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GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP
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Dear Members,

These past few months I have wandered the garden, lacking the usual sense of purpose and enthusiasm, watching the effects of the ongoing dry spell and ever tightening water restrictions. Tunes buzz around my head as I wander, predominantly "Stayin' Alive" by the Bee Gees!

Unfortunately, "When will we ever Learn" and "Pave Paradise" pop up too, as I have other sounds accompanying me on these garden walks - courtesy of the latest influx of home buyers and developers to our district - much louder, not little tunes to hum but a grinding dirge of chainsaws, bulldozers and bobcats. The "Bush Requiem", its Finale always the same. A heart stoppingly long crescendo, as the timber, cracking and groaning splits asunder, an earth shattering "woomph" follows and then, appropriately after such violence, a most profound silence. Usually a few battered survivors are left, well apart and suitably shaven, chained to the dry clay wasteland.

In such circumstances it is very difficult to enthusiastically embrace normally enjoyable gardening decisions such as plant choice, placement and design ideas. I remember the owner of a lovely exotic garden at Mt. Wilson saying to me once that "anyone can garden here as the soil and water supply is so good" - I am starting to think that when the gardening gets tough, only the VERY tough can get gardening!!

Shape, Foliage and the Australian Garden exercise our contributors' minds this Newsletter — the serendipity of five people submitting articles that dovetail so beautifully is an editor's dream!

Melbourne: July 25th & August 22nd. Sydney : September 26th. N.E. Vic. 31st. July

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CORRESPONDENCE

Re, Lawns a few newsletters back; there was a reference to kids preferring to have places to hide rather than open spaces for ball games. This seemed to solve a problem for me in waterwise design at the time, however the feedback I'm getting is that the big issue with many of the general public is doing away with places for snakes to hide. So, I'm back to square one - finding viable alternatives to lawns!

John Hoile NSW

Poor snakes, everyone needs somewhere to hide! Possibly John, you could look at groundcovers and very low growing plants which are not tall enough to provide shelter but are still an alternative to lawn in your design as they are low enough to constitute open or negative space.

After talking to you last week I dug out my old book of Alistair Knox, probably not looked at for twenty years. Yes, he does talk about "the sense of a cave in the Australian landscape". A lot of his thoughts on landscape design carry much wisdom still. Autumn in the mountains is very beautiful but too dry. A birthday present of a big tank means at least I can keep sprinklers going on the roof.

Deidre Morton NSW

I am enjoying the newsletters very much. As a new member it would be helpful to know if any other members lived nearby. I was wondering if you have ever considered the idea of a contact list of those members willing to be included. I would love to attend some of the meetings but may need a lift as we only have one car in the family. In addition it would be wonderful to have someone in the neighborhood to talk plants with. This is something I have really missed since I moved to the country 7 years ago. Just an idea. Cheers,

Dora Berenyi Vic.

Unfortunately I have an idea that privacy laws don't permit us to give out contact details without express permission from each member - however Dora, I can publish your details next NL and those close and interested could get in touch - if anyone else is in a similar situation to Dora, contact me and I will facilitate communication. JH

STOP PRESS

Yet another GDSG member has graced the small screen! Bettina Digby was on "Gardening Australia" explaining the regeneration work she is coordinating, with the help of volunteers, through Randwick Council at the Fred Hollows Reserve in Glebe Gully, Randwick.

DESIGN

World Gardens — Is there room for an Australian garden? Jeff Howes NSW

On a recent holiday to the west coast of USA that included San Diego, Los Angeles, the drive up the coast to San Francisco and inland around Arizona, in between looking at the scenery and meeting some colourful locals, I took particular interest in the plants used in public places and home gardens and I was quite surprised to find that they were very similar to those used along the east coast of Australia.

The more common plants that I saw include:

- Eucalyptus species, especially *E. globules*. In the small township of Morro Bay (halfway between LA and San Francisco on the coast) they had used *E. Ficifolia* as a street tree and they had been there a while as they some had trunks nearly 800mm wide. They were all just coming into flower — a magic sight)
- Callistemon species (all in a good need of a prune)
- NZ Christmas Tree - *Metrosideros excelsa*
- A grass similar to the swamp foxtail grass - *Pennisetum* sp
- Palms in all shapes and sizes
- Magnolia - especially the large white flowering form
- *Strelitzia reginae* — the bird's tongue flower
- *Senna artemisoides* (especially in Arizona. I also noticed there, a few nurseries that sold only Australian inland plants)
- Leptospermum species, especially Red Damask (developed in NZ and was widely sold in Australia many years ago) and our coastal white flowering *L. laevigatum*
- *Jacaranda mimosifolia*
- Ivy
- Bougainvillea's in all their colours
- Morton Bay Fig — *Ficus macrophylla*
- Norfolk Island Pine - *Araucaria heterophylla*
- Agapanthus sps
- Roses (nearly all black spot free)
- Oleanders (especially along freeways)

I was thinking about this and wondering if a globalization of plants is occurring, resulting in gardeners using plants from anywhere in the world without worrying where they come from as long as they either suit the situation and/or are 'pretty'. If so, is this at the expense of their indigenous plants?

Back in Australia - is it a problem if gardens in Australia are full of azaleas, camellia's, agapanthus, roses etc. and our local native plants are poorly represented? I suppose it depends on many factors and members of the GDSG would, I suspect, answer yes!

Should the Garden Design Study Group/APS/SGAP/Wildflower Society be promoting the concept of growing an Australian garden using Australian plants more than is occurring at present? If so, how do we go about this when we, the GDSG, is having trouble trying to define what is an Australian garden is.

Perhaps we need to be talking to the various nursery industry associations that represent - retail nursery's, wholesale growers and landscapers to name a few. In doing so we could promote Australian plants for their uniqueness and ability to better withstand our variable climate extremes and at the same time acknowledging that there is a place in these Australian gardens for plants from other countries.

