



# GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

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**Newsletter**  
**May 2010**

**70**

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Dear Members,

I begin with the red faces department and an apology...last Newsletter, I managed to confuse suppository and repository. Thank you (I think!) to eagle eyed member, MareeMacarthy, for pointing this out. Rest assured members, despite the second line, third paragraph in NL 69, I promise not confuse the two when it comes to storing our photos and plans of gardens!

Congratulations to our two South Australian GDSG members whobagged the gold and silver awards in the State Government Native Gardens Award for the best home garden. Please see Margaret Lees' correspondence and a visit to the website she mentions is highly recommended.

The Indexing of all our past newsletters is nearly finished. It is of course ongoing and each newsletter will be indexed now as it appears, at an approximate cost of \$60 per NL. This works out as an additional \$2.00/ member /year in order to continue to financethe indexing program. The Index is both online and paper copies are available. As a direct result of being linked online we have made the decision to publish all of our newsletters online as well - with a time lag of 12 months, so our members are always ahead. We did not take this decision lightly but on balance it seemed the most sensible and time efficient way of doing it; other SG newsletters are published in their entirety online and we spoke to the Indexer to canvas her opinion too. Please let us know if you feel there is a problem with this that we haven't foreseen.

Gardens of significance :IF WE DON'T VALUE OUR AUSTRALIAN PLANT GARDENS ENOUGH TO DOCUMENT AND RECORD THEM HOW CAN WE EXPECT OTHERS TO? Documentation ofsignificant gardens is extremely important. I would like to suggest that members submit their 10 favourite gardens in their state/territory - including the name, address and owners accompanied by a short description of the garden and why it should be considered significant. The garden write ups for the newsletterby the various groups and their subsequent indexingwill help record the gardens which we visit, or mention in the Newsletter;however there are many more out there that should be recorded for posterity so please put your thinking caps on and write in.

This edition - the elements, climate change and the lack of industry research on Australian plants and the effect of all 3 on our ultimate plant choice make interestingreading in the Plants section; also plants, their use and breeding feature in the Design section.

**\*\*REMEMBER SUBS ARE DUE JUNE 2010.**

## INDEX

### CORRESPONDENCE

### DESIGN

Turf Wars Elizabeth Kolbert U.S.A.

Modern/ Formal Barbara Buchanan Vic.

Talking with Bruce Mackenzie Bruce Mackenzie NSW

### PLANTS

Drought and Heat Tolerant Gardening:

Ern & Lesley Perkins APS Vic.

Ivan Holliday APSS.A.

Native Trees for nature strips Bruce Schroder & Neil Marriott Vic.

Pruning Again Chris Larkin Vic.

Trip to the Arid Country Caroline Gunter NSW

### GARDEN VISITS & MEETINGS

### TREASURER'S REPORT

### CORRESPONDENCE

I thought you might be interested to know that Judy Baghurst's garden at Pt. Elliott was today announced as the *gold winner of the SA State Government Native Gardens Award* for the best home garden, run by the *Sustainable Gardens section of the Adelaide Botanic Garden*. So far as I know the GDSG has only two members in SA. and we managed to get together last year.

Mine won the silver award. Isn't that eerie.

Info. is on the website at

<<http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/botanicgardens/programs/landscapes>> .

I'm not sure whether you are still organizing the newsletter, but I always look forward to it.

### **Margaret Lee S.A.**

#### *SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPES INAUGURAL NATIVE GARDEN AWARDS 2010*

*What was a barren and desolate farm paddock less than ten years ago has been transformed by **Judith and Andrew Baghurst** into a stunningly stylish Australian plant garden. In spite of the challenges of a rocky, windswept hillside and using only harvested rain and recycled grey water, the garden now hosts a wide diversity of plants artistically arranged to form spectacular tapestries of colour and texture. The owners are long term members of Trees for Life and have a commitment to planting local indigenous plants to revegetate the surrounding property. The selection of local and other appropriate native plants has benefited the local fauna as well as providing a sustainable garden of great beauty.*

***Margaret Lee's** beautiful front garden is a testament to a fifty year commitment to growing and experimenting with Australian plant species. Her garden features an attractive range of mature trees, providing shade and shelter for people as well as for families of birds which make this very peaceful Brighton garden their home. Margaret's talent for flower arranging and garden design has resulted in a beautifully balanced and well laid out gardenscape featuring a shaded and luxuriant frog pond. Her garden will inspire and encourage other home owners to also experiment with Australia's stunning flora.*

I have been working on an article on pruning as I battle to control and shape the garden. It has been my biggest job over summer and have made an impression but far from finished.

So far the summer has been more like ones of yore - quite kind by recent standards. We have had more than 50mm in Jan and only the odd very hot day. I have a couple of projects scheduled for 2010 that I'm excited about and itching to start. I hope to do a bit of a transformation up the hill! We have an APS Vic Quarterly Meeting here in June so have been involved in organising the weekend activities. The theme is 'Gardens for Wildlife' which is a scheme run by Knox Council to encourage and support home gardeners to develop wildlifefriendly gardens. A great concept.

### **Chris Larkin Vic.**

We had a lovely meeting last weekend at Diana and Brian Snape's place. It was just so peaceful being able to sit on their patio to have our meeting, and afterwards we had a chance of a quick walk around the garden.

I have been in my unit now for almost two years. The first July we hosted a GDSG meeting at my place in the middle of winter. The garden was laid out in the old style - mowing strips, lawn and perennials, mostly fuchsias, camellias, roses and loads of bulbs. The emphasis of the meeting that July was to wait a year at least before trying to re-design the garden and I took that on board, and also many of their suggestions.

So last July one of our fellow APS members over and our original design incorporated many of the suggestions from the previous July including moving the clothes line so that is no longer viewed from the dining room. There is a longer article to come on the changes and the progress.

Suffice to say I go out each day and marvel that the garden has been transformed and enjoy it immensely. Yet, that feeling of peace I got at Diana Snape's garden and in Bev Fox's garden the weekend before when she had her garden in the Open Garden Scheme is not here in my own.

This set me thinking of what makes these gardens stand out. Is it the sound of the birds, although I have a vast range in my own place, or is it that one is easily surrounded by trees, bushes and understorey in these gardens, replicating to a greater or lesser degree the Aussie bush. Yes, I think it is the being surrounded factor. My garden is too small for shrubs and trees.

### **Nicky ZananVic.**

As a result of my request through the SGAP "Bulletin", meetings, etc, a number of Queensland members have offered their gardens for consideration for illustrating the new book. Most are in south-east Queensland but others are in Mackay and elsewhere coastal and inland. I was disappointed at the response but I suppose that many people do not realise or consider that they have a good garden (or part of) and maybe shy about sharing them with others.

So, I am about to commence the process of visiting those I have not seen previously and identifying the best seasons for photographs.

I know there are a lot more native gardens in the tropics / subtropics and will continue to ferret them out.

### **Lawrie Smith Qld.**

We wait for the weather to cool, but Feb was just fabulous, with 7ins of rain and a few more to start March. I can actually plant, and the soil is like butter. I need a head start because I am just so much slower and only last a short time without a rest, so the encouragement of the rain keeps me going.

I bet next year we are complaining of floods too.

### **Barbara Buchanan Vic.**

## **DESIGN**

Extract from **TURF WARSE** Elizabeth Kolbert

*Published by The New Yorker magazine 21 July 2008 and reprinted here by kind permission of the author.*

In 1841 Andrew Jackson Downing published the first landscape gardening book aimed at an American audience. At the time, Downing was 25 years old and living in Newburgh New York. He owned a nursery, which he had inherited from his father, and for several years had been publishing loftily titled articles such as “*Remarks on the Duration of Improved Varieties of New York Fruit Trees*” in horticultural magazines.

Downing was dismayed by what he saw as the general slovenliness of rural America, where pigs were allowed to roam free, “bare and bald” houses were thrown up, and trees were planted haphazardly, if at all. The first practice, he complained, contributed to the generally brutal aspect of the streets.”

