

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

**GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP**

NEWSLETTER No. 7

November 1994

Study Group leader: Diana Snape

Treasurer/membership: Peter Gamham

Dear Members,

My apologies to anyone who waited for ages for a letter to me to be acknowledged or answered. As I warned in the last newsletter, I've spent most of this spring in WA. We visited wonderful places we've wanted to see for a long time - Cape Arid, Cape LeGrand, Fitzgerald River and Stirling Ranges National Parks; Lake King, Lake Grace and Peak Charles among others. Most areas were very dry and, though the wonderful variety of plants and flowers was still there, I think the flowers were not as abundant as in well watered years. I still took lots of photos of 'natural gardens' and came back with many impressions and ideas to develop further.

Doug McIver kindly assisted by answering as much of the mail as he could while I was away. Unfortunately I hadn't thought of suggesting this earlier but it would be helpful if in future, when members are writing to me and put my name on the envelope, they put GDSG next to it. This will make it easier for GDSG mail to be separated and diverted to someone else to answer if I'm away.

Our stimulating Study Group weekend in September was attended by 36 people (28 members and partners) plus visitors. Some were able to come for the whole weekend, others for just part of it. Reports on the weekend are included after the correspondence. Thank you to all those who contributed to making it such a success. Because of the ASGAP conference in Ballarat in 1995, we'll probably plan our next weekend for some time in 1996.

On returning home from WA, I was very sad to hear of the death of Jill Rossiter, who had kindly allowed us to visit her garden during the SG weekend although she was not well. However I was glad we were fortunate enough to have this chance to see Jill's beautiful garden and show her our appreciation of it. Her niece plans for the garden to be maintained in its current style.

A lot of interest was shown in our display at the Melbourne Wildflower Show in August which resulted in several new members joining the SG. Thank you to all members who helped over the weekend.

Since my return home, I've been to Beechworth to give a talk on 'Wildflower Gardens' at the Garden Heritage Festival there and I've been involved in the second biennial seminar at Karwarra Garden. The seminar, on 'Designing and Maintaining Australian Native Landscapes', was organized by Marilyn Gray and was excellent. Paul Thompson gave the opening address and Rodger Elliot the closing one. I spoke too and it was great to meet a number of other GDSG members there. Many of the talks (especially these three) contained ideas relevant to us and I'll include extracts from these papers in the next NL.

For NSW and Victorian members, please note news on page 17: for Melbourne meetings next year, slightly altered times; also details of our first evening meeting with a speaker, Jane Shepherd, who is Head of

Landscape Architecture at RMIT.

MEMBERSHIP 170 (with, I think, 21 non-renewals and 26 new members so far in our second year.)

FINANCES \$1306.29 in the bank on 29/11/94

GDSG Weekend Camp**Expenses**

Cost of meals	\$1139	Receipts	\$1574
Cost of Camp	\$250	Expenses	\$1532.90
All other organization	\$143.90		
Total cost	\$1532.90	Receipts - Expenses	\$41.10

INDEX

- 2 Extracts from members' letters
- 3 Life decisions and events - Janet Woodroffe
- 4 Open space and 'natives' - Anne Pye
- 4 ASGAP Garden Design Study Group weekend - Joy & Tony Roberts
- 5 The GDSG Fifteen Mile Creek camp - Elizabeth Brett & Margaret Garrett
- 5 GDSG project: a personal account - Margaret Garrett
- 6 A visit to Snobs Creek Fish Hatchery - Diana Snape
- 6 Books for the booklist
- 6 'Creating an Australian Rainforest Garden' by Ralph Bailey and Julie Lake - reviewed by Neil Marriott
- 7 Slide library - photographers please help!
- 7 A letter from the past - found by Joan Barrett
- 7 Themes for newsletters
- 8 Cottage garden effect - Anne Pye
- 8 Beechworth garden visits - Diana Snape
- 9 Problems/questions: natives to replace exotics: plants for a low hedge - Anne Pye, Trudy Grace
- 9 Formal plants compatible with conifers - Lindy Harris
- 9 Planting under established eucalypts - Jan Hall
- 10 Shrubs, local and planted, in association with forest trees - Vanessa Elwell-Gavins
- 10 A leavening of leaves - Geoff Simmon
- 11 No all-Australian gardens in a wildflower paradise? - Barbara Buchanan
- 12 Hakeas in our garden - Diana Snape
- 13 Identity - Janet Woodroffe
- 13 Australian icons - where do they fit into garden design? - Geoff Simmons
- 13 Favourite plant combinations - Nicole Lenffer, Trudy Grace, Bev Courtney
- 14 Some plant combinations I've enjoyed - Lindy Harris
- 15 Design ideas - for fun. Trudy Grace, Bev Courtney, Peter Graham, Diana Snape
- 15 Australia's Open Garden Scheme 1994 -1995: Cherree Densley
- 16 Invitation to all professional members of the GDSG
- 16 Suggestions and reminders; GDSG committee; membership forms
- 17 Melbourne and Sydney news and meetings
- 18 New members; changes of address; membership renewals

Extracts from members' letters

'Please find enclosed data base and proposed letter to entrants in the Australian Open Garden Scheme this coming season. . . . I want to acknowledge those who are making the effort to open their gardens and to find out if they know of others who might be encouraged to enter (only Australian plants though). I am making a list of potential ones that I know of in Victoria and hope to communicate with them in the next week or so. There are two or three definite in Metung/Swan Reach who wish to join for next year. Their gardens are terrific. . . .

The garden here at Killarney is providing me with much pleasure in the new things flowering and the lovely new growth being both fresh and healthy. Apart from a few nips of the frost, there have been no losses with the dry autumn/early winter and the correas have been extra lush with flowers."Cherree Densley Vic

'I often go bushwalking and do so now with eyes open for design possibilities. Nature designs so well, sqmetimes it seems so deliberate! Australian native gardens are much more than using Australian plants. Use of stone, branches, mulch, etc, enhances any planting. I would suggest we all 'see' our native areas before beginning an indigenous garden.'
Fred Young ACT

'My main interest is in the principles of good design but I'm very attracted to the idea of working out what, if anything, is an Australian style. I have a special interest in the development of an indigenous garden on half an acre at Point Lonsdale.' Rosalind Smallwood Vic

"My overriding interest is in the evolution and development of a particularly Australian style of landscape design. The fact that this development is largely in its infancy means it has the scope to reflect the overriding concern of these times - the environment. The Australian garden and its design should embrace issues such as water conservation, soil enrichment, food and shelter corridors of flora for native fauna, recycling and productivity.

House and garden should respond strongly to the individual area, its particular environment giving them a firmly anchored sense of place and a strong spirituality. No longer can the garden be viewed as an adornment or as pure decoration; these times demand another dimension, another perspective. Rather let us cherish and respect the earth for its place in the scheme of things." Jo Hambrett NSW

"I have been a member of SGAP for several years and served on Council in 1988-1989. Unfortunately my contact with the local group has been limited since then due to personal circumstances including a heavy teaching/study load, and I had missed the news of the formation of the new Study Group. I have just completed a thesis for my M.A. at the University of Adelaide which investigated the use of Australian plants in garden design over the past 30 years and was aghast at my ignorance of this particular area of interest as a SGAP Study Group. I had certainly stressed the role of SGAP as a driving force behind the acceptance of Australian plants as appropriate material for domestic and public gardens. My deficiency was noted by one of my examiners, much to my chagrin!

I will be most interested to read your classification attempts as I found this task the most elusive in my research." Elizabeth Caldicott SA

The reason why the Study Group has interested me has been the limited amount of publication on landscape and Australian plants. . . . It is amazing when talking about this, people look at you and mention 'gum trees'. Being in a small consultancy business that deals with peoples' refurbishment of their existing garden, I have to bite my lip when they talk about 'man eaters' (roses) etc. Out here on the basalt plains, roses and other exotics really cop a hiding; if it isn't from the soil, it is the changes in weather with wind and heat. But with our English background and horticultural teachings, what can you do? The local nurseries love them, flogging off all the insecticides they can and fertilizers to help people establish plants in an inhospitable environment.