What do other members of the GDSG think?

To conclude read on, perhaps nature will decide this for us.

What makes an Australian Garden?

Jeff Howes NSW

I am sure that others may be able to put their thoughts together better than I, however perhaps I can start the process.

I was thinking about what is so attractive about a typical Australian garden after looking at very formal large gardens, such as the world famous Butchart gardens in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

This garden is about to celebrate its 100th anniversary and I admire the work the original owner Mrs. Jenny Butchart undertook to create a garden from a quarry that yielded the limestone and clay for her husband's nearby cement manufacturing plant. While it attracts millions of admiring visitors each year, it was far too formal for me. The lawns were so bright green and weed free, there were no dead flowers on the annuals, gardens were finely tilled and no fallen leaves anywhere - it was just immaculate. The spring growth on the trees was very bright and colourful and a many of the trees had large leaves that formed a dense canopy that prevented little sunlight reaching the ground beneath them. It was this density of the trees that was the most un- Australian.

In my opinion, the most striking aspect of the Australian landscape (not rainforest) is that you can see the sky through the trees - there is that interplay of light and shadow, especially with the wind blowing. This openness and subtle smells of the oils contained in a lot of the leaves makes for the uniqueness of an Australian garden - is this what we are trying to create?

Last year I visited a lovely exotic garden close by where I live, reading Jeff's article reminded me of my visit - coincidentally the garden had been referred to in the visitor's book as Australia's own Buchart Gardens!

*I had been wanting to see it for some time as both our gardens share almost identical soil, aspects, indigenous species and so on, and I was interested to see the difference- visually and emotionally - between an exotic and a [largely] Australian plant garden **in the same area**- an important factor I feel, as an Australian plant garden in Cairns FNQ is going to have many different qualities to an AP garden in Adelaide or Melbourne. As expected, each garden provided quite different experiences despite their proximity. The differences were in the shapes, the colours and the textures of the foliage and the plant as a whole; all much stronger, "denser" as Jeff noted in his article, and this did give the garden a completely different "feel" and look. It was also well and truly groomed, a thing of beauty to behold as well as to be in. As one of our members once said in a NL, her garden does not photograph well as she feels to really appreciate an Australian plant garden you need to be in it, to be apart of its whole experience - if you like, it transcends the purely visual there are other sensorial and subliminal messages to decipher.*

By contrast, my garden has much more verticality, the tall trees reaching for the sun, breaking the sky up into blue chunks and the light changing as it hits each foliage layer at various levels. The Australian plants' foliage seems to scatter and fracture the light, making the plantings appear sparser, lighter, less dense? more ephemeral? and the lawns/ grassed areas vary in colour, height and species depending on position in the garden and the prevailing weather - and of course there are the everpresent gum leaves.

I'd welcome members' thoughts and comments. JH

John Coburn
Sun Music 1989
 National Library of Australia
 S John Coburn



An Italian View of the Australian Garden

GDSG member Jillian Walker, NSW, through her company, Ceres Mann, last year brought landscape designer, lecturer, author, garden historian, curator and TV star Gian Carlo Cappello, to Sydney for a series of lectures. Gian Carlo has studios in Florence and Fiesole, is curator of a section of the Boboli Gardens and a specialist on Italian Renaissance Gardens. Below I have quoted from an article which appeared in the Sydney Weekly Courier, written by Karen Halabi.

Gian Carlo says: "Well designed gardens don't need irrigation, when designing a garden we should consider soil nutrition and composition so that watering can be kept to a minimum. Choice of plants is less important than soil preparation. During the 45 degree summer heat that we experienced in Europe last summer half the plants in the Boboli garden died, but none were in the section for which I am responsible and where I have been carrying out restoration. That's because the soil is prepared well. We must prepare the soil properly and feed the plants for their maintenance free survival without constant watering.

I can see the beginning of a true Australian style, even though the majority of gardens still appear to be predominantly English or formal Italian Style. The prevailing use of indigenous plants defines an original style in itself although the plants are still being arranged in most cases according to an already familiar design, that is, English or Italian."

He urged Australian gardeners to avoid the pretentiousness of formal layouts, water fountains and statuary. He hoped the informality of our way of living "your spontaneity and casualness, like a form of roughness or rudeness, is the greatness of the Australian way of life" would eventually translate into an iconic garden style.

Gian Carlo visited two gardens owned by GDSG members [Ian and Tamara Cox and yours truly] and a third, the Ezzy garden visited by Sydney members last August; he saw many beautiful other gardens in his time here and Jillian was keen that he should see some Australian plant gardens as well. I had a great day accompanying them both. He was clearly "knocked out" by the health, variety and design of the Cox's lovely garden. Below is a transcript of Gian Carlo's thoughts, I feel they make interesting and informative reading, setting gardens in general and our gardens in particular as a part of a worldwide historical picture.



* As we discussed, permission for reprints of the attached comments, quotes etc. **must** be cleared through my office, please. You have permission to quote from these comments.
 Jillian Walker
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"In the Australian gardens the two most significant aspects were undoubtedly the literal devotion to native plants and the collections of plants. A nation with so recent historical roots (200 years is so little time compared with the history of Europe) appreciates and understandably makes its own those "roots" which had been, for millennia, part of the land where it now lives. The prevailing use of indigenous plants defines an original style in itself, also when the plants are then arranged according to an already familiar design: predominantly English style with formal inserts of the Italian style. Regarding Landscape Design professionals, it is more the quest for a distinctive characteristic of one's own, than that of a 'national style'; it is a phenomenon that is found in all countries of the world.