His “*Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*” urged readers to improve themselves by improving their front yards. “In the landscape garden we appeal to that sense of the Beautiful and the Perfect, which is one of the highest attributes of our nature,” it declared.

Downing’s practical ideas about how to achieve the beautiful included grouping trees in clusters, importing shrubbery of “the finest foreign sorts” and mixing forms and colours with enough variety to keep alive the interest of a spectator, and awaken further curiosity. Essential to any Perfect garden, he held, was an expanse of “grass mown into softness like velvet.” As an example of what he had in mind, Downing pointed to the Livingston Estate New York (which)...required the labours of 10 men. “No expenditure in ornamental gardening is, to our mind, productive of so much beauty as that incurred in producing a well kept lawn,” he wrote.

By almost any measure, the *Treatise* “was a success. It went through eight editions and sixteen printings and it made Downing famous. One critic called him the “Sir Joshua Reynolds of our rural decorations.”

Downing died in a steamboat accident on the Hudson; he was just 36. His practice was taken over by his protégé, Calvert Vaux, whom he had brought over from London as an assistant. Later Vaux joined up with Frederick Law Olmsted, whose career Downing had also encouraged. The two men embraced many of Downing’s ideas. They designed Central Park, with its broad lawns, and laid out suburbs ...with their many lesser lawns. Olmsted and Vaux’s work, in turn, influenced countless suburban subdivisions.

Having migrated into many parts of the United States that did not yet belong to the United States when the “*Treatise*” was published, the lawn today is nearly ubiquitous. Its spread has given rise to an entire industry, or, really complex of industries - Americans spend an estimated forty billion dollars each year on grass. The lawn has become so much a part of the suburban landscape that it is difficult to see it as something that had to be invented. This triumph has also brought into being a new tradition in landscape writing. The anti - *Treatise* attacks both the idea of the velvety expanse ...and the labour that goes into pursuing it. The writer in this tradition toils in the hope of reversing more than 150 years of gardening history. He envisions an American landscape that looks more like it did in Downing’s day - one covered in moss, or scrub or just weeds.

Among the dozen or so main grasses that make up the American lawn, almost none are native to America. Kentucky blue grass comes from Europe and Northern Asia, Bermuda grass from Africa and Zoysia grass from E. Asia. These and other so-called turf grasses are botanically ambidextrous; they can reproduce sexually by putting out seeds and asexually by

spreading laterally. (Biologists believe that they acquired this second ability some 20 million years ago when large herbivores switched from eating leaves to munching grass.) Mowing turf grass quite literally cuts off the option of sexual reproduction. From the gardener's perspective, the result is a denser thicker mat of green. From the grasses' point of view, the result is a perpetual state of vegetable adolescence. With every successive trim, the plants are forcibly rejuvenated. In his anti lawn essay "Why Mow?" Michael Pollan puts it this way: "Lawns are nature purged of sex and death. No wonder Americans like them so much."

A lawn may be pleasing to look at or provide the children with a place to play or offer the dog room to relieve himself but it has no productive value. The only work it does is cultural.

In Downing's day the servant - mowed lawn stood eloquently for the power structure that made it possible: who but the very rich could afford such a pointless luxury? As mechanical mowers enabled middle class suburbanites to cut their own grass, this meaning was lost and a different one took hold. A lawn came to signal its owner's commitment to a communitarian project: the upkeep of the green sward that linked one yard to the next.

Pretty much by definition a lawn is unnatural. Still there are degrees of unnaturalness. Even as the American lawn became democratized, it was also becoming more artificial. In 1909 a German scientist named Fritz Haber figured out how to synthesize ammonia. One use for what became known as the Haber-Bosch process was to manufacture explosives - the process was perfected just in time for the First World War - and a second was to produce synthetic fertiliser. It was observed that repeated applications of synthetic fertiliser could counteract turf grasses' seasonal cycle by in effect tricking them into putting out new growth.

Sensing a potential bonanza, lawn care companies began marketing the idea of an evergreen lawn. The Scotts Co. recommended that customers apply its fertiliser Turf Builder no fewer than 5 times a year. With the advent of herbicides in the 1940s, still tighter control became possible. As long as a hand trowel was the only option, weeding a lawn had been considered more or less hopeless.

A lawn "thickly starred with the glowing blossoms of dandelions isn't in itself a bad picture" the journal, *Country Life in America*, observed consolingly. The new herbicides allowed gardeners to kill off plants that they didn't care for with a single spraying. One of the most popular was - and continues to be - 2,4-D a major ingredient in Agent Orange. Regrettably 2,4-D killed not only dandelions but also plants beneficial to lawn like nitrogen fixing clover.

To cover up this loss any plant that the chemical eradicated was redefined as the enemy." Once considered the ultimate in fine turf, a clover lawn is looked upon today by most authorities as, "not much better than a weed patch" is how one guidebook explained the change. The greener, purer lawns that chemicals made possible were as monocultures more vulnerable to pests. The answer to this problem was to apply more chemicals.

In "American Green" (2006) Ted Steinberg a Professor of History at Case Western Reserve University compares the lawn to a "nationwide chemical experiment with homeowners as the guinea pigs." The risks of the chemical lawn are not confined to the people who own them or the creatures that try to live in them. Rain and irrigation carry synthetic fertilisers into streams and lakes. Manhattanites may not keep lawns but they drink the chemicals that run off them. A 2002 report found traces of 37 pesticides and herbicides in streams feeding into the Croton River watershed.

Although it was not intended as such Rachael Carson's "Silent Spring" (1962) is often cited as the first work in the anti lawn tradition. In her study of America's indiscriminate use of pesticides, Carson was repeatedly led back to the front yard. At around the same time Lorrie Otto from Milwaukee decided to restore her front lawn to prairie. One day some village workers arrived and without consulting her mowed her yard. Otto began speaking out

against lawns, calling them, among other things, sterile, monotonous and flagrantly wasteful. Her talks inspired the founding in 1979 of what might be described as the nation's first grass roots anti grass movement, which dubbed itself the Wild Ones.

But what is the conscientious suburbanite supposed to do? If one accepts the idea that lawns are in a deep sense unethical how does one fill the front yard?

Over the years many alternatives to the lawn have been proposed. Pollan in his book "Second Nature" (1991) suggested replacing parts or all of the lawn with garden. In "Noah's garden" (1993) Sara Stein advocates ungardening, essentially allowing the grass to revert to thicket. Sally and Andy Wasowski, in their "Requiem for a Lawnmower" (2004) recommend filling the yard with native trees and wildflowers. For those who don't want to give up the look or playing space provided by a lawn, the Wasowskis suggest using buffalo grass, one of the very few turf species native to North America. Smaller American Lawns Today (SALT) is a concept developed by William Neiring a professor of Botany at Connecticut College. Neiring planted trees around his property, then left most of his lawn unmowed to become a meadow.

David Benner, a horticulturist, from Pennsylvania has been touting moss as an alternative- he has a one acre moss garden. Recently there have been calls to make lawn space productive. In "Food Not Lawns" (2006) Heather C Flores argues that the average yard could yield several hundred pounds of vegetables a year. "Edible Estates" (2008) is the chronicle of a project by Fritz Haeg, an architect and artist, who rips up conventional front yards in order to replace them with visually striking edible plantings. Of course to advocate a single replacement for the lawn is to risk reproducing the problem.

The essential trouble with the American lawn is its estrangement from place: it is not so much a response to the landscape as an idea imposed on it - all green, all the time, everywhere.

Recently a NASA funded study, which used satellite data, determined that including golf courses lawns in the USA cover nearly 50,000 sq. miles- an area roughly the size of New York State. Most was growing in places where turf grass should never have been planted. According to a separate estimate, by the Environmental Protection Agency, nearly a third of all residential water use in the US currently goes towards landscaping.

The Northeast is one of the relatively few regions in the country that are actually well suited to lawns. There the simplest alternative to the modern industrialized lawn may be a lawn that functions more or less as it did in the 1880s before herbicides or even sprinklers had been invented. In "Redesigning the American lawn" (1993) Herbert, Bormann & Geballe dub such a lawn The Freedom lawn which consists of grass mixed with whatever happens to seed itself (dandelion, violets, bluets, spurrey, chrysanthemum, brown eyed Susan, oat grass, quack grass, evening primrose, clovers, broomsedge etc.) The freedom Lawn is still mowed preferably with a push mower, but is watered infrequently if at all and receives no chemical inputs.