But I had my revenge about 3 weeks ago; I took a couple of clients to the Wild!lower Show in Ringwood. I made a small bet, that they would really see an absolute menu of what flora Australia has to offer. Six hours later their jaws were still dragging on the floor. All I heard was 'Wow, does this grow near us?' or 'How can I grow this?'. It was like a child discovering a new toy. It is a real credit to the SGAP Groups that put that display on - they deserve all the praise for their planning and professionalism in the Show. I wish one day the Show could be incorporated in 'Garden Week'. That would really be great: more natives invading the exotics' territory." Peter Graham Vic

"On behalf of the Melbourne Wild!lower Show Committee I would like to thank the Garden Design Study Group for attending the Show this year. The success of the Show has always depended on special interest groups such as yours, with enthusiasm and information to share with the public. This is the first time I can recall Garden Design being featured at the Show. I hope it inspired some of the public to go home and "HA VE A GO". We very much appreciated the time and effort of your members, in setting up the display and working all weekend. 'Helen Morrow Vic

I am interested in all types of garden design really but am looking particularly at design for average suburban or even inner city backyards that is water conserving and suitable to the Adelaide climate and soils (i.e. alkaline compared with the acidic soils of most other Australian capitals)." Anne Pye SA

"I think it's a good idea (to use a particular theme for newsletters) and it could be done with a predominance of information on one theme as well as some other snippets. I like your suggestions for themes; subjects like 'plants for a formal garden' and 'cottage gardens' would be interesting too. . . . Many of the articles I have found interesting, particularly Street Trees and the Kevin Hoffman Walk - an inspiration on what people can achieve with lots of dedication!" Trudy Grace Tas

'Corrimal looks like being home for quite a while. I shall let you know how I get on with the garden as time goes by. At present there is not a tree or shrub on a fairly large block of land, 500m by 50m. The house has been here since 1927 and originally the owners kept a goat to keep the grass and 'swamp' plants down. The soil is a very heavy clay and there are a few casuarinas on neighbouring properties. It will be my first experience of gardening on clay.' Ian Percy NSW

'My interests are in bird, insect and frog-attracting indigenous gardens with water; using Australian species in a well-designed but sympathetic (to their habitat/ecosystem) way, rather than "European" design using Australian species. Thus I agree with the ideas of people like Glen Wilson and also the Chinese and Japanese concept of borrowing ideas from nature to achieve a restful, harmonious effect. Using foliage and forms well pleases me much more than bold masses of floral colour, especially in the domestic context where the scale is generally too small for large blocks of bright colour. The oriental idea of having discoveries/surprises to find in the garden if you seek them out also appeals.' Jen Johnston ACT

'Really enjoyed newsletter 6 - thank you. Please send back copies of the first 5 NL. Was amazed at the climatic ranges for some plants e.g. 7 plants and conifers - most would grow/be available here. Many general gardening articles refer to plants that would either not grow or not be available here. Given the mobility of many gardeners, would identification of species that have wide applicability be useful? I now know to disregard so many species, even in Grow What Where etc, but I learnt the expensive way.' Colleen Keena Qld

Colleen writes that her special interests (among many) are collection and hybridisation of Hibiscus species. The relevant Study Group is in recess but she is studying the development of small (1m x 1m) cultivars and frost-resistant (- 6 degrees) cultivars; their propagation, pruning, fertilising and use in containers; and their use in garden design. Look out for an article on this topic soon. Apparently Colleen's cultivars of *Hibiscus heterophyllus* and *H. splendens* alone offer a spectrum of colours ranging through ice, white, pink, rose, apricot, salmon, lemon, cream, yellow, gold and buttercup, with taller and shorter varieties!

Life decisions and events

Janet Woodroffe Vic

"Pop psychologists like to place life decisions and events up against a scale of ten. Well I would say that the decision to remove exotics from one's garden and plant Australian must come very high on the list. It certainly has been a life-enhancing decision for me. Learning about Australian birds a few years ago made the landscape come alive but learning

4

about the plants has topped it right off, and being in the country means one doesn't have to drive for an hour to get out in the centre of things.

I wasn't and still am not a "real gardener" but I wanted an Australian landscape around my house. The difficulties and obstacles placed in the way of an ordinary person doing that are enormous. There is ignorance at every turn and not only one's own but everyone else's. . . . One can hear and learn specialist information at SGAP but to get that information out into the general markets and the products into ordinary Australian gardens must surely be the real challenge. Then of course to have these gardens better designed is the ultimate challenge."

After a harrowing description in her letter of attempts to get rid of sparrows, the offspring of generations that had lived in 8 old peppercorn trees, the old church on the next block and her house (30 bags of nests removed from the roof section!), Janet concludes: *"However victory has come my way at last and from a very unexpected source - my visiting hawk. I kept noting the little piles of feathers in the yard and idly thought the cats must have come stalking about again, but now I see that it's the hawk and he is on the warpath against my sparrows. Such is the power and helping hand of nature."*

Open Space and 'Natives'

Anne Pye S.A.

"I think the treatment of open space depends on the needs of the gardener. While I realize lawn is 'politically incorrect' at the moment I can't help wondering if all the people paving around their houses aren't spending money (and energy) putting in air conditioning systems for summer. There are developments in lawns which need less water and I personally like to lie on the stuff on a nice day (I can't say the same about gravel or pinebark). I find it more attractive visually than the non-green alternatives and if kids fall over on it they don't hurt themselves.

In connection with the open space debate I think that the GDSG can't ignore the application of general design principles in developing their ideas. They are still applicable, it's just that the use of species needs to be changed from predominantly exotic to predominantly native, and knowledge of native species and their application to landscaping expanded.

I'm afraid I favour the continued use of 'native' of 'Australian', as Australian to the average punter will not mean 'all-Australian' or 'native' or 'Australian plants' - however much the GDSG manipulates its own use of terminology."

ASGAP Garden Design Study Group Weekend

Joy and Tony Roberts Vic

Members from as far away as Sydney and Adelaide gathered at 15 Mile Creek Camp, Greta South for an exciting weekend. Those who arrived on Friday night were fortunate to view slides of various garden designs shown by Bev Hanson, and slides of Linda Floyd's garden from the GDSG slide library.

Visits had been arranged by Barbara Buchanan and the Wangaratta group to a wide range of gardens, from a one metre median strip in front of the Violet Town municipal offices to the Wangaratta Tourist Information Centre and surrounding parkland; from small established suburban gardens to a large country garden still at the excavation and 'vision' stage - gardens which were to be considered during the group's garden design project workshops. We also visited Jill Rossiter's large established Australian garden which was a riot of colour and an inspiration. Barbara Buchanan's collector's garden indicated her long and continuing interest in Australian plants and Julie Strudwick's garden showed how sheer tenacity and determination can create a garden in the harshest of locations - dry, stony and steep.

Saturday and Sunday afternoons saw small groups of people with sheets of butcher's paper in serious discussion pondering over their allotted/chosen garden design projects. Group leaders later presented their groups' designs - detailed explanations were often necessary depending on the graphic skills of the group! - followed by general discussion. Some excellent ideas were expressed which hopefully will be of great help to the owners concerned.

And then dinner was served - good food (10 out of 10 to the Tatong Mothers' Club), good wine, good company and plenty of laughter. Following Saturday's dinner Rodger Elliot spoke on "Australian plants for Australian garden styles" illustrating his talk with excellent slides. Paul Thompson followed with "Putting plants together". Both talks were thought provoking, instructive and most enjoyable.

On Sunday night members showed a wide range of garden slides and by this time saturation point had been reached. Our ideas on Australian gardens have taken on a new dimension. Thanks to all those involved in making this such a memorable weekend.

5

The GDSG Fifteen Mile Creek Camp

Elizabeth Brett & Margaret Garrett Vic

The weekend at the Fifteen Mile Creek Camp, Myrhee, was held in a very friendly atmosphere of camaraderie; members approached the various workshop tasks with uninhibited enthusiasm. The general feeling of wellbeing was enhanced by the excellent catering of the Tatong Mothers' Club and the wonderful organisation of Diana (with the quiet assistance of Brian) and Barbara.

The program included visits to the garden design projects and established mature gardens. As well in the evenings we had discussions of members' slides and, on Saturday night, talks by Rodger Elliot and Paul Thompson. In brief, Rodger emphasized the need to know the natural habitat of your plants and to understand the conditions you have to offer them. Paul, we think, implied that garden design is very idiosyncratic and open to a great variation.

The projects under discussion were -

1. A small area in a larger garden in the Strathbogie Ranges (Ellis Stone's country) - a garden that is gradually being changed from an old exotic to a native but retaining useful exotics.
2. A completely new garden, around an as yet unfinished house, with land sloping down to the Broken River to the north, and a wonderful vista of mountains behind the house. Although the biggest project it was, in some ways, the easiest. On a new site there is only your imagination to hold you back.
3. A public area previously a sale yard (stock) at the entrance to Wangaratta, which certainly needs beautifying as it is the visitors' centre for the town. A challenging project which produced some very innovative ideas from the experts.
4. A small suburban garden in Wangaratta, to be redesigned as a native cottage garden for a show piece.
5. An old garden inside a levee bank, but still flood prone, with ease of renovation and maintenance a major consideration.

On Saturday and Sunday mornings we inspected the project sites and spent the afternoons in small groups working on the projects with the owners. At the end of each session, the plans were presented to the whole group for comment. The owner then had several options to work from and undertook to report progress to the Study Group.

The established gardens we visited were-

1. Julie Strudwick's garden, which she has carved out of a forest on top of a mudstone hill. A remarkable effort with many terraces and fences to keep out the rabbits and wallabies. A real collector's garden established with little or no water.
2. Barbara Buchanan's garden, another collector's garden on a large scale, with many Western Australian plants. It slopes down to a steep gully which Barbara is planting with indigenous species.
3. Jill Rossiter's garden in the foothills of the Warby Ranges. This is a mature garden, beautifully landscaped to complement the surrounding bush and take advantage of the magnificent view of Mt Buffalo. Jill's is an outstanding example of what can be achieved with an Australian garden.

This very well attended weekend proved to be an outstanding success, with members coming from far and wide. An inspiration to all who were fortunate enough to be there and how lucky we were to have such a panel of experts present!