At the most we can speak of a style tied to modern Western civilization. Recent history teaches us that only totalitarian regimes sought a 'national style' in artistic expression, and also looking back in time, different styles of garden design were imposed by the stronger nations: from Babylon to Hellenic Greece, yielding later to Rome; from the Arabs occupying half of Europe to the richness of Florence of the 15th and 16th centuries; from royal France to colonialist England, the latter summarizing in itself all that preceding history, adding a touch of the East as well. Australian gardens therefore, more than having a new style that distinguishes them, are the result of and are an integral part of the Western style that today governs the world and asserts itself everywhere. As the magnificence of the ancient oriental gardens is now lost and we do not have in our DNA the minimalist essence of the small Japanese gardens, therefore the heritage of the ancient Greek philosophy remains almost unchanged to our modern western cultures : the restrained Hellenic elegance: the Glaphyria. And we do not know how to detach ourselves from it, not even when descending into the excesses of certain North American gardens.

Europe is today's Greece and America acts like ancient Rome; following more the technical and material aspects that those speculative and philosophical.

Of the two trends, Australia is selecting the way of good taste, (Sydney-land must not become an anagram of Dysney-land). Here this means that the formal layout of flowerbeds, the water fountains and the statuary are created without pretentiousness and everything is actually enriched with a healthy and radiant caricature of itself. It is quite the reverse in authoritarian nations. Also in the Australian public gardens there is a reflection of a society that knows to exalt the rights and duties of its citizens, first above all the right to happiness (perhaps not everyone knows that The Americans, in their Constitution, sanction this article which was originally proposed by a Tuscan nobleman) and the duty to protect the environment.

On these points, Australia is simply an example for the other countries of the world. The collecting of non-native plants in Australian gardens, I believe may be a way of feeling part of the rest of the modern civilized world - that now also includes Japan - yet still remaining an island continent a long way from Europe and the USA. South Africa, another country with a colonial past, has produced magnificent parks in an Anglo-Saxon style; today the African style (that is an invention of the current regime) is doing away with those gardens which, in the world, are the ones more similar to the Australian gardens. But I do not believe that in Australia there is on the horizon a stylistic claim from the aboriginal people. Every country, even in the similarities, has its own story to tell. Another distinctive feature of Australian gardens, also of more formal ones, is the informality of the way of living. In life as in the garden: "barefoot".

In the past, affluence always fought against spontaneity which was seen as rough and uncivilized, and the garden was always the way to display one's affluence.

In most cultures, particularly in Europe, it is still this way, but in Australia affluence demonstrates itself instead in the acquired power to be spontaneous, casual at every opportunity: this is the greatness of the Australian way of life that finally clears away the class-consciousness of modern society."

PLANTS

WHAT SHAPE ARE YOUR PLANTS IN ?

Chris Larkin

Following on some reasonable rains in the second half of last year we had a mild, one might even say cool, January here in Melbourne. I don't usually garden much in summer and I wouldn't normally put plants in the ground at this time of year, not least because we're on tank water, but this is exactly what I ended up doing in January. Little did I know that we would then head into an extended period of dry that would go on for the next 3 months. Luckily I have avoided being lulled into any sense that conditions with respect to rainfall over any one year will get any better. (How long is it since we have had 'normal' rainfall?) When I'm thinking about what plants to use in the garden I give myself a very stern talking to, reminding myself that parts of the garden with wonderful moist soil conditions at certain times of the year will dry out by the end of each summer. I try to keep this knowledge to the forefront of my thinking. For this reason more and more I'm repeating plants that survive and do well in my own garden. Naturally this produces greater cohesion in the plant design. Fortunately with the size of my garden I can repeat quite a lot of different plants while still maintaining a rich variety including continuing to trial plants that are new to me.

I do remember spending a bit of time pruning during the cool summer time. There are a number of Australian plants that have such a natural compact growth habit they actually look as though they have been pruned on a regular basis. The dwarf forms of *Baeckea virgata* are classic examples of this. In fact when a recent visitor asked me how much I pruned my plants I answered quite a lot but went on to say there were plants that might appear to have been pruned but on the contrary they just naturally grow that way. To give an example I pointed to some dwarf *B. virgatas* whereupon the woman said 'Oh, I would have expected that those plants had been pruned a few times each year'. Perhaps there aren't really a great many plants quite so tightly controlled or as perfectly rounded as dwarf *Baeckea virgata* although dwarf forms of *Acacia cognata* and the less well known *Phymatocarpus maxwellii* spring to mind. Realistically though there are any number of plants that without too much effort could be kept to quite a regular shape. Plants such as *Homoranthus papillatus* or *H. flavescens*, dwarf forms of *Kunzea ambigua* and *parvifolia*, Mel. *violacea*, *thymifolia* and *hypericifolia* forms, Leptos like *rotundifolia* 'Julia anne' and 'Little Bun' and any number of *ofcorreas* - and many, many more.

When out pruning last summer I started to see the potential of pruning to round off some plants, to repeat semi-formal shapes for visual interest, contrast, surprise and delight. (I might add that this idea is used to great effect in the Kevin Hoffman garden ^ L&T^.) One idea I have is to punctuate a winding set of steps with softly rounded topiary of

Spyridium microphyllum, repeated to left and right, to act as visual points of reference like the knobs on a banister of a flight of stairs.

There are quite a few examples around the area I live in of local councils using Australian plants in a very formal way. As I drive down one street there are several roundabouts and an elongated chicane. Two roundabouts have tight clipped *Correct reflexa* to about 0.75m in their centres with outer skirts of *Grey, obtusifolia*; another has *Orthrosanthus multiflorus* in the middle and the compact form of *Brachyscome multifida* around the edge, the chicane has a centre *oiDianella* with an outer skirt of a hybrid grevillea such as *gaudi chaudi*. Elsewhere in the City of Knox westringias are cut into cubes, oblongs and balls. *Mel. huegelii* is hedged into tall and short columns - an ugly sight when first attacked by the clippers but it always responds very well. I can only imagine that without any emotional involvement in the task it has been relatively easy for council employees to carry out these works and the results are quite informative. Formal garden design is apparently on an endless path of ascendancy as gardens in recent times seem to have more to do with extending the built environment of the house. Outdoor 'rooms' are created with short or tall walls of foliage clipped to nice straight lines and there seems to be no reason at all why a wide range of Australian plants can't be used for this purpose.