The anti lawn movement has been around now for several decades. In that time thousands of American families have dug up their lawns and put in wildflowers, meadows or vegetable gardens. In that same period however millions more have put in new lawns. A recent study by researchers at Ohio State University estimates that owing to new development, the space devoted to turf grass in the US is growing at the rate of almost 600 sq. miles a year.

The easy explanation for the failure of the anti lawn movement is that change is hard. People have been trained to expect lawns, and this expectation is self-reinforcing: weed laws are all about maintaining property values. For a developer putting in turfgrass is by far the easiest way to landscape. The lawn may be wasteful and destructive but it is, in its way, convenient.

And this is perhaps the final stage of the American lawn. What began as a symbol of privilege and evolved into an expression of shared values has now become to represent expedience. We no longer choose to keep lawns; we just keep on keeping them. In the meantime the familiar image of dad cutting the grass and then beer in hand sitting back to admire his work is in many communities a fiction: increasingly, lawn care has become another one of those jobs, like cooking dinner that's outsourced to someone else. When my husband and I lived in Westchester County, he used to mow our miniscule Freedom lawn - "freedom" here being understood as just another word for nothing left to lose - himself. That he did so was not a source of pride around our house but vague embarrassment.

If Downing came back today what would he think of our lawns? Presumably the neatness of our pigless yards would impress him. But it is hard not to feel that he would at least be ambivalent.

Downing was passionate about landscape gardening, and even more so about its edifying possibilities.

We now have lawns smoother and more velvety than Downing could have imagined. And yet our relationship to the Beautiful remains vexed. As the anti lawnists correctly observe, the American lawn now represents a serious problem.

That the space devoted to it, continues to grow and that more and more water and chemicals and fertiliser are devoted to its upkeep - doesn't prove that we care, so much as that we are careless.

## **Modern / Formal Gardens**

The Age (Mar. 10th.) has a piece about Wes Fleming's current plans for a garden for the 2010 Chelsea Flower Show. He says he feels the way to winning best of show is to concentrate more on plants than the hard landscaping which has been his past practice and is typical of Australian design in contrast to that of England. As a long-term reader of the RHS journal I remember noticing some 5-10 years ago a trend in the show gardens towards hard landscaping at the expense of the plants which drew unfavourable comments. The message was received, or fashion changed and plants again come first. There were some "gardens" during the slick minimalist phase that really did not fit the name but collected rave reviews for their style. These relied on exotic materials used in elaborate constructions, and obviously mere plants could not be allowed to be obscure such features. You and I probably could not source or afford most of them and I certainly would not like to live with such "gardens". The pendulum in England has swung back towards plants and maybe it will here soon too. After all what makes us garden?

Perhaps it depends on who is making the garden, the owner or a professional landscaper. As gardener-owners I think it is fair to claim our gardens are full of plants and we make our gardens to work in. Many a professional garden is made to entertain or otherwise play in. Or maybe just sit in and enjoy, but not to *do* anything in. It is all tying in with a book I am

struggling through, *New Classic Gardens* by Jill Billington which describes the stark minimal scene. Some of the pieces can be quite beautiful but they are outdoor living spaces, not places where you get dirt under your fingernails. Of course there can be no sharp cut off between an outdoor room and a working garden and I am exaggerating with the two extreme positions but the contrast in way of perceiving gardens is very real. Some people just love to fiddle with plants, the more they can indulge this love the greater it grows. The miracle of a seedling bursting forth, a cutting putting out roots, watching for the first buds and flowers followed by the next generation of seeds, the thrill when a serendipitous combination catches the eye, or planned groupings have come off; these are the sort of things that take me out each day. We do relax and unwind in our gardens, but not by just sitting and looking.

I sometimes wish there were some other word to describe the outdoor room that would discriminate it from a garden. Both are legitimate concepts with their own standards and it is plain confusing when both are lumped under 'garden'. Of course professional designers produce gardens for gardeners; if I had my time here again I would seek professional advice for an overall plan because I have seen how their flair plus experience can lead to exciting ways of using space. Then perhaps I should have less of a muddle, a more practiced eye would almost certainly have led to a better use of opportunity.

Many people regard gardening as just another chore but still appreciate a garden ambience. These are the folk who turn to professionals (or live in a sea of weeds). They are known as time poor, although I suspect it is more disinterest in the whole magical growth cycle that separates them from equally busy people who just have to get personally involved. It is when designers start to create show gardens, or TV producers instant makeovers, that the rot sets in. Naturally a designer wants to stand out, hence the use of exotic structures, the search for something no-one else has used, anything to be different. Show gardens can have a real function in displaying new materials and new ideas, or maybe that should be recycling forgotten ones, little is truly new in gardening. It is years since I have seen a live show garden as opposed to photographs but to me show gardens have an air of unreality and definitely no lived in, homely look. There's nothing left to do.

**Barbara Buchanan Vic.**

Notes taken at two Talks by Bruce Mackenzie  
to the A.G.H.S. Sydney AGM August 2009 & the G.D.S.G meeting Nov. 2009

Exploring the reason that may lead to a rewarding residential design is more an exercise in exploring the experience of *living in the garden* rather than that of the *romance* typically associated with the act of gardening.

There are criteria for developing this sort of space rather than plants, horticulture and colour.

### Domestic Gardens.

In 1976 Bruce made a decision not to engage in any more domestic gardens, deciding there was a limit to both his physical and emotional energy.

He wanted to serve as many people as possible rather than a few and was totally dedicated to working with Australian species and paying homage to the indigenous environment.

**Pettit & Sevitt village** St Ives NSW, by **Anchor, Matlock, Murray and Wooley** 1965  
- landscape planned before the building.

**Normanhurst** 1955-75

Own house, more time than money. Today I would respect the original more

**Seidler** 1960s

Transparency is important the garden and house are one space levels should come together

**Cockburn** 1979 - 89, two gardens in the Hills District NSW

Adventure garden places to visit.

Cockburn house 2 1985 - 89

There was no sense of entry. We made a bridge to go over and the house appears.

**Manly ( own) 1984- 2007**

The older house and garden was a sandflat, then a dairy and then wall to wall houses. There were layers of history.

Bruce stripped the whole block to remove the weeds- best thing he did- pragmatic and practical. He dug down to pure sand, added humus and mulch from the council, worms appeared and indigenous species were planted. These developed at an incredible rate with minimal watering - eventually there was charcoal loam through out the property.

*Draw up the way you want it to work, create the envelope and wrap the garden around that. Make every space of the house and the garden a cell of activity and design.*

**Foxground retreat 1999 -**

"In your face" forest 1 acre in hundreds of acres of forest, no paddocks, weeds, machinery

1. A tranquil hideaway to feel refreshed after living in the busy seaside suburb of Manly.
2. Not a garden - it is what has not been done, the design of removal; things that should not be here, to reach nirvana requires perfection - the purity of the scene is so important

3. The complexity of a rainforest is one of its distinguishing features - here there are 145 identifiable species in 1 acre!

4 Water - sprinklers for fire and rainforest seedlings

5. Solar panels but not abundant sunshine

### **Manly Apartment 2007 -**

2 levels high on a hill - 2 beds and study, a new phase after 25 years of sheer delight; everything growing in tubs.

### The Public Domain.

Landscapes designed for the public, if not well maintained, tend to fade away.

### **Readers Digest Building** Surry Hills, 1966

A roof garden, 3 stories off the street, not visible from the street visible from all the offices

### **Kuringai College**

Magnificent Hawkesbury sandstone flora, it was challenging trying to build on such a beautiful piece of earth.

Here the landscape design was planned before the building( like the P and S houses).

The pre existing landscape was beautiful and needed almost no interference - contractors on the site could only work outside the fenced areas, which protected the landscape.