One GDSG project: a personal account

Margaret Garrett Vic

For three years I had looked out the living room door on to a pile of earth dumped in front of the house from an excavation at the back. I wanted to make steps to complete the landscaping of the embankment and to allow entry into the garden from the living room. (Steps on the other end of the embankment were finished two years ago and worked well.) I just couldn't see how to do it. I sometimes thought it would be easier to rebuild the house than to build the steps! The more we cleared the area around the house the more obvious became the possibilities for landscaping the house paddock and the more complex the problem of the steps. A huge English walnut tree is the dominant feature of the area and the shade of its wide spreading branches has always looked like an inviting spot for respite from the summer heat.

When I was asked to participate in a GDSG project I was a bit worried. After all I'm very much an amateur and I had already planted out my big, ambitious garden in an area away from the house. I chose the steps/home garden area as the project site.

On Saturday afternoon a small group (seven I think) worked together on this project (No. 2). Four had seen the site but with photos of the completed work and the unfinished end of the embankment the others got some idea of the task. It was fascinating for me to see how the professionals in the group were so quickly able to build on my very vague ideas and come up with realistic and uncomplicated solutions that are right

7

If you wish to create a rainforest with showy flowers, flamboyant foliage, fragrance or attractive fruits, chapters and lists are provided. For those who love to grow Australian plants in tubs either indoors or out there is a chapter on this aspect of rainforest gardening.

An excellent final chapter lists and describes the author's fifty favourite rainforest plants, outlining among other things the best climate, frost tolerance, light requirement and special features for each plant. *Creating an Australian Rainforest Garden* is illustrated throughout with numerous black and white photos as well as several pages of beautiful colour plates. It is excellent value for money; there is even a chapter on growing rainforest plants from seed and cuttings so you can grow your own plants for your new rainforest garden.

(This review was first published in the SGAPVic newsletter September 1994.)

Slide library - photographers please help!

Among members' slides shown at the weekend camp were some donated to the GDSG slide library by Linda Floyd, Diana Snape and Paul Thompson. Since then Peter Garnham has also donated slides, and Jan Hall and Bev Hanson are checking their collections.

Doug McIver is looking forward to receiving slides from other members to help us build up this important resource. We've already had enquiries about the Study Group lending sets of slides (or audiovisual displays) to SGAP District Groups. (See NL5 p4 for further details.)

You can send just one slide or many. Please don't be unduly modest and don't be deterred by the form - just fill in as much as you can. If your form has gone missing, write to Doug or Diana and ask for another one.

*This applies for all members except those from NSW- your NSW slide librarian is **Dennis Marsden***

A letter from the past

found by **Joan Barrett Vic**

*Joan found a challenging letter from **John Blake**, Kensington in the SGAP Vic newsletter, March 1982. Here are extracts from it with points which still have some relevance to us, twelve years later on.*

'There has been a shortage of good advice to home gardeners leading to tatty gardens, usually composed of too many, too large plants in too small a space. With predatory landscape contractors "native" has come to mean "cheap"..... Several ideas spring to mind.

1. The Society should establish a file of quality native landscapes, to provide photos and notes for publication, not only in the Society's own publications but as a resource for the authors of books and gardening magazines.
2. "Australian plants" should have at least one article on landscaping in each issue.
3. The Society, through its Research Groups and Newsletter, could attempt to solve landscaping problems. The destruction wrought by overlarge trees would suggest the need to develop a repertoire of small, easily grown trees for use in small gardens. People in the inner suburbs should not have to forgo the pleasures of a native garden.
4. *(about Tasmanian Blue Gums)*
5. Awareness again. Where Melbourne suburbs are attractive it is because of trees. The most attractive suburbs are those like Blackburn and Eltham that nestle in the original bush. Local councils invariably plant any tree but those native to an area. How many Liquidambers and purple Prunus have to be planted before an area loses its character? Even trees from another part of Australia erode the harmony established by the dominant local species. Surely this is a case of preservation through cultivation.

I am sorry if all of this sounds too strident but I have seen too many third rate landscapes passed off as native gardens. How many times have other members been told "Oh, the native craze is over"? It's time for us to show that the best gardens for Australia are Australian gardens."

John Blake, where are you? Come and join the Garden Design Study Group!

Themes for newsletters

Three design themes suggested for next year's newsletters are:

- # small trees (6 metres, 20 feet or one telegraph post in height) and their use in gardens (see *John Blake's letter*)
- # the use - and conservation - of water in gardens *(people are becoming more aware of the importance of this)*
- # formal (or formalistic) gardens *(as an obvious and interesting contrast to 'bush' gardens)*

Please send in any thoughts, questions or suggestions you have on any of these topics. Plans of actual gardens or plant lists would be great too.

Also let us know any other themes you would like to see members focus on. You might like to add to the suggestions over the page for achieving a cottage garden effect in your area.

6

for the site and what I wanted but couldn't solidify by myself. Everyone in the group contributed and at the end of the session I came away with a plan that I was well pleased with and something that I can work to. In two years I will have a charming area where once was an eyesore.

The Wednesday after the camp, full of enthusiasm and inspiration, I began on the steps. After three days we had steps built into a rock retaining wall, paved on the top and a garden bed in front. I have started to research and collect small plants for the new summer garden. The next stage is a rock paved path to the back of the house, the main visitor entrance. I cannot stop myself from walking to the living room door and looking out on to the finished steps and in my mind seeing the garden as it will be when completed.

For me the camp weekend was most stimulating and worthwhile. It was a renewal. After this winter of frosts and mists and lots of dead plants my enthusiasm for growing Australian plants was at a low ebb. I cannot wait for the weather to warm up to get on with the new garden but this time I will take Rodger's words of advice and select plants that occur naturally in the conditions we have here. Thanks to everyone who participated.

A visit to Snobs Creek Fish Hatchery

Diana Snape Vic

On the way home from the weekend a group of nine members visited the Snobs Creek Fish Hatchery near Lake Eildon (in Victoria) to see the landscaping with Australian plants that has been carried out there. The designer has created a creek and pool system which makes extensive use of simulated rock ('granite') boulders. Although not yet very old, these have been made skilfully and are becoming quite convincing as they begin to age. The planting is more successful in some areas than in others, where factors such as plant choice and mulching and watering regimes have probably influenced growth and survival rates. A separate interesting display is being developed to show differences between a 'natural' and a degraded stretch of water. Well worth a visit (especially if you like fish).

Books for the booklist

The library at the camp (books brought by members, not just our very limited GDSG library) was fascinating but there just wasn't enough time to even glance through many books. Maybe we should have an occasional book afternoon or evening. Paul Thompson brought along *"The Culture of Landscape Architecture"*. This excellent book came out of the Landscape Architecture Students Edge 2 Conference in Melbourne, 1992, and was published by Edge Publishing (RMIT and Melbourne University). Paul says it costs about \$30 but is selling out fast.

Creating an Australian Rainforest Garden by **Ralph Bailey & Julie Lake** (Lothian) 1994 64pp

reviewed by **Neil Marriott** Vic

Rainforests have been the "flavour of the week" for the last two or three years, and as Australian plant enthusiasts discover the vast range of spectacular ornamental plants that grow in them, this popularity is sure to continue. A number of excellent books have been published recently to cater for this interest; however this is the first book to actually show how to establish and maintain a rainforest garden in a broad range of climates. One has only to walk through the superb Fern Gully at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, to see just what can be achieved in a cool climate.

When I began my rainforest at White Gums Nursery, Stawell many people scoffed and said it could not be done. In those days all I had to go on was information in the Rainforest Study Group newsletters (which was terrific) and my own intuition. As a result there were numerous early failures; who would have believed that rainforest trees have mostly shallow roots, and that as a result they should not be planted deeply but do best planted on top of a mound of well dug soil. This is particularly so in heavy soils.

Through persistence and much trial and error, a delightful rainforest patch was created. This became a haven for wildlife (and humans) on hot summer days as the closed canopy created a superb cool microclimate. Had this book been available then, many hours of labour and hundreds of plants would have been saved. For the novice, the book first describes the major types of Australian rainforest and where they occur naturally. There is then a short chapter dispelling some of the myths surrounding rainforest plants such as "rainforest trees grow too tall" and "rainforest plants need a bit of water".

Then we get down to the nitty-gritty chapters on creating a rainforest garden, starting with planning, soil preparation, the actual planting, windbreak and frost protection, mulching, fertilizing and much more. Clear line drawings assist in explaining these topics. The creation of a rainforest effect in small gardens and courtyards will undoubtedly be a valuable chapter for SGAPers who like to have a "bit of everything" in their own gardens. For those who live by the sea or inland, brief but helpful chapters provide the major do's and don't's for these more adverse areas.

8

Cottage Garden Effect

Anne Pye S.A.