As some plants age they can be given quite a different character, and some might say a new lease on life, if they are pruned to effect. I have seen older examples of *Baeckea virgata* cut to reveal their short trunks with a mop top aloft. And I'm sure this idea could be pursued with *Agonis flexuosa* dwarf and *Lepto 'Cardwell'* and I know Snape's have done this with *Melaleuca lateritia*. *Leptospermum horizontalis* can be shaped in a similar manner but because the foliage is quite stiff the plant takes on a wonderful appearance of being bonsaid.

The study group has visited this topic on a number of occasions and certainly a worthwhile reference is to be found in the chapter 'Formal Gardens' in Diana's and the study groups book — 'The Australian Garden: Designing with Australian Plants' - a worthwhile reference book for any library.

P.S. In the last couple of weeks I've purchased two plants that are new to me that may grow to have a tight topiaried appearance — a dwarf form of *Thryptomene saxicola* and dwarf *Calytrix tetragona*.

FOLIAGE AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Barbara Buchanan

From Douglas Ruhnen in Fine Gardening Feb 99. (Fine Gardening is an American publication.) "problem of too much fine foliage, not enough bold texture. Too much fine texture imparts a weak, soft, unfocused effect while bold texture can provide relief from unstructured fluff. The two are most exciting in contrast to each other. Bold contrast can come

from large leaved plants or plants of distinctive form. A large pot, sculpture or garden structure can also provide relief from too much fine textured foliage."

This was actually written about creating herbaceous borders but it struck me that this "weak, soft unfocused effect" is what makes our all-Australian gardens difficult to photograph effectively. They may look perfectly satisfactory to our prejudiced eyes, or should it be conditioned eyes, used to masses of fine foliage but be disappointingly flat through the camera lens. One plant just merges into the next and the next. . . . Well, we make our gardens for our own pleasure not necessarily to make great photos but ever since I read this in 1999 I have been even more aware of the benefits of foliage contrasts in giving each plant a place in the overall scheme. At the same time I have engrained Glen Wilson's exhortations to use similar foliage types together with just the occasional contrast for emphasis.

I also remember my 'grey patch' where I collected all the grey foliage I had and found it didn't work, when everything was grey it was very dull. On the other hand a grey mallee Euc. in a mass of green shrubs gave scale and distance which was otherwise very foreshortened. It is a matter of context. For years I have been looking for red foliage too, in our climate quite a few plants make red leaves in response to both heat and cold which helps give a seasonal change and set the shrub apart. 'Copper Glow' is not the only teatree with red leaves and I have scanned nursery trays of indigenous leptospermums for the best colours with great success. My 'jungle' under shade cloth contains quite a few rainforest plants in pots which give vivid flushes from time to time. The rainforest also provides large leaved plants to make the bold contrast of the original quote but not too many of them can be grown outside here. The firewheel *Stenocarpus sinuatus* is one that does and its deep green large leaves have a luxurious look even when it is without flowers. On the other hand *Banksia robur* provides the leaf size but is hard to keep a good green colour, a combination of drought stress and winter cold I think. It does flower prolifically in late summer/autumn to the great delight of the New Hollands. Of course the currently fashionable tufties are another good source of contrast. I need fairly large ones to make an impression here. I keep trying the kangaroo paws but the climate is really too damp. My Gymnea lily works well and has even flowered once, so I have started another for balance. My grass trees are away now, after a slow start and likewise my macrozamia which are finally increasing despite the drought. However I would remove the *Lomandra longifolia* if it wasn't such a daunting task because it really does not contribute much and is getting rather large. It looks as if the *Gahnia sieberiana* which I bought for its red berries is not the real thing, no sign of berries on the flower stem, still it makes a statement.

One of the best of the grey foliages for me is *Derwentia perfoliata* which is also indigenous. The really bright silvery leaves are big by Australian standards and the mounding habit an attractive change. It does need to be cleaned up each year as the old foliage is black and unbeautiful. Another that draws visitors' eyes is *Cyphanthera albicans* although the leaves are very fine their bright silver is always fresh and cheerful. I have repeated both of these round the garden.

Perhaps other members have their own foliage contrast favourites that might give me some new ideas..?



SNIPPETS

Lawn as an Art Form [?]: an extract from an article in "Your Garden" Jan. 04

"In this garden, fine leaf couch" Windsor Green" lawns are lovingly cosseted to achieve a soft lush carpet that links and sets off all the other features of the garden to perfection. Using a cylinder, the grass is mown weekly in a clockwise direction then again in the opposite direction. This gives the lawn a fine finish. As the soil is sandy the lawn is watered daily and it is fertilized every six weeks .During humid periods fungal problems are sprayed with Mancozeb and Fongarid and watering is reduced to stop the spread of the disease. To reduce the amount of thatch and to help the lawn drain evenly it is vertimowed annually and cored every two years. Bruce recommends using a lawn specialist to control weeds.

The question mark is mine. The garden is in Perth. Ed.

An Uncommon Woman of many talents

Born in 1834 Louisa Atkinson was a combination of novelist, journalist, ecologist, naturalist, botanist, taxidermist, bush tucker woman, advocate for Australian plants in gardens, and a painter of fauna, flora and landscapes .Careful research, literature, art and science were the tools she skillfully employed to infect others with her love of the environment.

As well as being Australia's first woman novelist, Louisa became our first nature columnist. She wrote on the natural wonders of birds, insects and plants as well as bush foods of the aborigines, and was thanked for bringing to practical use our colonial fruit and plants. She was acknowledged as an expert botanist and plant collector and several plants were named in her honour.