### **RTA 1975**

In order to prevent soil erosion, Bruce Mackenzie was instrumental in persuading the RTA to use indigenous plant communities( changing according to the landscape one is driving through) as roadside planting.

### **Peacock Point 1970 -6lloura Park Reserve Balmain**

Retrospectively - a turning point.

The *dreaming of gardens* comes from the historical memory of the great estates of Britain.

It is important not to manipulate the whole site - pander to special plant requirements for special reasons but don't try and change the soil or the micro environment on too much of the site.

The original design was one which would relate to the natural environment and give people a relaxed atmosphere - it was not to be like a geometric parkland ( as it has become.)

### **Sir Joseph Banks Reserve**

Stimulated and guided by nature but not a reproduction; using qualities of nature to improve the aesthetic and philosophical design of the park site. It was very windy - almost couldn't stand up so consideration had to be given to plants and people surviving the wind.

Forty years ago, the sand was extracted from the shipping channels and sold on and it was a site for container terminals.

Spine of dunes and chain of lagoons provided a third dimension that didn't previously exist and they were planted out with indigenous species

He introduced a plant called *Lomandaralongifolia* - now it's a standard with the majority of plants used created from tissue culture.

He sees this as a huge problem due to the inherent lack of diversity and genetic permutation.

Jonathan Steed suggested using only seed grown plants and support nurseries which do - he thinks tissue cultured plants should not be used in large scale projects

Bruce wonders how you can convert the bulk of the urban dwelling population to this mindset?

### **Jo Hambrett NSW**

## **PLANTS**

### **Heat Tolerant Plants**

In the past I have tended to describe our garden's soil as typical red -brown earth, common in many Adelaide suburbs.

I no longer accept that there is a *typical* red-brown earth; variations result from the depth of top soil: 10 - 15 cm in our garden and 60 - 80 cm in parts of Edwardstown.

So wherever gardeners live they should identify the plants, in the categories below, and their soil in the localized area, when very hot and dry summers prevail.

For the record, in 2009, Adelaide had a heat wave of about 2 weeks when the sun temperature was 50 deg C. or more, including 6 consecutive days of over 40 deg C. in the shade, peaking at 46 deg. And, virtually no rain for almost 3 months.

All plants fall into these categories:

1. Those tolerant to heat & drought
2. Those tolerant to heat but not drought
3. Those tolerant to drought but not heat
4. Those not tolerant to heat or drought

#### Category 1

These plants should form the backbone of the garden, requiring no water once established. In our garden these include all acacias, callistemons, sennas, eucalypts, many melaleucas, all

*Chamelaucium mucinatum* forms except 'Lady Stephanie', a range of eremophilas ( although there are many species which are difficult to grow for reasons unrelated to heat and drought.) Other plants in category 1 include *Bursaria spinosa*, *Conostylis scandicans*, *Correa pulchella* (orange flower form only), *Dampiera rosemarinifolia*, *Daminia oldfieldii*, *dodoneas*, *Hymenosporum flavum*, *Hypocalymma angustifolium* and *xanthopetalum*, *Ozothamnus diosmifolia* and *Pittosporum rhombifolium* ( syn. *Auranficularhombifolium* and Quandong).

Generally Proteaceae species have not been successful and I suspect Phytophthora fungus could be the culprit in many cases. *Hakea purpurea* and H. 'Burrendong Beauty' ( see below) have been stand outs over 30 - 40 years; other successes are *H. grammatophylla* and *H. invaginata* while *H. multilineata* and *H. oleifolia* show promise.

Successful grevilleas are several forms of *G. thelemannia* incl. 'Ellendale Pool', *G. 'Honey Gem*, *G. robusta*, and *G. speciosa*. *G. 'Moonlight'* and the lovely *G. depauperata* died this year after many years of abundant flowering. Neighbours have large plants of *G. olivacea* and 'Winpara Gem'. *Petrophilabiloba* has grown and flowered well without water. Successful street trees include *Bauhinia gilvum*, *Callistemum salignus* form, *Cupaniopsis anacardioides*, several eucalypts, *Hapulia pendula* ( still young), *Hakea laurina*, *Hymenosporum flavum* and *Malaleucastypheoides* ( a swamp dweller).

#### Category 2:

will include many special plants each individual wants to grow which are not burnt by the hot sun but need water as required.

Plants in our garden in this category are all Malvaceae, Alyogyne, native Hibiscus etc. ( except *Gossypium sturtianum*), *Calothamnus hirsutus*, *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* ( water copiously), *Frankenia pauciflora*, goodenias, *Hibbertia grossulariifolia* ( excellent groundcover), *Hibbertia dentata* ( must be in at least 80% shade or it burns.) A surprise has been a lovely form of *Scaevola aemula* in 80% full sun.

#### Category 3:

Plants in this category should be located inconspicuously so they do not spoil the overall appearance of the garden in summer. We have had trouble in this category with dwarf forms of *Syzygium* ( burn badly) and strap leaved plants such as dianells and *Orthrosanthus multiflorus* ( died completely) as well as *Elaeocarpus reticulatus* in filtered sunlight and *Hakea archaeoides*.

#### Category 4:

Plants in this category are to be avoided completely!

#### A Favourite Plant:

*Hakea 'Burrendong Beauty'* - in flower this is a beautiful dense shrub to about 1m. or less in height. It may spread widely with horizontal branches invading adjacent plants if left unchecked. Annual pruning after flowering, or other times if necessary will keep it to the desired shape and size. Showy carmine red flower clusters with long cream styles occur in

virtually every leaf axil during autumn. The leaves are elliptic to obovate, bright green, stiff and spreading. It is easily grown in most soil types but prefers clays and loams. Drought and heat tolerant once establishes and loved by birds for protected nesting and its nectar.

**Ivan Halliday S.A**

### **Ext. from Research Report Growing Australian Vic APS March 2009**

Here in central Victoria we have had years of drought, over a month without rain and many days with temperatures in the forties. The initial response is for eucalypts to shed their leaves and the fallen leaves carpet the ground. As the dryness continues upper branchlets of the trees die off followed by whole branches. If mistletoe is present the host branches are usually the first to die off. Sometimes trees produce epicormic shoots along the trunk before the tree dies. As the tree drops leaves more sunlight reaches the understorey. Many shrubs have died - wattles, bursarias, hakeas, ozothamnus, spyridiums, pimeleas and eggs and bacons. Many of the indigenous plants planted in the reserve have also died.

In dry conditions growth rate is usually slow and the edible plants grazed down to ground level. To grow successfully plants need to be drought tolerant and inedible. The use of indigenous plants for low water gardens has often been advocated as indigenous plants are adapted to local conditions; if we continue to have lower rainfall and higher temperatures the local plants may be no longer suited to the (newly prevailing) local conditions.

Perhaps when we plant we should be considering plants adapted to a lower rainfall than the local plants. In central Victoria that could be plants from the mallee or western NSW. If local plants are used, a check in the bushland will give an idea of their hardiness.

**Ern& Lesley Perkins Vic.**

### **Native trees for Nature Strips& Street Planting**

*Bruce Schroder:*

I have been a passionate member of APS for many years. In my various roles within the local government open space sector I have strongly promoted the use of Australian native plants in both public and private landscapes.

For the last 10 years I have been in a position to influence the street tree species selection for all new housing and industrial subdivisions within the City of Whittlesea, along with the City of Casey, one of the fastest growing growth corridors in Melbourne. At best the local climatic and soil conditions can only be described as testing! Most of the municipality lies on the easternmost reaches of the northern and western basalt plains, very flat with surface basalt quite common. The local soil is the most horrific sticky black clay soil which when wet doesn't drain and when dry shrinks so much that cracks to 75mm or more wide and a metre deep appear on the surface. Is it any wonder that the local vegetation communities support almost no woody species whatever, save the magnificent Redgum?

The lack of well drained soils doesn't seem to be an issue for cooler climate deciduous trees and if they can tolerate the hot dry summers there is no reason why they too can't be used to add variety and interest to local streetscapes.