A list of small shrubs and groundcovers suitable for pastel 'cottage garden' effect in Adelaide plains type environs:

<i>Astartea fascicularis</i> 'Winter Pink'	<i>Brachyscome multifida</i> (in paler shades) GC(ground cover)
<i>Calytrix tetragona</i>	<i>Chamelaucium ciliatum</i>
<i>Correa alba</i>	<i>Correa pulchella</i> (in pale pink tones)
<i>Eremophila nivea</i>	<i>Grevillea juniperina</i> Pink Lady' GC
<i>Hardenbergia violacea</i> 'Alba'	<i>Hemiandra pungens</i> GC
<i>Hypocalymma angustifolium</i>	<i>Leptospermum juniperinum</i> 'Horizontalis'
<i>Micromyrtus ciliata</i> GC(ish)	<i>Rulingea hermannifolia</i> GC(ish)
<i>Scaevola aemula</i> (in appropriate shades) GC	<i>Thryptomene baeckeacea</i>
<i>Westringea fruticosa</i>	<i>Westringea glabra</i>

If you wanted pale yellows you could add *Conostylis candidans*, *Grevillea muelleri* and possibly *G. juniperina* (yellow).

I haven't included pimeleas, prostantheras or eriostemons as I haven't grown them in my garden. As most of the natives in my garden have only been in for 6 months I feel unable to provide too many comments on individual species. However over winter *Astartea fascicularis* 'Winter Pink', *Crocea saligna* and *Thryptomene baeckeacea* have had long lasting floral displays (on silty loam, pH neutral, Adelaide plains backyard - all day sun, especially afternoon).

Beechworth garden visits

Diana Snape Vic

I visited a number of interesting gardens at Beechworth during the Garden Heritage Festival, most with a minority of Australian plants. One I enjoyed was a small, Japanese-style garden inspired by the Japanese gardens in Cowra NSW. This featured rocks, water, gravel and the gentle sounds of water, windchimes and birds. Plants were chosen primarily for form and foliage, though colour combinations were generally sensitive and appealing. Significant Australian plants in this garden included *Myoporum floribundum*, *Homoranthus flavescens* and banksias. It would be fascinating to see a whole garden of Australian plants using elements of this style.

Only two gardens really celebrated the joy of Australian plants and I'd like to thank their owners for the pleasure of visiting them and being shown around. One, open for the Garden Heritage Festival, belongs to Ron Munro who is a member of the GDSG. His garden is part of 16 hectares of hilly granite country with rocky outcrops; wonderful distant views are compensation for shallow soil. Ron gardens on a grand scale and there is plenty of space: nothing is crowded. To complement the existing woodland he has planted many trees, usually in groves or smaller groups. Some are indigenous, others from further afield - casuarinas and different types of eucalypts (ironbarks, boxes or gums); sometimes one species on its own, or in balanced combinations. He has levelled a circular area as a sports 'oval' for the children to play, at the same time creating (where the edge of the 'oval' has been raised) a lower crescent-shaped area with trees and a pleasant park-like feel.

Ron uses large quantities of mulch to help combat dry, hungry soil as he relies heavily on natural rainfall. Between the entrance gates and the house, on either side of the sweeping drive and higher again, Ron has built up and planted large beds with a variety of shrubs. Those that do well he multiplies; the oldest beds are now mature and attractive. 'Specimen' eucalypts such as *E. caesia*, *E. preissiana* and *E. ficifolia* add their appeal. To create garden beds in rocky areas he has gathered up 'rock gardens' and introduced pockets of soil for planting. Some plantings are kept low to preserve views from the house. Ron's vision is to turn his evolving garden into an 'Australian plant paradise' and it will be fascinating to see this unfold.

Ron says he was inspired by the second garden I visited, which belongs to Dot Stelling. When Bob and Dot bought their house it had an established lovely but exotic garden in a bushland setting. Part of this early garden remains but sections have been modified and compatible Australian plants introduced. Close to the house Dot has created beautiful new gardens using only Australian plants. In recent years her daughter Fleur has encouraged her to grow more indigenous plants to link the garden to the surrounding 'bush', which Dot loves dearly.

Just over a year ago, Dot talked Bob into enlarging the garden again (this sounds like Cherree Densley and Ian) by converting a large sloping paddock into two areas, divided by a curving path. On one side Dot is growing a variety of beautiful plants from different areas of Australia. The even more fascinating garden on the other side is purely indigenous, to show friends and visitors that plants do not have to come from somewhere else to be good enough to grow in your garden! There is much repetition for a natural effect and careful groupings and placements. The local *Hardenbergia violacea* grows close to the path, with *Pimela linifolia* and *Micromyrtus ciliata*. *Calytrix tetragona* echoes the massed effect in nearby bush, as does *Acacia buxifolia* which also lines their entrance drive with gold in spring; *Indigofera australis* and the local *dodonaea* are more scattered. *Billardiera cymosa* is used as a scrambler/light creeper. After sixteen months, not under the best possible conditions, the 'exotic' Australian garden is growing well but the indigenous garden is visibly flourishing. I'm looking forward to seeing it again as it matures.

Problems, Questions and Answers

Plants for a low hedge

Is there an Australian plant that would do the same job as *Buxus sempervirens*, as I'm thinking of using a low hedge around a bed?

Trudy Grace Tas

My three suggestions of plants which might be worth trying (depending on how they do in Trudy's area of Tasmania and how they respond to regular clipping!) were the low form of *Baeckea virgata*, *Austromyrtus dulcis* and *Westringia* 'Wingabbie Gem'. Lindy Harris suggests another one below. *What would you suggest?* DS

Formal plants compatible with conifers

Lindy Harris Vic

For a formal or 'oriental' garden *Leptospermum obovatum* dwarf would look great. This particular form has neat glossy foliage and an incredibly neat rounded habit consistently. I'm experimenting soon with pruning as a formal hedge because if this works and it doesn't go woody and die back then I think I've found one substitute for good oP *Buxus sempervirens*.

Smaller substitutes for, or compatibles with, conifers: *Darwinia oxylepis* - grafted is probably safer. Also *Darwinia meeboldii* and *D. collina* too, quite formal in their way. I suspect *Pimelea nivea* is worth consideration as well.

Natives to replace exotics:

Anne Pye S.A.

How about *Leptospermum rubrum* nana to replace *Berberis atropurpurea* 'nana'? Although the flowers are different colours, both are useful for small hedges with bronze foliage.

Planting under established eucalypts

Jan Hall Vic

Planting under established eucalypts has challenged me often as our 20 year old trees change the nature of the garden. The ongoing problems are not only which combinations look well together but those that will survive with a minimum of care and water. These areas could be divided into:

1. woodland - quite shady, planted with smaller plants, eg epacris, and close to the house and therefore can be watered, probably twice a week in summer.
2. dryer and more open woodland - semishade, with sun part of the day. Watered just enough to keep the plants reasonably healthy - probably monthly in summer.
3. open - full sun with tall trunky trees and watered rarely.
4. windbreak with acacias and some grasses - no watering.

1. A lot of root competition so still need reliable plants eg correas, with ongoing selection of hardy forms of some species. *Prostanthera ovalifolia*, dwarf *P. rotundifolia*, *Boronia clavata* and *B. 'Sunset serenade'*. These form a background to smaller plants such as *Parahebe (Derwentia) arenaria* and other not so reliable plants. *Pratia purpurescens* - quick growing ground cover but is invasive. This is supposed to be a green, leafy area with spring flowers. Extra leafiness is gained from some semi climbers - *Billardiera longitlora*, *B. Candida* and other billardieras; *Aphanopetalum resinsum*, *Hibbertia dentata*.

2a. Correas again, mainly *C. glabra*, *C. backhousiana*, *C. calycina*. These blend with *Phebalium squamulosum* ssp *atgenteum*, *Thomasia rhynchocarpa*, *T. foliosa*. *T. sohadacea*; *Lasiopetalum behri*, *Lysiosepalum involucreatum* plus more in this family. Groundcover is mainly the 'Speedwells' which can be divided by the spadefull - *Derwentia perfoliata* and *Veronica gracUia*. *Dianella tasmanica* is treated the same way and looks well near trunks of trees. *Einadia* (formerly *Rhagodia*) *nutans* (Nodding Saltbush) is indigenous and chose to appear under many trees.

2b. In a similar area is a combination of acacias, westringias, *Correa pulcheila*, *Indigofera australis* and *Pavonia hastata* - pinks, mauves, yellow and white. *Indigofera* is also very useful in semi-shade and wet in winter, dry in summer situations.

3a. Hot spot in summer under *Eucalyptus citriodora*. Eremophilas like it here with *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* (Common Everlasting) and *Stipa elegantissima*.

3b. Under a group of *Eucalyptus scoparia* - *Acacia acinacea* and *Grevillea intricata* with grasses *Themeda triandra* and *Poa ensiformis*. *Eutaxia microphylla* and *E. cuneata* are also reliable here.

4. Windbreak. The eucalypts generally prevent weedy growth now. Some of the original acacias have selfseeded and we add others, usually indigenous species *A. acinacea*, *A. aspera*, *A. pycnantha*; also *Dodonaea cuneata*, *Bursaria spinosa* and cassias (*Senna artemisoides*). *Danthonia* species (Wallaby Grasses) are creeping back and are encouraged.

Our soil is degraded red clay loam (100 years of cropping and grazing). We use gypsum, sand and compost to prepare most spots and mulch and remulch as needed. Rainfall is 460 mm, usually in winter, but this year is dry and frosty. We grow all Australian plants except for fruit trees and veges.