Victor Crittenden [see **Book Review**] of Mulini Press, Canberra has spent 30 years researching and republishing works by Louisa. "We are very casual with our early writers" says Victor. Today, Louisa's novels and a selection of her newspaper articles are available through Mulini Press largely fulfilling the wish of her husband James Calvert to republish her literary work.



Australia Speaks

"There's nothing wrong with design enriching our lives,[but] it's more than that too. It's not just a look, an aesthetic, it's not just what's the latest thing, it's possible to be something of great depth and resonance for human beings, whether they be rich or poor. Modernism was carried in the early days by architects with a social conscience, believing they could change the world for the better".

Gregory Burgess, RAIA, 2004

"What one tries to do [as a designer] is to enrich or enhance people's lives in whatever way. We're trying to add functionality, amenity, make something work better, make people's lives easier, make tasks easier, but at the same time we're aware of the aesthetic dimensions, which means we may be able to make life more pleasant, more enjoyable and graceful.

Mary Featherston, Designer, 2004

"The Droughts to which we are so continuously subject, render abortive all attempts at maintaining a garden in the English Style, and point out to me that stonework and terraces and large shady trees, the characteristics of Hindustanee gardens, are more suited to our climate than English lawns and flowerbeds."

John Thompson, Surveyor-Generals Dept.,Sydney 1839

We have bought a little estate of 42 acres four miles from Sydney by the sea, it is lovely beyond conception. The scenery resembles Jersey, but it's far more beautiful — the vegetation is so lovely. You can form no idea of the beauty of this climate, our winters are delicious. I shall look in horror at the leafless trees when I return home. I am in my garden all day and quite delight in cultivating our place. I have just been planting seeds collected by Dr. Leichhardt's expedition, a gardener who accompanied him gave me a few seeds of each new flower they discovered.

Georgiana Molloy, Bronte House, Sydney, 1830

Being a good custodian of the land and caring for the world around and its people should be acknowledged for the achievements they are. Australian gardens are not icons of status; they are at their best when they are a personal expression of a nurturing philosophy.

Paul Thompson "Australian Planting Design"2002

BOOK REVIEWS

"A Shrub in the Landscape of Fame" Victor Crittenden Mulini Press 1992

This is a most interesting biography of Thomas Shepherd, the Scottish horticulturist and landscape designer who established Australia's first nursery garden. He also found time to write, deliver and publish a series of lectures on horticulture and landscape gardening. He was horrified by the destruction of native flora and castigated the colonists in one of his lectures delivered posthumously; " When you, gentlemen, first go to your estates your ground was well furnished with beautiful shrubs. You ignorantly set the murderous hoe and grubbing axe to destroy them, and the ground that had been full of luxurious verdure was laid bare and desolate. No person of taste who has seen the rocks, trees, flowering shrubs, rock lilies and other plants growing there indigenous in masses and groups unequalled by the art of man, must but admire them. No rocky scene in England or Scotland can be compared to it."

. The book gives a fascinating insight into colonial life through the eyes of a plantsman. It is also worth noting that a book on Garden design did not appear in North America until five years after Shepherds, it seems we lost our advantage somewhat. JH

Report on Melbourne Meeting - May 16

Due to a light sprinkling of rain the discussion part of the meeting was held before we went outside to wander through Betty's garden.

Much of the discussion again centred on the list of criteria for assessing a garden in light of feedback received, via the newsletter, from the N-E Vic group. It was thought valuable to include sections as follows.

Site description and history

Assessment of land — slope, size, soil, significant vegetation

Relevant history of the site e.g. former use

Initial impressions and future uses

Welcoming aspect

What you want to achieve? How do you want to use the outside space?

It was also suggested that a different title might make the intended use of this 'tool' much clearer and even less threatening. A title such as 'Features of Good Garden Design: guidelines for assisting garden owners to assess and develop their gardens'. What do you think?

After we receive any feedback from the Sydney group, and any other GDSG members for that matter, interested members of the Melbourne group will take one final look at this tool before we begin a review of the group's aims sometime next year.

Betty's garden by Joan Barrett

When Betty and her husband bought their half-acre property 20 years ago in a dry area of bushy Eltham North, they decided on an Australian garden despite having inherited an exotic one. The long, low Sibel-designed house sits unobtrusively on a gently rising slope where the previous owners had fortunately retained many of the indigenous trees (*Euc. polyanthemos*).

Betty now specializes on eremophilas and has a more recent interest in petrophiles and isopogons. The treed block provides dappled shade to most of the garden for much of the day. Despite popular opinion, the fore-mentioned eremophilas (desert-loving) thrive among the varied understorey (acacias, bursarias, hakeas, westringias to name a few) that she has created. Mat plants, ground covers and grasses add to the effect.

Pathways, adequate though not well-defined — seem to 'wander' through this area, making it appear as an extension of neighbouring bushland. In contrast a colourful collection of epacris and a potted *Rhododendron lockae* make vibrant statements near the front door.

Planting continues around to a steep embankment on the western side of the house which features steps - and many more eremophilas - and leads us to the more formalistic northern garden. Here, the previous owners used bricks to create narrow paths and raised, circular beds. Betty has softened the built courtyard concept with a myriad of plants, beautifully displayed and a water feature where recycled water is pumped to a higher pond, overflows and descends via a runnel to a lower pond. A number of carefully tended baskets hang from an elevated wooden frame on the patio - a flowering *Grevillea nudiflora* being particularly eye-catching.

Behind all this must lie the northern boundary but the fence is almost indiscernible under a wall of vegetation seemingly reaching up to a stand of trees - *backhousia*, *Leptospermum petersonii*, *pomaderris* - blocking out the next-door house which would have been intrusive in this low-level space.