Whittlesea's general position is for the use of native plants in most of its public landscape development and it encourages developers to achieve the same. In my experience if the selected species cannot be considered suitably established to stand on its own without artificial watering after an initial 2 summers of establishment then the species is not suitable for a street tree. Trees such as the various cultivars of the ornamental pear are proven performers and an increasing number of drought hardy cultivars of Ash and maple are appearing on the market.

Until the nursery industry gets its act into gear and undertakes suitable selection, breeding, trialling and reliable reproduction of the best forms of a wider range of Australian native trees fit for the purpose, as has been occurring overseas for years with cool climate trees, it will be some time before the landscape industry will be swayed to look beyond those trees currently being strongly marketed by the truly professional tree nurseries.

Trees such as *Euc.leucoxydon* "Rosea" continually appear on landscape plans when there has never been such a beast - not only is there no such cultivar but what the industry produces as such is from such inbred stock, the performance and presentation of the resultant trees make one realise why Australian trees have such low esteem in the development industry.

Even with recent introductions, such as the dwarf form of *Euc.leucoxydon* "Eucky Dwarf", production is totally uncontrolled and there is no guarantee whatsoever of performance of this stock planted under this name.

I am personally not convinced that there are the natives suitable for street trees out there at the moment, as Neil says there is.

A street tree needs to be more than just drought hardy, it needs to be of consistent form well shaped ornamentally appealing readily pruned to conform to a myriad of clearances and standards, have non invasive roots and to top it off never drop leaves branches twigs nuts or berries or be a nuisance in any way shape or form!

*Neil Marriott* replies -

I bow to your greater knowledge on what is best suited to the basalt plains soils of Whittlesea shire. From my experience there are a lot of WA goldfields eucalypts in particular that are ideal and yet almost untried as street trees - species such as *Euc. torquate*, *salubris*,

*campaspe*, *eremophila* & *macrandra* have been widely used in inland towns and roadsides throughout Victoria.

My suspicion is that with the change in climate we are now experiencing these same species may be well suited to eastern suburbs of Melbourne.

I must agree with you wholeheartedly about the dismal state of plant selection in the Australian native nursery industry. There is virtually NO breeding for specific outcomes other than appearance - and even that is minimal.

Most new plants are simply discoveries in someone's garden. I am just finishing my new grevillea book on hybrid grevilleas with Peter Olde and this feature is nowhere more evident than in the genus grevillea!! What hope is there for selective breeding in eucalypts, angophora or casuarina!

Having mentioned Angophora they are proving to be the most drought tolerant and attractive street trees herein the Stawell district (Vic). I was in Altona last week and the *A. hispida* was looking superb and growing well in shallow basalt soils. I also believe that good selections of *Bursaria spinosa*, *Acacia aneura* and *A. pendula* will prove wonderful street trees when someone decides to do some thorough selection, trialling and breeding.

It is up to fanatics like us to keep pushing for better native plants - it won't come from the nursery industry. Until APS members or some far sighted nurseryman comes along and begins to revolutionize the industry we will have to put up with exotic plants that are clearly better looking and better suited than our own native species.

## **Pruning Again**

I always claim I was forced to start pruning around 16 years ago; starting a few years after foliage from some of the plants in my newish Australian plant garden had begun to encroach on pathways. Like most gardeners what I've learned has mainly been as a result of practice and observation. In recent years my knowledge, confidence and willingness to experiment or take risks has increased apace thanks to the influence of a couple of experienced gardeners.

In 2008 a talk given to our local plant group by Elspeth Jacobs gave me the confidence to prune material from the centre of a plant to simplify the structure and increase light and airflow to the middle of the plant. This talk was done in the evening using a few potted plants Elspeth brought in for demonstrating her talk. The indoor forum and limited plant material concentrated the mind. It turned out more valuable for me than visiting Elspeth's garden for a practical demonstration, which we did a year later, just because we couldn't flit from plant to plant. The talk had a profound effect on me and I started putting her suggestions into practice at the soonest possible opportunity which was only a couple of days later on the weekend. Up until this point I was tackling pruning much more in terms of tip pruning or limited structural pruning mainly making cuts from the top or side of a plant or sometimes to reveal a trunk but rarely did I look beyond the surface. Largely ignoring the centre I wasn't assessing the whole plant and all aspects of its health and structure beyond

the outer shape. Pruning that ignores the centre of a plant and concentrates on the outer shape can increase a plants blobiness when what you might be looking for or needing is a lighter look.

Topiary and hedging is the simple end of pruning as they are exercises mainly in clipping. As with so much in the formal garden or formal treatment of plants, once the initial decision is made about the plant size and shape not much further thought is necessary.

When I look back now it seems the kind of pruning I was doing was timid and blinkered and certainly not always the most valuable for the plants or for the appearance of my garden. Does the result of pruning always look immediately good? The answer is sometimes yes and sometimes no. Even when not doing a radical prune there may be a need to steel yourself for a less than attractive look in the short term but the rewards will come if everything goes to plan. This was my experience when I put Elspeth's suggestion to the test: while I was pruning I was feeling confident, the next day I worried I'd gone too far. Sometimes I'm in the zone so to speak and I'm happy with what I've achieved; at other times I feel I might have butchered a plant and live in hope that all will be concealed and forgiven in time. . Growing in confidence has meant growing in boldness – and there are times when it's been necessary to take a great big pruning leap of faith into the unknown cutting a plant back in radical ways because in truth the alternative would be to remove the plant altogether because it is too large for the space, or damaged or too woody.

I'm into pruning these days and find it challenging and thought provoking. The more thought goes into the job the longer the job takes – a real issue with a large garden such as mine – but the more targeted and effective the pruning. At the moment I'm interested in pruning many of the large plants on the north boundary to trunks; mostly single trunks. And with this venture I've had the opportunity to discuss how to approach individual trees with an experienced gardener. These trees will be the front line in my screening defence; in front of them large shrubs can screen to fence height. With the budding trees there was sometimes no decision to be made because the plant has a strong single trunk, with other trees it has been necessary to force the issue, to encourage the development of a single strong trunk. Choosing a leading branch to become the plant's future main trunk has meant sometimes choosing a smaller rather than larger branch because it is the most central. After choosing the branch to trunk I have sometimes removed competing branches but sometimes it has been preferable to 'feather' these competing branches back so that they lose their dominance but maintain a function in the short or long term.

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This is as far as I got in writing about pruning when a freak hail storm passed through some Melbourne suburbs striking most forcefully right here in my neighbourhood. Now I've had an altogether different lesson in pruning; different but interesting one might say. A few plants

have been damaged beyond repair but others have been pruned in interesting ways. I've never been confident about where to make the cuts on dwarf banksias but the hail storm made a good fist of it and if I only had the time I'd study it closely. I'm optimistic about the garden bouncing back from this battering. A huge volume of material has either been taken (free) to the tip or spread along my boundaries. Nature did a job in around 20mins that would have taken me many weeks to perform; not that I would have been quite so reckless and undisciplined or so unconcerned about the clean-up which would also fall to me.

Below is a rearranged and marginally tampered with excerpt from an article I wrote for my local Aust Plant Soc group's newsletter

*I watched the storm approach; it rumbled its way from the west. I now know that the growling sound it made was due to the activity of stones tumbling around within the system. As it got closer I noticed that it was a very dark cloud with a yellowy tinge – the colour of a snow cloud I noted. The hailstones, some as big as cricket balls, weren't smooth round things but they were sharp-edged and shaped irregularly. On close examination you could see they were made up of a collection of smaller stones; they were conglomerates, excellent tools for cutting. I watched them slice away hundreds of branchlets from the eucalypts and other trees. It was raining foliage so that when the storm passed it looked like a green cloak had been thrown out over the property blanketing garden and driveways alike. It was a wondrous sight to see and strangely beautiful. When it was safe to do so – I was scared of the lightning – I wandered around taking pictures to record the event and noted that even 4 hours later hailstones still had not melted away.*

*I sustained a broken skylight, TV antennae, an outside light and pipes leading from the workshop roof to both tanks. All of these things will be simple enough to repair but fixing up the garden is a different matter altogether. I think it would be fair to say there is not a single undamaged plant: there is simply not a single plant that doesn't need attention. Not surprisingly ground-covers like *Myoporum parvifolium* were sliced and diced by sharp edged stones that hit the ground but I can already see they are shooting away and should repair themselves. On the other hand it is surprising how damaged woody shrubs like banksias of all types are. On most plants the bark has been scraped away in places leaving me wondering how the plants will deal with this in time – will they heal or will this cause future problems. Some plants have been split at the base and have been removed but the vast majority will survive and may perform very well thanks to a wild uncontrolled prune by nature followed by my attempts to rectify any problems by – you guessed it - further pruning.*

It's about 6 weeks since the storm, and despite having a 2 week holiday during that time when I devoted the majority of my time to the garden, the clean-up is still not complete despite having paid and unpaid help. Dead sections of plants were not always immediately obvious as foliage remained green and only browned off over time –sometimes weeks. Also some parts of plants have died without having sustained any obvious injury so I find myself returning to the same plant over and over in an attempt to clean it up. I'm going over the same territory time and again wondering when it will end and in some cases where it will end.