Shrubs, local & planted, in association with forest trees Vanessa Elvvell-Gavins NSW

(In NL 6 Vanessa described her area near Queanbeyan in the Southern Highlands of NSW.)

Most of the front garden consists of natural forest, with six small raised beds containing imported soil and plantings of grevillias (*rosmarinifolia*, 'Canterbury Gold', 'Ciearview David', 'Bronze Rambler' and *lavandulaceae* 'Victor Harbour', which looks remarkably happy despite its distance from its normal habit); *Prostanthera incisa* rosea, *Eriosiemon australasius* (which thrived for a year but now with the extended dry looks very unwell); *Melaleuca incana*, *Hakea dactyloides* and *Banksia integrifolia*. A callistemon (variety not known) planted by our predecessor and a *Callistemon* 'Kings Park Special' which has just started taking off are two of the very few callistemons which seem to thrive with us. Perhaps our conditions are too dry.

The natural forest here is mainly *Eucalyptus macrorrhyncha*, with a couple of *E. melliodora* and one *E. rossii*. One of the melliodoras is very large and statuesque, with a huge branch arching over a rustic path next to a lichen-covered rock fall. This has a small *Brachybma daphnoides* at its base, unremarkable except when in flower. There are also a couple of the parasitic *Exocarpus cupressiformis*, which seem to be commoner lower down on the block. Under the eucalypts there are numerous local shrubs and ground covers: the orange and yellow peas *Dillwynia sericea*, *Pultenaea procumbens* and *P. microphylla*, the local dryland bluebell *Wahlenbergia communis* and the tiny groundcover *Goodenia hederaceae*, all of which are common here; the cream-flowered Epacrid *Styphelia triflora* which occurs only in this part of the garden, a lovely deep purple scrambling form of *Hardenbergia violacea*, and *Indigofera australis* which do not seem to live long here and always look ratty except when very small.

There is an excellent example of our main middle storey shrub, *Daviesia mimosoides*. The middle storey is only thinly populated here, but this bushy shrub develops long arching branches with delicate greyish lanceolate leaves which almost disappear under the mass of tiny yellow and brown peaflowers in October. There are also *Brachyscome rigidula*, *Lomandra longifolia* and a small grove of *Acacia dealbata* which seem to be self-suckering. Apart from a few clumps of *Poa labillardieri*, which have now mostly been removed, the delicate *Poa sieberiana* and a sparse upright grass which I have not been able to identify, this area is largely grass-free and the weeds are mercifully rare.

In this area our predecessor and I have done some spot planting of things which claim to like shade, including *Prostanthera incana*, a so far un-named almost blueish prostanthera from somewhere near Tumut which our local Canberra region SGAP is bringing into cultivation, *Pimelea ligustrina* (now suffering from water stress), *Hakea verrucosa* (which flowered for the first time last year with creamy flowers ageing to dark cerise) and another hakea (*bakeriana*?). This spring, a small tree near the top of the rock fall produced creamy flowers and I think this is a *Hakea eriantha*.

(Vanessa also listed other plantings at the top and bottom of the rock fall, but says these two areas have generally failed to flourish.)

A leavening of leaves

Geoff Simmons Qld

A characteristic of Australian vegetation is the evergreen nature of its flora so it is not surprising that design will reflect this property. The varying shades of green, mostly rather subdued, may tend to give a drab and monotonous scene that is frequently commented on by the overseas traveller. It is certainly a challenge to overcome this factor or, on the other hand, use it to advantage.

While introduced deciduous trees shed all their leaves to stand bare-branched in winter, Australian trees are clothed all the year to form a unique feature of the Australian landscape. Several aspects of this difference are worthy of comment. For example Australian trees would be looked upon with disfavour by a fastidious gardener who can't bear to see a leaf or piece of bark on a finely manicured lawn or paved area. Preferred is the tree that sheds all leaves over a short period so that raking, gathering, burning or composting can rapidly return the garden to a sterile neatness. This picture is one rarely seen in nature in Australia. It probably illustrates the desire to reproduce memories of European gardens but is not really relevant to the Australian scene.

However when the nutrient cycle in wooded areas such as rainforests is considered, the shedding of leaves over prolonged periods is an advantage to the decomposition process taking place in the ground litter. It is notable that many of the rainforests are said to exist on very poor soils.

There is another 'footprint' of leaves - needles may be a better word - and that is the suppression of many seedlings that germinate below the canopy of some trees such as casuarinas. This allelopathic effect produced by the

fallen foliage is obviously an asset in avoiding competition for available nutrients.

Another factor is the character of the leaves forming the litter. Their size and resistance to competition will influence the vigour or survival of associated plants. A eucalypt now seen not infrequently in Queensland gardens is the Swamp Bloodwood, *Eucalyptus ptychocarpa*. This tree produces giant leaves - one measured was 300mm long and 100mm wide - and even when dry they are 1 to 2mm thick. If these fall, light is excluded and even the weight of the litter can stop the growth of small plants.

In regard to bark shedding, eucalypts such as *E. teretecornis* and *E. tessellaris* have very attractive colour changes during the seasons for those gardeners keen to use trunks of trees as part of the decor of their gardens. On the other hand this bark shedding is a warning that they are not suitable as hosts for epiphytes such as staghorns and Australian orchids.

Finally - do you want free mulch? The natural leaf drop can be supplemented by continuous tip pruning to reduce the height and give form to any tree. Strew these cuttings on the ground below the trees and add to the nutrient cycle as well as conserving moisture.

No all-Australian gardens in a wildflower paradise?

Barbara Buchanan Vic

I happened to be in Esperance visiting family when Diana contacted the secretary of the local branch of the WA Wildflower Society to ask if there were any local gardens she could recommend for a visit. (Excursions to look at wildflowers are the chief activity of the WAWF Society, rather than cultivation of plants as in SGAP.) There were few, and no all-Australian gardens were known. This sparked off a discussion as to why there should be so few local plants, even Australian plants, grown in a town where there are so many stunning indigenous plants and which benefits from 'Wildflower Tourists'.

The Esplanade area is dominated by magnificent Norfolk Island pine (*Araucaria heterophylla*), planted by the founding fathers, a theme that is being continued. The second wave of settlers in the 1960s planted many Tuarts (*Eucalyptus gomphocephala*), a magnificent eucalypt which all too frequently today is lopped and pollarded.

I've come to the conclusion that there are four main reasons why there are very few if any all-Australian (AA) gardens in Esperance.

1. It is so damned hard to grow anything successfully which leads to
2. Australian and other plants are mixed more than usual - if it will grow, use it.
3. A very limited range of plants on offer in the nurseries.
4. The pioneering frame of mind which separates 'bush' from 'garden'.

At my son's place we tried to make an indigenous, low maintenance, natural garden. The 'soil' is a deep white sand, leached of nutrients; it has a limestone outcrop and quickly develops a non-wetting surface. Although in a relatively sheltered part of town, the place still experiences very strong winds; Esperance is the windiest town I know. White shelled snails swarm over everything and probably accounted for any seedlings which did germinate from the seed cases of local plants we scattered. In the original bush the sand is protected by shrubs and their leaf litter, with a very thin layer of humus where the nutrients are held in organic combinations. This layer is rapidly lost when the soil is cleared and is very hard to restore, in pastures or in gardens. We used bales of old hay and masses of seaweed but they require constant replenishment.

Because of very active local Land Care groups we were able to get some indigenous mallees and larger melaleucas but that is about the limit of local plants available. Almost all the plants in nurseries and supermarkets are sent down from Perth and the proportion of Australian plants is low, of WA plants even less. There are practically no small Australian plants available.

There is still a pioneering atmosphere in the town and a vigorous, independent community spirit. On many farms there are still uncleared tracts of bush but they are by no means undisturbed and the flora is gradually becoming more limited as it is invaded by grazing animals and exotic plants. The gardens around the farmhouses are quite separate from the bush.

There is a change in attitude occurring and appreciation of the bush is growing. Wildflowers have become a welcome secondary income source with all the picking done in the bush, and as this resource dwindles interest is growing in maintaining and preserving the plants.

On the way home in the bus to Perth we stopped briefly at Newdegate, between Lake King and Lake Grace. Beside the bus stop was a small memorial garden, built up around great granite boulders and AA. Some had died, but the general effect was very pleasing; you would not have to be an Australian fanatic to notice it. A little further on as we hurtled

through Wagin I glimpsed a public garden with a large statue of a ram. It seemed to me to be another AA, and there were no extensive areas of lawn but wide gravel paths winding between mallees and clumps of shrubs - definitely one for a closer look.

I realized how lucky I am to have my friends in SGAP to share plants, triumphs and losses and keep me going when the temptation to give up the struggle gets strong. Above all I came away with the message, keep it simple, stick to what does well. And that includes my steering clear of the wonders of the Esperance Sand Plain which have evolved for very different conditions to mine. I'll try.