(P.S. Many thanks Betty for allowing us to hold our meeting at your home. The home baked goodies were a real treat. Chris)

Melbourne Meetings for 2004

Please note that there is now an additional meeting proposed for interested members to meet with the sole aim of completing the 'Criteria for Assessing a Garden's Design'.

- July 25th - Meet at the home of Chris Larkin to discuss and finalise the assessment tool. Start time 1.30pm.
Please let me know in advance if you will be attending this meeting.
- August 22nd - Two garden visits proposed. Different water harvesting features are central elements in the design of these two suburban gardens. Could members please meet at the first garden (Cruithof s) at 1.30pm. We will have afternoon tea at the second garden with Maureen Schaumann. Please phone Chris to let me know that you are coming. Please bring a little something to share for afternoon tea.

Home of Jo & Mary Cruithof,

Designer: Michael Cook who writes the following.

Jo and Mary contracted my business GreenScreen to landscape their front garden in February 2000. When I inspected the jungle garden, Jo told me that they were having problems with their storm water drains. After noticing that the lowest point of their block is the junction of Irving and clove streets, I asked Jo why he needed storm water drains in the front garden and why not turn a problem into a water saving feature by directing storm water into a creek bed.

Jo and Mary liked the idea.

"Idea sold!" The jungle cleared. Two mature Peppermint Gums and a correa remained. Creek created, with basalt rocks, pebbles and sleeper bridges. Mound and void formed. We planted the front garden with a variety of Australian plants, which makes an unusual approach to a suburban house.

The following year I designed Jo and Mary's back garden, to replace a bungalow they had removed. This garden features "love out" areas with pergolas, decks, under cover breakfast verandah and permanent pond water feature.

The gardens have been well maintained by the owners, with occasional intervention by "yours truly".

Hope to see you there.

Home of Maureen Schaumann

The central unifying design feature of Maureen's garden is the use of soaks or ephemeral ponds in the front and back gardens. Maureen was inspired many years ago now by the beauty of the pond at Karanga Nursery to redesign her front garden around a similar feature. But unlike Kuranga she wanted a soak rather than a pond. After a semi sunken swimming pool was removed from the back garden the second much larger soak was established. These soaks have transformed an otherwise flat suburban block into something quite special. They are visually pleasing with a uniquely Australian feel. It is possible for Maureen to grow a wide range of plants in such a setting with some plants happily naturalizing in the soaks themselves.

In addition Maureen has a large number of pots and hanging baskets that add charm and interest to her back garden. I have certainly copied a few of her ideas for pot culture myself.

Some members will know that Maureen has been an extremely active member of the Daisy Study Group which she founded and she has been one of the authors of their 3 publications to date. While continuing as a member of this group Maureen is also very active in the Foothills group organizing speakers, raffles and selling plants for the Day Meetings.

- Nov 14 - End of year outing to Botanic Gardens Geelong and the Hoffman Garden at Lara. A full day with picnic lunch. I am suggesting that we meet at the entrance at 12pm to allow time to look at the garden before lunch.

Australia's Open Garden Scheme - Australian Plant Gardens around Victoria

There are quite a few Australian plant gardens open in the upcoming season. A number of them are new to the scheme. Where I'm sure that the gardens are first time entries I have indicated, others however may also be new. All gardens are open 10am-4.30pm with \$5 entry charge.

- Sept 4 & 5 - Cheryl's Garden -
- Sept 18 & 19 - Hanson Garden
- Sept 25 & 26 - Armstrong Garden
- Sept 25 & 26 - Gardners Plot
- Oct 2 & 3 - Guenzel Garden
- Oct 2 & 3 - Gunn Garden
- Oct 9 & 10 - Jacobs Garden
- Oct 9 & 10 - Peg McAllister's Garden
- Oct 9 & 10 - Solea
- Oct 9 & 10 - Edwards Garden
- Nov 13 & 14 - Brown's Garden
- Nov 13 & 14 — Ruthen Garden

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.

SYDNEY MEETINGS

VISIT TO MT ANNAN 27/6/04

On a perfect winter's day Australian Garden Design Study Group members from the Blue Mountains, South Coast, Newcastle and Sydney gathered at the Visitor's Centre at Mt Annan Botanic Garden for a tour of the Terrace Garden by Ranger John Holland. The Mt Annan Botanic Garden was established as a Bicentennial project in 1988 to showcase plants from Australia's more arid regions which are more difficult to grow on the coast at the Sydney Botanic Garden because of the higher humidity and rainfall. The Terrace Garden whilst extensive is only a fraction of the 410 hectares of the gardens, (which are advertised as Australia's largest botanic garden.)

The Group was invited to comment on the design of this garden. It is 16 years since it was first installed and plans have been drawn up to take a fresh look at the area. The area is considered significant as it is immediately opposite the Visitors' Centre and Restaurant and is the first introduction to the gardens for most visitors.

Being true Australian plants' aficionados, members were enchanted with many of the individual plants which we saw. However, our overall impression of the design of the garden was one of disappointment. Plants have been planted in families to show their botanical relationship. Thus there were conifers and acacias, then proteaceae etc.etc. Members did not think that this botanic gardens approach would engage the general public aesthetically. Not does it provide the opportunity to inform people about the environmental relationship between plants. As the plants have been grown for their botanical significance they seem to have received very little horticultural care e.g tip pruning to encourage a more attractive growing habit. We thought that the straggly habit of many plants would actually discourage the general public from wanting to grow plants like them. The lack of care of the plants may also be due to lack of funds. John gave the impression that funding has not been maintained and like all government funded organisations these days there is more emphasis on justifying the need for funding and pressure to earn income.

We used the draft guidelines for assessing garden design prepared by Chris Larkin and these proved a very useful focus to our discussion. Overall our conclusions were that the Terrace Gardens should be designed to introduce visitors to different Australian plant environments and to provide ideas on what can be planted and enjoyed in suburban gardens. As most visitors are from Sydney, plants suitable for the different Sydney garden environments such as North Shore sandstone, Eastern suburbs sand, Western Cumberland Plain shale could be used. Some emphasis should also be given to indigenous plants.