I consider myself lucky in a couple of ways. One, my home is largely undamaged while some people around here have had to leave home until repairs are carried out. Second, I think the storm occurring in autumn rather than spring is a blessing. I can't image what it

would have been like to enter the stressful time of summer after a storm wrecking so much devastation. As it is the weather has been mild despite above average temperatures and there has been useful rainfall. Now I await the regeneration with interest and optimism.

**Chris Larkin Vic.**

### **Caroline Gunter's Arid Country trip**

In May and June last year John and I set out on a major expedition (for us anyway) driving across the Nullabor plain and exploring the south west corner of WA.

We didn't travel with the crowds in the wildflower season but were delighted with what we saw.

We fell in love with the great expanses of the plain with those wonderful green and grey mounds of vegetation surviving on gritty limestone. Then we were charmed by the mallees that lined the roadside with generous shiny leafed clusters swaying as we and the road trains passed. At their feet were the grey forms of Saltbush looking like sheep or rocks with a sparse groundcover of grey and purple leafed succulents.

Towards Norseman we were given a grandstand display of Salmon Gums *Eucalyptus salmonophloia* after a shower of rain with their remarkable salmon trunks gleaming and glowing in the sun. Even the bikies we met at the campsite had been entranced. For the drive down south to Esperance the roadside was decked with more Salmon Gums and great towering stands of showy *Banksia speciosa* in extravagant flower. Esperance demonstrated its capacity as a windy city with howling gales and pouring rain forcing us into a cabin. We did brave it out to Cape le Grand National Park with its dramatic beaches and coastal scrub reacting to the full impact of constant wind pruning. Snuggling low were small banksias with dense clumps of *Adenanthos sericeus* leaning onto the hillsides with their minute red flowers gleaming in the woolly tan-topped foliage. Gnarled trunks of other shrubs lay like spaghetti over rocks with foliage protected in their lee.

Approaching Albany we found varieties of *Grevillia* budding up and foliage of a prostrate *Banksia* along the roadside. Around here we met our first native forests, as well as our first views of huge acreages of plantation forests, predominantly Tasmanian blue gum, *Eucalyptus globulus*, planted as a viable crop and tax saving solution. Their future now looks grim.

From magnificent Albany we went north from the coast to Mt Barker in the Stirling Ranges to see Kevin Collins Banksia Farm. It should not to be missed by anyone with an appreciation of native plants. We parked in an empty car park and followed the signs past the nursery and displays borders of extravagantly flowering low *Banksias* to the Gallery. This charming large room was decked in dried and fresh blooms, filled with paintings and lined with gleaming local timbers. And striding out came Kevin with a beaming welcome. He then proceeded to charm us for a couple of hours with an enthusiastic talk about his passion for banksias from childhood games and collecting for firewood of *Banksia grandis* cones to the gathering and growing of the collection of all 78 known species. The most recent addition is, I believe, *Banksia aquilonia* from Hinchinbrook Is and Mt Finnigan Nat. Park in northern coastal Queensland. He tells a great story about that find in 1996.

We were then released to stroll among the plantings with advice to see particular unusual species as we went. Incredibly he managed to find just the right soil and aspect for them all

to thrive but he confessed to a few new positionings. He insists there is no “right” time of year to visit the Farm as there are flowers all through the year. And along with his wealth of information and exciting tales he also makes great coffee. We had a wonderful time and are now armed with his informative book, **Banksias** published by Bloomings, 2008 which is filled with history, biology, related art work, propagation and cultivation notes and a very useful species guide.

From here we returned to the coast where the roadsides and sandy shores are swept and scented by Willow Myrtle, *Agonisflexuosa*, mighty Eucalypts lined the valleys and hilltops and windpruned shrubbery clothed the beachfronts. I found an old favourite here, the velvety leaved *Chorilaena acerifolia* apparently the only species in the genus. It used to grow well in my sandy soils but sadly departed some years ago. Now we had to really meet the forests.

Just a few Ks east of Walpole is the Valley of the Giants offering an inspiring treetop walk on a suspended path among the leaftops of *Eucalyptus jacksonia*, *E guilefoylei*, and *E. diversicolour* (Karri). Looking down from this birds eye view we could see the abundant strappy deep green leaves of sword rush *Lepidosperma gladiatum* and softer foliage of the Karri Wattle, *Acacia pentadenia*. - I'd rather like to be a bird around here! Another area shows the history of forestry in the area and some of the mighty remnants of the Giants.

Off again along roadsides decked with strong “trees” of pin cushion Hakeas, *Hakea laurina*, fully decked with Christmas- like baubles. These are displayed alongside tight tufted clumps of Dryandras beaming golden tops and extraordinary clumps of grass trees. At times I thought I'd found low forests of the great grey leaved *Eucalyptus macrocarpa* some wildly straggly, others neat new dense plantations after regrowth from fire. I found on a later visit to Kings Park I was mistaken but have no clue what these masqueraders were.

We met friends at Margaret River and were told tales of the fabulous orchid display the bush around presents in spring. However we were stunned by the stands of Karri showing all their diversicolour with pink, orange tan and cream trunks en masse along the roadside on the limestone shores. There are deep caves under all this mighty growth. Our friends also introduced us to the snotty gobble, a slender innocent geebung, showing no snotty signs when we saw it. We're told it exudes a sticky sap.

North towards Perth, highway plantings include the “look at me” Illyarrie, *Eucalyptus erythrocorys*, with red and yellow flowers and great bowls of seed cases. Also very wide dense trees of a hakea, thickly massed with seed cases on the old wood.

In Perth we stayed with geologist and native plant loving relatives who proudly showed their garden rarities like dirty socks grevillea, not too smelly (can't find its true name) and several Hakeas with assorted beaky fruits. They took us to Kings Park to show us some of the plants they met on their expeditions like sword leaved grasses and, a very dense impenetrable Hakea they refer to as bastard bush. The whole Park is filled with great and diverse displays including the ancient Bottle Tree that was moved from the north a couple of years ago and had an attendant guide to protect it and answer questions.

From here we headed east following the water pipeline that was constructed at the turn of the last century to provide water from Fremantle to Kalgoorlie, a pump assisted journey of about 600KM. It and we traveled through grain belts where the soil and rain permit, to pastureland and on once more to the red soil of the interior,

Lovely old Kalgoorlie and Boulder have a rich history and show the wonders or otherwise of mining. A green belt was planted in the 1970's around the towns in a effort to control the dust storms that previously enveloped the area. There is a bushland park on regenerated woodland that had been clear-felled for timber with many endemic Emu and Red Hop

bushes, Bluebush, Saltbush, Cassia and Sandalwood, Salmon Gums and Gimlets. In season would be Everlasting daisies and Twining Fringe lily. We planted seed of Karikurla, (from which the city name is derived) the Aboriginal name for Native Pear, *Marsdenia australis* as our effort to assist in revegetation.

Then, more boldly now, we returned to the grand crossing of the plains where the scenes were still familiar and each change of vegetation marked another couple of 100Ks towards home.