I think it is important for us to be aware of the constraints on designing and establishing an all-Australian garden identified by Barbara in this article. These can be translated to many other areas outside major centres. DS

Hakeas in our Garden

Diana Snape Vic

Hakeas are good, honest, reliable plants requiring only sunshine and satisfactory drainage to flourish. Most are medium to large shrubs with attractive form and often superb foliage. Some are named after their leaf shapes - fans, hoods, shells or daggers; others the shapes of their woody fruits - beaked, crested, or like swans or cricket balls. Hakeas are closely related to grevilleas and have interesting variety in their flowers, but only a limited number are usually available from nurseries. Scores more deserve to be better known. Over the years we have enjoyed growing a range of hakeas in our garden but I do have a weakness for those with 'pincushion' flowers.

A significant proportion of the total 150 or so species have prickly foliage, including the four hakeas indigenous to the Melbourne area. Not everyone would describe their prickly foliage as superb but it's certainly interesting and useful. All four are ideal for protecting small birds and deterring unwanted animals. In our garden Bushy Needlewood (*Hakea sericea*) undergoes a fairytale transformation in winter and early spring as masses of dainty, fragrant white flowers appear, spidery like grevilleas'. Some forms are tinted pink. Another local, *H. nodosa* (Yellow Hakea), is attractive planted in a group; its bluer-green foliage is not quite so needle-like. We grew a low shrub from W.A., *H. lehmanniana* (Blue Hakea) for some years but it wasn't very happy and never flowered. Recently I saw one that was happy in Bev Courtney's garden in Frankston, a metre high and with flowers of the most beautiful blue.

Hakea laurina (Pincushion Hakea), once grown widely for its charming cream and soft red pincushion flowers, now seems to be a forgotten favourite. Beloved by birds and bees, it's a sentimental favourite of mine. When we returned home 20 years ago after living overseas, friends gave us a beautiful bunch of these flowers from their garden. After the branches with their flowers and characteristic woody fruits had a long spell indoors, I put them on a garden bed as mulch. A little seedling appeared later, luckily where there was room for it (and illustrating the ease with which hakeas can be grown). Now a tall shrub (a small tree really) 4 metres or more in height, it has given us pleasure for all those years and still reminds me of my joy on being back home in Australia. Forms of this usually upright shrub can vary in habit; occasionally topheavy, it is best protected from direct wind but is happy as part of a substantial screen or in a well sheltered position.

Two other larger hakeas, side by side, enriched our back garden for almost as long. They finally became too big and we removed them reluctantly to create space for the delights of a new area to re-design on a smaller scale. The leaves of both these plants are firm and robust, not flat but slightly wavy. Sea Urchin Hakea (*H. petiolaris*) grew tall and splendid, dense with silvery grey, rounded leaves. Conspicuous buds decorating the branches and even the trunk burst into rust and cream 'pincushions' from late autumn into winter. The foliage of handsome Oval-leaved Hakea (*H. elliptica*) is a lovely clear green but every year the velvety new leaves seem to crown the whole shrub with wonderful bronze 'flowers'. These can be kept almost indefinitely in a vase. The actual flowers appear freshly white in winter and early spring. At the moment a seedling *H. elliptica*, with its little bronze crown less than a metre high, is living on borrowed time at the edge of an open area not far from its parent's position. It is so pretty, but it cannot be left too long before removal - one more year, or maybe two?

Three young hakeas are (and should remain) smaller, so I trust they are here to stay. The flowering habit of *Hakea obtusa* is similar to that of *H. petiolaris*. Pale buds and very deep pink flowers along the trunk and branches herald winter, contrasting nicely with blue-green foliage. Its sprawling low branches help make it almost hemispherical, going on three metres in diameter. Not far away a low (initially prostrate) plant with abundant pink and cream pincushions along its spreading branches is a lovely *Hakea* hybrid, formerly known as *H. crassinervia*, an absolute delight to me and the honeyeaters. As with most hakeas, pruning should encourage it to stay compact. A more recent planting in our garden is *H. neurophylla* and I shall wait expectantly to see its first ethereal display of pink and white against blue-grey foliage.

Each hakea has its own charms and each gardener has personal favourites. For one hakea, the key feature is very dramatic foliage; for another, brilliant red flowers. Many with handsome, formal appearance provide a touch of solidity in a garden of finer, softer foliage. Both hardy and showy, they would blend well with introduced plants for gardeners who are keen to introduce suitable Australian plants into an already established exotic garden.

(This article was first published in 'The Age' on Saturday 12th November 1994.)

I found Sarah Guest's article (*The Age* 4/8/94), about her difficulty of finding the right English language words to describe Australian plants, very interesting. That's just the problem. We are imposing "English" words on the Australian landscape. The evolution is slow in coming but it demands changes in seeing, thinking and writing patterns. Change is always difficult and sometimes painful. It involves loss, as we embrace the new.

Since removing the last of the European exotic plants from my garden I've had to meet with the effects of these changing situations. Last week I wanted a specimen bloom to take to my mother in the nursing home. No daphne now, no rose, no daffodil, not even a geranium! I searched my garden for something appropriate and lit on *Guichenotia macrantha* A spray petal daisy in a vase and all the flower heads were exposed to view. It looked magnificent, but what to call it. I consulted Wrickey & Fagg but it didn't say a lot, only that it was from WA and enjoyed sun. So I called it "An Australian desert plant". The response was immediate. People gathered round to look at this "unusual desert plant". So many oohs and ahs and perfect strangers asking for cuttings. What publicity!

On another occasion I was having trouble relating to my builder. But as soon as he placed his berberis next to a patch of Australian grasses his tongue loosened up and he talked enthusiastically about the Australian bush, language and history of the plant. The difficulty and my job done promptly.

It seems to me all Australian plants must once have had an aboriginal name. As imposed Latin names and now in order to popularize the plants and market them they are given English names. I know the pressures and irritations that come to bear at this stage but wouldn't it be good if we could use the English language to give our plants and lift their common names out of present banality. Cotamundra Wattle, Finders Range Wattle, Ovens River Wattle, are all names that tell something and have a bit of dignity about them but when we get to names like 'Vree and Easy' (sounds like a 'ramp'), 'PH-Feari, Fitk Supreme', etc, they say nothing to me about Australia. Even 'Happy Wanderer' does not sound like an Australian name to me. Perhaps this plant should be called 'Happy Walkabout' and the other - 'White Walkabout'.

Australian icons - where do they fit into garden design?

Geoff Simmons Qld

Inanimate structural features and objects play an important part in garden design so they can also be discussed in the context of Australian garden design. Exotic plants should not be the dominant living subjects in an Australian garden, so why should items such as temples, gazebos and eastern style gravel beds be included when they have practically no relevance to the Australian scene?

Some basic ideas are used world wide in garden design. These include objects such as sundials, fountains, weather vanes and statues. Unfortunately most of those on sale in garden stores are overseas in origin or design. The purchase of these ignores the possibility of obtaining designs that are more relevant to Australia and shows a certain lack of creativity on the part of the garden designer.

What are the Australian icons that can be used to create an Australian motif? The first to come to mind are the native flora and fauna but others include boomerangs, major engineering feats such as the Sydney Harbour Bridge or geographical features. Many SGAP members stress the need to preserve the local native plants but ignore the local features that are unique to their area.

A statue of a cherub or bird bath of Greek design requires careful placement even in an exotic garden but it can stick out like a sore thumb in a garden purporting to express Australia. The creation of a new garden or remodelling of an existing one offers the opportunity to introduce ideas that reflect a purely indigenous view point and remind one that we are in Australia - not Europe or other foreign land.

Glen Wilson devotes one page to sculpture in gardens but mainly discusses natural objects such as pieces of wood or rocks. I would like to see more representational Australian as an integral part of garden design in this country.

Favourite plant combinations

I came across a simple but pleasing combination recently of small-growing eucalyptus trees underplanted with a *Correa reflexa* which was thickly planted to produce a continuous groundcovering - it looked great I thought. **Trudy Grace** Tas *Eriostemon myoporoides* growing in front of *Correa lawrenciana*. The red bells contrast with and complement the starry white flowers of the eriostemon. They both flower late autumn/winter and provide some colour at a bleak time of the year.

Nicole **Lenffer** Vic

Bev Courtney Vic says: While I'm thinking about combinations, I'll mention one particular plant, evident at the moment because it is flowering profusely. At last count I have ten in the garden - the oldest approaching 12 years, the youngest planted just a month ago.

Snowy River Wattle (*Acacia boormanii*) has long been a favourite for the following reasons:

1. Fine grey-green to blue-green foliage, contrasting well with deeper greens.
2. Masses of bright yellow balls from late winter into spring.
3. It can sucker to form a small copse, although only one of mine has done so.
4. If it doesn't sucker, it does branch low to the ground, giving a multi-stemmed effect.
5. Branches and stems seem very strong and supple. If it rains at flowering time, the weight of wet flowers and foliage bends branches almost to the ground but they don't split and break as other wattles have done.
6. Fast growing.

Now I'm thinking about what to combine with *A. boormanii*. It will have to be blue/purple/mauve and white, because these

are favourite colour combinations of mine. In another part of the garden I have a hovea species, still only small and flowering for the first time: bluish-mauve pea flowers and long, dark green leaves. I must take cuttings from this and plant close to *A. boormanii*. It will look superb growing up through the multi-stemmed acacia, especially as *A. boormanii* gains height and the lower stems become bare trunks. At ground level comes the white. So much to choose from in this cobur. I can only think at the moment of massed plantings of *Rhodanthe anthemoides*, either of the tow, branching forms, generally known as 'Paper Cascade' and 'Paper Baby', with perhaps a few of the more erect, non-branching forms to provide a contrast in habit. The yellow centres will pick up the yellow of the acacia. Should I plant another groundcover to pick up the blue of the hovea? If so, it may be a *dampiera* or a *scaevola*, and probably in a paler shade of blue-mauve.