At the end of the visit many of us visited the nursery and were disappointed to not find any of the plants which are showcased in the very effective displays around the Visitors' Centre. I would have thought it was a perfect opportunity to get us to part with our money by selling the plants which we could see looking so magnificent.

Jennifer Fairer

GARDEN DESIGN CRITERIA DISCUSSION

As Jennifer mentioned we used our lunch break at the June meeting to discuss the Garden Design Criteria, see NL Nov. 03, we had a terrific roll up so the discussion and resulting conclusions were, I think, certainly representative of the group.

Obviously we didn't have a domestic garden to use the design criteria tool on, however it proved to be most adequate.

A few points we would add to the Criteria would be:

*- Ability to move through the landscape, how is the **movement of people** facilitated through the garden? This probably has more relevance in a large garden often open to the public or a public space, however we thought it a valid point to consider.*

*- To consider **tension and contrasting elements** as well as harmony and unity.*

*- To somehow be able to take into account the presence of the fourth dimension - **time**- in the garden; possibly by, amongst other things, the suitability of plants chosen for a particular spot, the height, width and age they'll grow to.*

*- To consider the use of the **borrowed landscape** in the garden.*

Because Mt. Annan is such an important resource for our Society and study group I felt it important to get a couple of members' observations of the day. The garden is clearly under resourced and GDSG member Anne Nield appealed to all of us to consider becoming a Friend of the Gardens [Sydney, Mt. Annan and Mt. Tomah] in order to help the Gardens and their hardworking staff There are certainly some design issues in the featured Terrace Garden that need to be resolved— as we were discussing this, the idea arose that possibly Botanic Gardens in this day and age are struggling with the same issues as other 19th century institutions such as zoos and museums, the need to change to stay relevant to the paying masses in the 21st century and yet still maintain their indispensable scientific research focus. Our guide John talked about an Adventure Park theme in the terrace garden with water slides etc., most of us were unable to share his enthusiasm, however we quite understood his desire that the Gardens should appeal to the maximum number of paying customers. It will be most interesting for our Group to follow the redesign progress of the Terrace Garden.

JH

REPORT ON THE JUNE 26 VISIT TO MT ANNAN BOTANIC GARDENS

It was with some pleasure we, my sister and I, set off down the Canberra Freeway and could actually turn off purposefully to Mt Annan. This was to be our first visit. A photographer friend was surprised we wanted to go there; too dry and boring was his opinion.

So we were delighted with the first impression of rolling golden grassy hills, the tree lined car park and a fine display of both permanent and potted landscaping around the Visitor Centre and shop.

Across the road were several flowering garden display beds featuring some of the plants developed in the Gardens, set in lawn around a pool. Behind this rose a dense "rainforest" scene planted on terraces marching up an otherwise grassy hill.

Our guide, John, told us some of the history as he led us up the winding pathways. The Gardens were opened in 1988 with a Bicentennial grant and were to research and display dry-land native species. John was involved with much of the earliest plantings.

The terraces were designed to display progress from early plant forms like ferns around the pool, then examples of *Macrozamia* (burrawangs), *Callitris* and *Podocarpus* (pines), advancing to *Doryphora* (sassafras) and densely leafy rainforest species followed by palms. Water would have had to be used here to develop such lush growth in this site so unlike a deep protected gully. It seems to have worked well. Further up the slope were area plantings of *Acacia* budding generously, *Grevillea* flowering generously, *Hakea* flowering subtly, with low breaks between the displays offering views of the surrounding hills and small fountain and sculptured display in the picnic area below. Most of the plants were named and access paths were available at the back of beds if closer examination was required.

Near the top of the hill was an interesting Aboriginal "relic", a preserved old tree carcass and an explanation of it and the site's significance.

From there on things sort of petered out. More rainforest species had been planted near the top of the hill, much appreciated by birds but many plants looking a bit worn by exposure. We were advised of a *Prostanthera* group planting down the southern side of the hill but from the top we could see sparsely planted gums on a grassy slope and many winding paths and roads with rolling hills beyond. There was no real focal point at the summit.

The path and steps down led through diverse plantings with points of interest to me like *Davidsoniapuriens* (Davidsons plum) with fruits aloft, *Melichrusprocumbens* (jam tarts), so recumbent their flowers lie facing the ground and are pollinated by ants, and a strange grey-stemmed leafless *Euphorbia* (sp?). Also sadly here were many bare spaces and many rogue seedlings. However there was a splendid covered walkway completely draped in the tropical vine *Legnephora moorei*. In another area concealing the deadly concrete terraces were a few plantings of a prostrate casuarina which I couldn't key out in Sydney flora but think could possibly be *Allocasuarinna paludosa*. John then showed us plans and ideas for future developments aimed at increasing visitor numbers while maintaining Botanic Garden status and asked for our comments. Jo will send our reactions and opinions to the Gardens.

We all then repaired to lunch under the trees beside the lake (there are several picnic, barbecue and pleasing recreation areas scattered about the largest Botanic Gardens in Australia), and followed with a practical application of Chris Larkins Garden Design Assessment criteria on the Gardens.

My sister and I were pleased with our first Mt Annan visit and the discussion and opinions that followed.

Caroline Gunter

SYDNEY Future Dates 2004 :

The next and final meeting for the year will be **Sunday 26th September 10.00 am at Deidre and Ivor Morton's** house [see map] "a cave in the Australian Bush" and it's rooftop garden, followed by a visit to the **Glenbrook Native Plant Reserve**, established by the Blue Mtns. Group of APS in 1963.

Put this date in your diary **now** - it should be a wonderful day, visiting our beautiful Blue Mountains in Spring.

GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP N.E. BRANCH

Notice of Meeting.

Sat. 31st July 2004 at John and Helen van Riet's home
at 10.30am for 11.

Programme Inspection of the progress of this quite new garden which is acting as a show piece for Australian plants.

Discussion: a) matters arising from main NL
b) list of most useful plants for the district and basic garden design to use these. The proposal is to add such (a) design(s) to a booklet to be produced by APS with backing from.....? based on the plant list with other helpful information for beginners on planting, watering etc. with our especial contribution to be suggestions and the plans to create an appealing garden, not just a collection of plants. If you don't have a specific garden you want to base your plan on, use a standard town block (not sure what that is, but I hope you get the idea) I suggest you also create conditions that might exist, such as position of windows, shade and sun, drainage, views that need to be catered for in the plan. Soil type does not arise yet as it was decided to try and keep plant recommendations to basic shapes, tall skinny, low round, tuftie, etc. to fill the masses on the plan. So if you think of a plant that would be just right in a spot, describe its shape, or role in the plan but also name it as an example. Ideally the

new gardener could then select plants with appropriate features from lists for their particular soil type.

If your skills are not in drawing plans maybe you could think of simple guiding principles to be included. Maybe you would like to do this as well as a plan, good. The more the merrier because that will make obvious what is most important and get the best way of expressing it. Space will be limited so we are looking for a list of pithy succinct sentences, but it will be interesting to see the range of ideas people wish to include. Time may be limited too. After lunch we are going to Heather and Glen Miles block, Sessions Rd. Killawarra, just north of Wang. The Miles' main preoccupation at the moment is building their house but their thoughts do extend to the garden-Heather is itching to start planting. About 1.5 acres have been set aside for the garden and Glen enjoys propagating. I hope we can offer plenty of ideas for them to consider.

TREASURER'S REPORT & MEMBERSHIP

SUBSCRIPTIONS

A hundred members have paid their 2004/05 subs and four enthusiasts have paid for 2005/06 as well. Please check the list below to see whether your subscription has arrived at Bryan's. If you have sent it off and are not listed please phone Bryan on 03 9561 238. If your sub is outstanding please act.

GDSG Members financial for 2004/05 (in alphabetical order of surname)

Ingrid Adler, Joan Barrett, Michael Bates, Carol Bentley, Dora Berenyi, Judy Boldiston, Elizabeth Brett, Barbara Buchanan, Canberra NPS, Diane Clark, Ian & Tamara Cox, Jill Dark, Jennifer Davidson, Gillian Davies, Dominic Delia Libera, Arthur Dench, Cheree Densley, Kay Dempsey, Betty Denton, Shane Doherty, Roger & Gwen Elliot, Wendy & David Evans, Jan Flemming, Linda Floyd, Julie Foster, Beverley Fox, Christine & Angelo Gaiardo, Peter & Wilma Garnham, Ron Gournall, Jan Gough-Watson, Mary Graham, Cheree Hall, Jan Hall, Jo Hambrett, Bev Hanson, Suellen & Brian Harris, Monika Herrmann, John Hoile, Annette & John Houseman, Jeffrey Howes, Julie Jones, Alan & Helen Joyce, Bev Kapernick, Catherine King, John Knight, Faliery Koczkar, Chris Larkin, Margaret Lee, Alexander Mackenzie, Win Main, Neil Marriott, Maree Me Carthy, Thea & Jim McCarthy, Margaret Moir, Brenda & Tony Moore, Diedre Morton, Alex Moutsatsos, Leigh Murray, Anne Neild, Georgina & John Persse, Thelma & Don Peterson, Shirley Pipitone, Michele Pymble, Anne Raine, Pam Renouf, Martin Rigg & Diana Leggatt, Tony & Joy Roberts, Nicky Rose, Paula Rumble, Gwen Saunders, Therese Scales, Peter Shannon, Anne & Graham Smith, Lawrence Smith, Ross Smyth-Kirk, Diana Snape, Lara Solymna, Ros StClair, Joy Stacey, Ross & Elaine Sutherland, Pat Tratt, Gloria Thomlinson, Philip Tow, Colin Turner, John & Helen Van Reit, Rosaemary Verbeeten, Warnambool SGAP, Merele Webb, Maureen & Norman Webb, Judy Wish-Wilson, Wildflower Soc Of WA, Tim Wilson, Pam Yarra, Debbie & Rudy Youssef, Alik Zouliou.

Bryan Loft

GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

FINANCIAL STATEMENT 1 July 2003 - 30 June 2004

Balance 30 June 2003			<u>\$ 11,629.43</u>
Plus INCOME			
Royalty on Book	\$	10,413.00	
Book Sales	\$	295.35	
Bank Interest	\$	61.46	
Unsolicited Donations	\$	15.00	
2002/03 Subscriptions received	\$	10.00	
2003/04 Subscriptions received	\$	610.00	
2004/05 Subscriptions received	\$	815.00	
2005/06 Subscriptions received	\$	40.00	
Unknown Credit	\$	2.80	
			<u>\$ 12,262.81</u>
Less EXPENDITURE			
Newsletter Expenses:			
Printing	\$	1,386.00	
Postage & envelopes	\$	450.20	
Labels	\$	25.98	
Ink cartridge	\$	65.00	\$ 1,926.18
Sub to Friends of RBG Cranbourne	\$	25.00	
Sub to Friends of Kawarra Gardens	\$	20.00	
Purchase of Books	\$	363.00	
Reimbursement of Book Production Expenses	\$	150.00	
Gifts to meeting hosts	\$	115.00	
Leader's Secretarial Expenses	\$	66.30	
NSW Group mail out	\$	49.50	
Treasurer's Expenses	\$	25.00	
FID Tax	\$	<u>4.70</u>	
			<u>\$ 2,745.68</u>
Balance 30 June 2004			<u>\$ 21,146.36</u>