Still to come was the Australian Arid Lands Botanic Garden at Pt Augusta.

Don't fail to spend time here. The park was established in 1993 as a site for arid lands ecosystem research and conservation.

Its spectacular site is where Matthew Flinders sailed *The Investigator* inland in search of the anticipated Inland Sea in 1802. Here is where his botanist, Robert Brown, was put ashore to collect specimens some of which are now displayed in the Gardens.

Growing abundantly is a fabulous collection of Eremophila, saltbush, Acacias, the three outback *Santalum*, (quandong, bush tomato and sandalwood) and Grevilleas, including the fabulous, heavy wooded, beefwood *G. striata* (we have an old family piece of furniture made in outback NSW). John was charmed by the number of small leaved and small growing Eucalypts with a generous dusting of flowers up and down their stems. Most intriguing to me were a series of four metre square display gardens of delightful differing arrangements for what could be small front gardens set in the red soil and making features of arid land plant selection.

All looked like excellent garden design and well worth good photos for our next (still proposed ?) book .

A short diversion through the base of the Flinders Ranges to Quorn (past Mt Brown Conservation Park), then Peterborough and the Barrier Hwy to Broken Hill kept pace with that orange soil we'd fallen in love with. All the way to Wilcannia and Cobar I felt sure I'd seen clumps of quandongs emerging from the red soil. It spread before us all the way to Orange, now lushly productive with grain and orchards but petered out as we approached the Great Dividing Range with its sandstone base. We were stunned once more by just how small is the coastal rim not dressed in that fabulous red.

### **Caroline Gunter NSW**

## **GARDEN VISITS & MEETINGS**

### **MELBOURNE MEETING**

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2010. Please ring Diana Snape if you haven't already heard from her.

## **NORTH EAST BRANCH VIC. FEB.2010**

Our first meeting for the year will be based on a visit to the 'Marangay' garden of Sally Gamble which featured on the cover of the current Open Gardens book.

Date Sat 24th. April.

Address Standish Lane off the Kilfera Rd. on your right a few K. out of Benalla.

Time 10.30am. Entrance fee \$6, as it is an official open day. We could assemble in the carpark with a cuppa.

Sally and a group of friends were among the early visitors to the Van Reit garden last year and were very interested in the planting. Marangay I gather began as an exotic garden and is being partly worked over to become more Australian. It was also open in the spring on a date that clashed for us, but it must be some effort to do it twice in 12 months.

After we have seen enough we can move to our Benalla house 44 Riverview Rd. for lunch and discussions. We will have at least one copy of the APSVic production Growing Australian for new gardeners and a ground plan of the block on which stands the house my grandson has just moved into in Albion in Melbourne. I thought it would be useful to work with the book and see how it would help a complete newcomer make a garden. I have given Mark the CD of the book because that is how he reads things and have had a quick look through myself. I was impressed to have Mark quoting some of the ideas back to me and I felt the design part was a very good start. I was disappointed by the limited selection of plants recommended for the North East as I know a lot of sweat and tears went into making a list, despite the problem of the large geographical area covered. I felt such a brief list would put off the faint hearted. Still Mark is in Melb and there is more recommended for the city.

Gloria is chasing up a landscaper who worked with all Australian plants on a new housing development in Shepparton as we discussed at our last meeting and we hope to organise our next meeting around seeing this work. Jan's garden will be open on Oct. 9th-10th. and we will have a preparatory meeting there as well as help on the days, as we did for Helen.

I had to withdraw the group from the Friends of Willow Park Design Competition because we did not have the man-power to take responsibility and see it through in the time. I had an encouraging response from Alison Mitchell, the convenor, who suggested we may be able to work with them at a later stage. So a meeting that includes an update on Glenda's garden as well as seeing the situation at Willow Park seems probable.

Hoping to have a good start to the year, despite the clash with Anzac Day long weekend and Wangaratta outing for which I apologize but the chance to see Marangay made it inevitable.

Barbara Buchanan      5729 7536

## **SYDNEY GARDEN VISITS & MEETINGS**

MEETING SOUTH COAST Nov. 2009

Bruce Mackenzie, Foxground, see Design section

### Geoffrey and Anne Long Bolwarra, Foxground

Sydney GDSG were last at the Longs five years ago. It was a marvellous opportunity to revisit the garden and see the changes and hear from the owners about their ongoing adventures in garden design and plant selection.

Some of the new things included:

#### 1. A fire management regime

Prune everything from ground to 3m up keep ground completely clear asst protection zone 40m toughened glass clad boards with steel well organised house is greatest protection Most of the plants are at a stage where they can be pruned up to 3m

#### 2. Pruning to reveal coastal views

#### 3. More walkways, paths and vistas through the indigenous forest

Plants noted on the flat walk - dry side of the hill

coachwoods flowering along the escarpment

theSassafras, "fragrant in all its parts"

Archronychia( lemon aspen), tall tree big orange berries

Exocarpus, the parasitic wild cherry, related to the mistletoe. Bright green, weeping casuarina- like foliage

*Eliodendronaustralis* red olive berry

*Eleaocarpuskirktonii*

2 rare and endangered dachmanda( soccerwood) and *zieriagranulata*

*Sloaneaaustralis* maidens blush related to davidson's plum aspleniumflabollefolium

*Commosoniafrserii* fabulous white flowers

#### 4. Eternal vigilance and a Herculean effort has resulted in the majority of weeds infesting the forest now conspicuous by their absence.

### The Dix Garden, Gerringong

We came to this suburban garden in March last year from a bush property with plenty of space and two dams that provided water for an extensive garden. Despite a more plentiful rainfall in Gerringong, water is a limiting factor in the garden. We installed 7200 litres of storage and plan more; the trick is to find space for tanks. At purchase we planned to do away with the small swim pool but as the summer gets hotter and the frequency of requests for a dip by neighbouring kids increases doubts about retrieving that patch of ground are waning.

Space, water, aspect is next. The large gum trees that were an enticement to the property make shade, which has a large bearing on choice of planting species. Plus they cheerfully take advantage of soil improvement and nutrients. As you face the house from the street, north is to the left and gratefully the original owners placed the house so that side could be a garden. That is where we have started, having dug up lawn and a number of overgrown exotic shrubs. It remains to design a structure that will partly shade that side in summer, it is both the main entrance and the place where container plants will be kept. Probably shadecloth covered, perhaps a pergola or maybe shade sails. There is little room for further planting.

At the rear, (east) we put a roof over part of the courtyard, removed three mature small leaved fig trees and regenerated the original raised beds. Some plantings in that area will have to be taken out in due course, the lovely grey foliage *A. covenii* is too big as is the casuarina, which I had thought to be a dwarf variety. The rest of the backyard will remain devoted to veggies if the water holds up.

On the South we have a small space that gets very shaded in winter in which herbs are doing well enough and towards the brighter end is a Wollemi pine that came with us in a pot. It is making some progress despite having been cut in half (at our Bywong home) when about 60 cms height by a sulphur crested cocky with no sense of respect. It took a long time before growth resumed at the central tip and I remain unsure that it will be a normal tree.

Now to the front. The block narrows to about ten metres wide at the street. Presently lawn, a shrub garden is envisaged but not yet planned. The caravan will go at some time. Whether to keep some lawn in conformity with the neighbourhood is an issue. Two large trees were taken out on the North but we expect to keep the rest with a bit of cleaning up. Choice of species for this area is critical as they must not require watering once established. Seeking to know what natives do well by looking about Gerringong is unrewarding; most locals are wedded to grass and agapanthus. We have probably used most of the sites in the sun where the large flowering Grevilleas can thrive. We created some terraces beside the drive using waxwood sleepers and these seem to work; the soil here is excellent and deep, what a change from our previous soil yet that could be made to grow much with a bit of organic material. No doubt tree roots will intrude the boxes in time. Why the terraces? When we first came, rain fell in one deluge that threatened to wash away anything loose on a slope. It has not happened since, but we are windy about planting anything but grass on a slope.

We are interested to know what anyone might think about these issues, we welcome your interest and needless to say you will be welcome any time in the future to follow progress.