Some plant combinations I've enjoyed

Lindy Harris Vic

"*Eriostemon* 'Profusion', a hybrid between *E. myoporoides* and *E. verrucosus* I think, has a bushy habit and very long, slightly arching branches and well-displayed white flowers. In front of the *eriostemon*, *Derwentia arenaria* 'Cottage Blue'. This seems to flower endlessly and, when I first planted the original plant a couple of years ago, I cut it back in autumn a little and popped the unstruck cuttings in around other parts of the garden; most struck and they look just beautiful. I like its scrambling habit, fine foliage and the way the sprays of blue flowers are held above the foliage. The *derwentia* mingles amongst a yellow/gold *Helichrysum bracteatum* - I think it's 'Princess of Wales' - certainly it is demure and well behaved, unlike some of the *bracteatum* forms I know. This plant rests rather delicately with the *derwentia*, an arm here and there holding up the odd yellow flower rather like an anorexic ballerina or should I say princess. Around the base is *Brachyscome multifida*, white flower form. The *eriostemon* doesn't flower all that long but the others chug away for most of the year and are good value.

In another area, *Eriostemon* 'Profusion' again, with a white flowered form of *Indigofera australis* arching over it. I have a bit of a thing for *indigofera* as it has so many uses. It will happily grow and flower in quite dark situations and once established will tolerate appallingly dry situations but, though tough, looks so delicate and filmy. I'm fond of the loose, fern-like foliage and the commonly grown form tends to have long, whip-like branches and the flowers (usually mauve) are lovely winter/spring. This is a great plant where some light screen is required near a window, where you don't want to lose light and still want to be able to see through the foliage. Every few years I decapitate one at ground level because it becomes lazy and begins to lose height and some of it begins to recline over a path. Being either forgiving in nature or fiercely determined, it bounces back very quickly and waves at me through the window every morning.

Anyway getting back to plant combinations. . . . In amongst the *eriostemon* is *Guichenotia macrantha* - one of the lanky arm brigade which I'm partial to. I like to plant smaller plants under 1.5 metres close together so that some become almost subsumed by the others. They've 'appeared to disappear' but, like a drowning sailor determined not to drown, they throw up an arm and make their way so that when they flower it's such a lovely surprise because you've forgotten that they were there at all. In front of the *eriostemon*, *indigofera* and *guichenotia* is a white form of *Tetratea thymifolia* and the double flower form, of *Wahlenbergia stricta* which is hardly there until it flowers and then produces tiny blooms the size of a one cent piece and a bit like the double flowering form of *Eriostemon verrucosus*. Somewhere in there is *Cheiranthra lineata* almost invisible again until it produces those beautiful blue blooms and the 'accident' which makes this display *Rhodanthe anthemoides* 'Paper Star'. This was one of those "I'll just do something really dumb which I know breaks all the rules" experiments which says a lot about the tenacity of plants . . . the nature of gardening and of gardeners. I had one tube of *rhodanthe* struck and although there wasn't an inch of bare earth to be seen I nestled it down under all the foliage of those other previously mentioned plants - no room for lateral growth, little light and this poor little thing headed up for the light and has become a 'climber', festooning the *guichenotia* etc and now there's a plethora of tiny deep pink pointed buds over grey-green foliage. It's really made this little area ...and would look nice as a ground cover too. Planning certainly has a place in a garden, intuition is important but 'accident' somehow gives me the greatest pleasure.

Another combination which has worked well is with *Acacia linifolia* planted about three and a half years ago. I love the yellow/bronze foliage tonings, fine foliage and the pale lemon flowers which appear for about six months of the year; ragged they are but extremely beautiful against the bronze. It's only grown a bit over 1.5 metres though it can grow taller and it has *Billardiera variifolia* - broad leaf form - growing lightly up through it. The flowers are much larger and darker than the fine form and are a gorgeous deep blue/purple. At the base is *Persoonia nutans*, a 60cm x 60cm shrub, fine foliage, bronze as well, with singular bright yellow flowers. In around that - yep - *Derwentia arenaria* again, the odd *craspedia*, *Goodenia lanata* and a *Hardenbergia violacea* 'Mini Ha Ha' (what a name).

In another area. . . . *Pimela nivea*, *Eremophila nivea*, *Guichenotia macrantha* mingled in together with *derwentia* to hide ankles. In the foreground, *Chloanthes paniflora* a grey-leaved shrub of 60cm (with mauve flowers like *Eremophila nivea*) and *Thomasia pauciflora* which is a dainty little shrublet with dark wiry stems (very beautiful), small *thomasia*-hairy bronze foliage and delicate little pinky/mauve flowers. These last two plants nestle around an old stump which supports a large, shallow rustic concrete birdbath. I look out on this combination each morning when I have my breakfast and I find the muted tones quite restful. Just one more A group of *Poa australis* around a tiny little 'rock pool' bird bath with *Tetratea ciliata* white form, *Wahlenbergia gloriosa* and *Goodenia elongata* nestled in among the *poa*. Looked stunning but the *wahlenbergia* has been sulking and I suspect it might not reappear this year, but for two years it made this little area beautiful. And climbers *Billardiera erubescens* orange/red flowers which it never stops producing for the honeyeaters and with it, *Hardenbergia comptoniana* purple/blue - sounds the pits but it looks superb.

15

Design ideas - for fun (A few responses to the design ideas from NL 6. As some members have said, it depends of course on the total picture, but you are allowed to make up your own and write it in! DS)

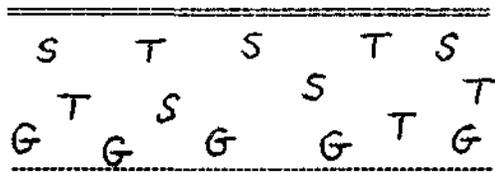
Planting a circular bed with *Banksia spinulosa* and *Persoonia pinifolia*

"With both of them I would prefer a mixed up combination when using a limited number of species like that, and also in a fairly formal shape such as a circle or rectangle. The circular bed design I prefer is 1. With the rectangular bed I would have everything mixed up - some trees to the front, some at the back, etc." **Trudy Grace Tas**

Today I'll go for design 5 (with prostrate persoonias to 'fill in' the bare spots) - informal within a formal shape. DS

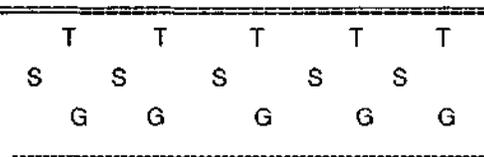
Planting arrangements for *Eucalyptus leucoxylon*, *Thryptomene saxicola*, *Brachyscome multifida* in a 3m wide bed:

Bev Courtney Vic I would put the eucalypts in two groups - 2 on left and 3 on right (planted fairly close). 3 on right, because the eye tends to read (or look) from left to right and the RHS group would be the dominant group; 2 on the left to balance. Thryptomenes scattered - 3 to fill in the central area, the other 2 to provide a backdrop to trunks. Brachyscomes scattered at the front.



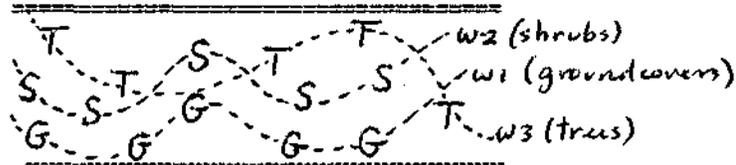
Peter Graham Vic These are fun - the variations are endless, within the confines of the growing area, but it really depends on the picture you want to create for the eye.

1. The semi-formal picture



Pretty standard: the eucalypts at the back towards the fence, with the thryptomenes slightly forward but between the eucalypts; then at the front, the brachyscomes as groundcover. This means the eye sees the groundcovers first, then the shrubs and hence the trees which frame the whole picture.

2. Informal (wave picture)



This revolves around informal groupings to make pockets within the plantings, so the eye must search for the plants instead of just seeing them. These vistas or pockets give the area you want to plant some depth but the basic framework is still visible (trees at the back, shrubs in the middle and groundcovers at the front). This is especially good when dealing with limited space.

And here are two more. Why not

1. design a daisy 'lawn' (or low garden) of about 20 square metres, with species suitable for your area; choose a shape for your 'lawn' and use as many different daisies as you like.

As a starter I'll go for an obvious one - the old favourite *Brachyscome multifida* in a random mosaic of different forms and colours - reliable mauve, lilac, purple and white forms predominating, plus some pink and cream which I find less reliable. I'd love to see this tried. (You could go for a much more formal effect instead - coloured stripes?) Vigorous plants occupy 1 square metre (20 plants needed) but some are not vigorous, so say between 20 and 40 plants. DS

2. picture red flowering callistemons, popular in strip planting (for example as small street trees). Attractive on their own, they might look even better in combination with one or two other plants. What would you choose and how would you intersperse them?

