walk and talk us through the latest developments and following lunch in the Gardens - B YO or Café - I thought we could discuss Victoria's "Criteria for a Descriptive Assessment of a Garden's Design" please bring your Nov 2003 NL with you for reference, Chris is keen to get feedback and get this up and running. Ring me, Jo Hambrett so I know numbers, please don't hesitate if you need a lift, car pools are easy to arrange with enough notice and its lovely to see lots of faces and renew acquaintances, as well as getting down to business of course! Hopefully we can catch up with our South Coast and Southern Highland members as well as those from Sydney.

The next meeting will be **Sunday 26th September 10.30 am at Glenbrook Native Plant Reserve** in the Blue Mountains - this site was established by the Blue Mtns. Group of APS in 1963 .Put this date in your diary now - it should be a wonderful day, visiting the beautiful Blue Mountains in Spring.

A very big **Welcome** to our **New Members**.

A reminder that **04/05 subs** are due by **July 1st 04** . Please fill in the form included in this Newsletter and send it to our hardworking Treasurer Bryan; we would appreciate you doing so promptly to minimize end of financial year workload.

04/05 Financial Members: D. Berenyi, E. Brett, B. Buchanan, D. Dela Libera, J.Fleming, J. Foster, J. Hambrett, B. Kapernick, A. Mackenzie, N. Marriot, T. & J. McCarthy, L. Murray, A. Neild, M.Pymble, A. Raine, M. Rigg & D.Leggatt, J. Stacey, M. & N. Webb, C. Bentley, S. Pipitone, P. Tratt.



Minnie Pwerle, Awelye Atwengerrp Synthetic polymer paint on linen, 70 panels 260 x 260mm each, overall size installed 1880 x 2700 mm