Please send in your suggestions and also other **design ideas - for fun**. DS

Australia's Open Garden Scheme 1994 - 1995

A Cherree Densley effort

This year Cherree Densley opened the Densley garden for the Scheme and encouraged other SGAP members to open theirs. She also checked through all the descriptions of gardens entered in the Scheme. Then, in the capacity of SGAP Vic State President and also as a member of the Garden Design Study Group, Cherree wrote a nice friendly letter to all 43 gardeners in the Scheme whose gardens were all or mainly Australian plants, congratulating them for their efforts and

16

encouraging them to 'spread the word'. A great effort using the database, Cherree! (Cherree's term as SGAP Vic State President is now over so she is taking on new responsibilities; one is leading the Container Plants Study Group.) Now the responses are coming in from many of the gardeners Cherree wrote to, and extracts from these letters (and also we hope some plans) will be included in coming newsletters.

The statistics this year are, as ever, interesting. They do not tell the whole story and are a very rough guide but they still give an impression we shouldn't ignore. Of the huge total of 559 gardens, only 43 (8%) appear to be gardens of predominantly Australian plants.

State	S.A.	Vic.	NSW & ACT	Qld	Tas	Total
Total no. of gardens	59	118	244	77	61	559
Australian plant g.	8	10	18	4	3	43
percentage	14%	8%	7%	5%	5%	8%

South Australia leads the way again. I wonder whether the dry climate is a significant factor there. It's pleasing that the percentage of Australian plant gardens open in NSW seems much higher than last year's.

~~Please visit any gardens you are able to~~ in your state and write a report (however brief) on the garden for a newsletter - just your impressions will do - &/or take photographs. Remember ~~YOU~~ are the Garden Design Study Group. If you don't do what you can to help achieve our aims, nothing at all will happen!

Invitation to all professional members of the GDSG

We are fortunate to have a number of professional members within the GDSG, from different states and with a range of both academic qualifications and practical experience. We'd like to extend an invitation to all our professional members to write something about themselves, their background, their work, their design philosophy - whatever aspects they'd like to write about - for our newsletter. An article could be anywhere in length from a paragraph to 1000 words or so. We'd like to publicize the role and the importance of a professional approach to garden design as well as including profiles of our professional members.

Suggestions and reminders

- * Write a sentence, a paragraph or a page to let us know your ideas on any aspect of garden design.
- * Articles on coming themes - small trees; water; formal gardens - will make you very popular.
- * It would be a good idea for GDSG members in other states (as well as in Victoria) to keep in touch with their local SGAP newsletter editors about articles on garden design. You could write an article yourself or point out one in a GDSG newsletter you think is relevant and would be of particular interest to your state or local group. It's important to increase awareness of garden design within SGAP.

GDSG committee

The GDSG has set up a slightly more formal committee structure to spread the load a little. The committee (based in Melbourne) currently consists of: Diana Snape (leader and newsletter editor); Nicole Lenffer (deputy leader); Gordon Rowland (Sydney leader); Peter Garnham (treasurer and membership secretary); Doug McIver (slide librarian); John Armstrong; Joan Barrett; Barbara Buchanan; Linda Floyd; Helen Morrow. I think about 12 people would be ideal, so we'd happily welcome other people who have a commitment to the work of the Study Group and volunteer to join the committee.

Membership forms

Peter Garnham has now taken over as treasurer and membership secretary.

Don't forget to let Peter or myself know of any changes of address or phone number. Also if you haven't yet sent in a completed membership form please do. Keeping track of our membership is a big job and having the forms makes it a lot easier.

Courses Quite a few members are currently undertaking different part-time or full-time courses related to garden (or landscape) design or horticulture. Please let us know when you complete your course and graduate so GDSG records can be updated. Comments on particularly good courses could be helpful to other members.

Melbourne news

Display gardens of Australian plants are currently being designed for Cranbourne Botanic Gardens, near the established lakes. The aim is to attract tourist groups on their way to see those irresistible penguins at Phillip Island. Encouraged by Rodger Elliot at the September camp, the GDSG decided to collectively become 'Friends of the C B G' to show our support for this very important project. One of our primary aims is to encourage the development of beautiful Australian plant gardens for members of the public to visit. Local members might also like to join the 'Friends' as individuals (cost \$7). Redevelopment of another significant public garden of Australian plants, the George Pentland Gardens, will soon take place at Frankston. Bev Courtney has details. *Please let us know of similar projects in other areas.* The future management of the unique Maranoa Gardens (almost 90 years old) and adjacent Beckett Park has recently been under review. Maranoa is apparently safe, but if you live nearby keep your eyes and ears open for any news.

Melbourne meetings - please mark dates in your calendar **now!**

Meetings will still be on the first Sunday afternoon of each month (except January when there is no meeting). In future we'll try to separate the part of the meeting which deals more with organization and the part which concentrates on actual garden design. The business part dealing with the monthly agenda will start at 1.30 pm (all members are welcome then). The part of the meeting concentrating on aspects of garden design will start at 2.30 pm (so if you don't like business meetings &/or are too busy to come at 1.30, come for just this part),

1995 dates and venues

Sunday 5th February at Rodger and Gwen Elliots' place at either 1.30 pm or 2.30 pm (see explanation above).

This will be a wonderful opportunity to see a very special garden.

Please share cars if you can as street parking is slightly limited.

Sunday 5th March at Diana Snape's place at 1.30 or 2.30 pm.

Sunday 2nd April at Nicole Lenffer's place at 1.30 or 2.30 pm.

Thursday 30th March 8 pm - our first evening meeting

Jane Shepherd, Head of RMIT School of Landscape, will be our first guest speaker at an evening meeting. This will be on Thursday 30th March at 8 pm at the Municipal Horticultural Centre, Jolimont Road, Forest Hill. Jane will speak on the influences acting on Australian garden design today. The cost is \$2 per person and members' friends and family are welcome. I hope we'll get a really good attendance. Please let John Armstrong or Diana Snape know if you are able to come so we have an idea of numbers. Any keen cooks can win hearts by bringing 'a plate' for supper.

News from the Sydney Chapter

1995 dates

Provisional dates for 1995 meetings - all scheduled for a Saturday or Sunday, times and meeting points to be decided.

11 or 12 February: Talk and slide presentation by **Bruce Mackenzie** (depending on his response to our invitation which has only just been sent). Venue to be decided.

Sunday 14 May: Mount Annan Botanic Gardens

26 or 27 August: Mount Annan Botanic Gardens

Saturday 18 November: Royal National Park, Wallumarra Track.

Further information: Gordon Rowland

The **1995 Wildflower Festival** is to be held on Saturday and Sunday 12 and 13 August in the grounds of the Nursery Industry Association, 344 Annangrove Road, Rouse Hill.

Further information: Dulcie Buddee,

Several local Councils in Sydney are using Gordon's booklet '*Australian Native Gardens: A Resource Book for the Sydney District*' (still available from Gordon). This gives details of 21 nurseries, 22 reference books, 6 gardens in the Sydney district open to the public, and 4 professional designers. *An excellent idea for other districts too?*

Anyone interested in finding out about courses related to Garden Design at the *Greater Garden School*, based in Rozelle, could contact GDSG member

18

New members (*professional qualifications &/or practice)

A warm welcome to the following new members - it's good to see a number from SA. I hope people in the same area can make contact with each other; it would be great if groups could eventually start meeting in Brisbane and Adelaide.

Martin Atchison

Margie Barnett

John Bramley*

Stephanie Bull*

Elizabeth Caldicotr

Brian & Mary Dacy

P. B. Feige

Gloria Freeman

Meredith Freeman

Peter Graham

Steve Hailstone*

Nola Harrison

Greg Ingerson*

Colleen Keena

Margaret Lee

Pat MacDonald

Adam McGoldrick

Penny Munro

Versha Pradhu

Anne Pye

Peter Sharp

Pam Tourle

Felicity Waters

Jim & Pat Watson

Library, Gravely TAFE Centre, Gravely Q 4054 (contact person Colette Tucker)

New addresses

Nicole Lenffer*

Ian Percy*

Rosalind Smallwood

Membership renewals

Tracey Allen, Karin Andersson, Michael Bates, Jane Calder, John Coath, Bohdan Durnota, Bernadette Flynn, Leon Horswell, Catherine King, Faleiry Koczkar, Bryan Loft, Christine Maxfield, Fred & Joy McKew, June Parrott, Royce & Jeanne Raleigh, Jane Weyand, SGAP NSW, SGAP Queensland, Wildflower Society of WA, SGAP Foothills Group, SGAP Geelong, SGAP New England Region

Please let me know of any errors or omissions.

Thank you to all members who have contributed to this newsletter - your contributions provide its interest and appeal.

Because of my time away, and so it won't be out too late, this NL is a just little shorter than usual. I'm not sure just how well it has 'come together'; I've had to hold some extracts and articles for the next one but I hope I haven't missed anything urgent. Please let me know if I have in case an item has gone astray. So many things are happening it's hard to keep up with all of them. (It couldn't be old age, could it?) However please don't stop writing - I look forward greatly to receiving your letters and articles.

My very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.



Diana Snape