### **Warwick and Glenis Dix. NSW**

It is utterly heartbreaking that the majority of residents in this town( and so many others) can only come up with the truly appalling, unsustainable, imagination and bio diversity bereft grass/agapanthus combination for their garden when the day before we had glimpsed the wealth of indigenous plant life that the soil and climate in this area can support - as Bruce Mackenzie noted - 145 species in an acre!

Warwick and Glennis Dix, very kindly allowed us to visit their garden on the Sunday. Naturally it was quite a contrast to Bruce and Laraine's indigenous forest retreat and Geoffrey and Anne Longs' Bolwarra.

The Dix's say that coming to a suburban block after having space makes one realise "the reality of gardening" - what you want v. what you can have.

Gardens they can't have but are influenced by include - Sissinghurst, a great example of an English traditional garden, the ANBG Canberra - a beautiful and a favourite garden and the Japanese Palace Garden Kyoto.

They say priority must be given to the plants you love to have -

viz: *Astaria fascicularis*, long flowering horizontal shape, *Melaleuca volacea*, great form, *Viminera juncea* - acacia like swamp plant, *Billiadiera longifolia* ( red, white, blue and purple, *Tenuiloba x nana* Thorny Devil

The blue wrens love the Hakea Burrendong Beauty ( see plants) Acacia chinchilla (Bilby's nursery Coonabarran) and Acacia Little Nugget are a great combination

For compost Warwick recommends reading "Growing Media" by Handreck and Black. They have excellent basalt soil and use Pine fines, urea and ferrous sulphate.

Warwick loves pruning the plants, shaping, encouraging the form. Imagine cloud westringias rather than clouds azaleas! Balance is very important too.

Over a cup of tea and a delicious slice we discussed the garden and offered suggestions to various queries.

Member, Joy Cook suggested a mixture of *Scaevola alba* white, blue and pink forms, as well as *Chryscephalum rammonissina*, *Calocephalus lacteus* ( white heads, grey foliage) and *Calocephalus citreus* ( yellow heads) and *Pycnosorus globosus*, billy buttons for the front lawn - it sounds delightful.

### **SYDNEY GDSG meeting FEB 27<sup>th</sup> 2010**

Our first meeting for 2010, like that of our last for 2009, was a return to a garden we had looked at 5 years before.

We met at "The Wildflower Place" at Erina Heights and were warmly welcomed by the indefatigable owner, plantsperson, garden designer and author, Nola Parry, on a beautiful clear pre autumnal coastal day.

After a quick cuppa and not a few purchases we left to see 3 coastal Australian plant gardens in to which Nola has had some input. Both gardens were at the front of the house only and both showed ingenious use of a small space

Our first garden was at Forrester's Beach. At the front of the house, where traditionally a square of lawn would be, was a gravel ring, donut shaped and not completely symmetrical, placed roughly in the centre of the lawn space. Thickly planted beds surrounded its perimeter, on one side hugging a pathway leading to the verandah and on the other creating the edge of the circular gravel pathway ( forming the donut ring which was covered with gravel instead of icing! ) In the centre (where the hole is normally) was a circular island of plants with a Golden Penda providing the centrepiece.

This unusual design achieved at least 3 things. It made a small space feel much larger by breaking it up into many parts; it enabled masses of plants to be used, in different ways for different effects and it gave privacy and peace to an area not usually associated with either. Trees were kept at large shrub height, some shrubs were clipped and some weren't, allowing for a display of various forms and textures. Varying the heights of plants allowed the views to be controlled and heightened the sense of anticipation and therefore space.

An interestingly shaped plant that drew much attention was *Alogyne hakifolia*.

The second garden was only a few kilometres away at Bateau Bay; the house was rectangular rather than square and of bagged brick, both of which made it a less imposing presence in the landscape. Previously the front garden was lawn, mondo grass, some grevilleas and 2 callistemons. The owner, Jim Ransom, replaced the rather unpromising grey clay - probably building fill, with raised beds of crushed sandstone. A flat area of crushed sandstone evokes a creek bed and doubles as a second car space if needed.

A mulched path winds through the raised beds. A shade loving, white "cat's whiskers" looked spectacular by the front door.

Jim says that WA plants "take his eye". He is very pleased with his grafted eremophilas getting 3yrs out of them. Other plants he enjoys are:

*Grev. dryandroides* subsp *hirsute* ; *Grevdryandrii* ( NT) grafted; *Darwinia oxylepus* (WA) and *Dodonea boronifolia*

## Rainridge

Ann and Tom Raine's property at Wamberal

Rainfall 46 " - 70" pa, 10 acres, 2 acres under garden surrounded by turpentine, blue gum and indigenous rainforest valleys

It was wonderful to see this garden after 5 years and of course there were huge differences. For me the greatest change was that of the settling into the landscape of the house. The iron clad pole house sits tall on the slope of a hill, affording a panoramic view of the coast and Terrigal beach from the front veranda; five years of growth has seen the then obvious understructure completely obscured. Rainforest trees *Melliocope elleryana* are up to the verandah height from here you gaze out to a sea of blue. From below, the house floats, like an elegant ship, on a sea of greens.

Also new is the lillypilly hedging which has helped provide shelter and a microclimate for the planting near the house. Anne felt that she needed an area which gave her a sense of enclosure, important in such a big garden.

Some plants:

*Vallisneria*, *Euodiamurrelia*, *Barklyaseringifolia*, *Acacia itiophylla* (Flinders Range wattle - eyecatching form and silvery colour).

A great combination:

*Grevillea Marmalade* (deep orange blooms) planted with the Hinchinbrook *Banksia Banksioplagiocarpa* (maroon new growth).

After lunch Nola kindly spoke to the group. She talked of gardening as opposed to landscaping - she feels the latter too often consists of a mass of a few species of plants - that does not a garden make.

She mentioned a job which she shared with a landscaper - she got the frontline, sand dunes and he got the back. His response was - 2 olives and 18 Indian hawthorns!

She commented on the wonderful growth at Rainridge and reiterated her preference for colour ( over form, texture and scent) as her the main design tool.

She loves rainforest species as they last a long time and suit the mild climate of the Central Coast - now she says happily, "we can colour round the framework"!

The lower courtyard garden is of decomposed granite and has one beautiful Blue Quandong in pride of place - the other trees are in large pots so the drainage is not interfered with . From the courtyard the rather special WA *Grev Formosa* can be seen, its long racemes spilling down the slope.

Anne says she is still learning to prune - as a late, but now zealous pruner myself I know what she means! ( Ed.)

On either side of the dam are two arboretums - the eastern one was put in first for privacy and t 5 yearson it has certainly done its job. Noteworthy are a beautiful grove of *A. hispida* - I could barely speak such was my ( albeit, unedifying) envy!! Also a beautiful lilliypilly with wonderful long coral coloured berries and soft matt longiih leaves - unfortunately name unknown.It would be very good to get this identifiedas it looked a very good garden specimen.

The second arboretum consisted of the fabulous*Eleocarpusemundii*,in its rusty red new growth; the 3 different species of kurrajong; a Qld Kauri,*AracauriaCunninghamii*, red ash bunya pines and the fantastically formed pencil cedars

THE NEXT MEETING/GARDEN VISIT FOR THE SYDNEY GDSG WILL BE:

**NEWCASTLE 21/22 AUGUST 2010.**

Our member, designer and horticulturist, MareeMacarthy has very kindly offered to organise a weekend tour of Newcastle gardens that she has designed ( see NL 69).Maree will also be with us throughout the weekend to talk about her designs and plant choices. She is an incredibly knowledgeable and accomplished plantsperson and an informative experience is guaranteed.

We begin the weekend at her house 14 Margaret St., Highfields, meeting there at 11.30 am., BYO lunch and after that we shall see her garden before visiting 2 or 3 others ( which appear in the list in NL 69). We stay overnight in Newcastle, no doubt enjoying one of our now famously fun & friendly dinners at a local restaurant. The next morning we are up and at 'em to see 3 gardens or so, possibly more, before lunch and the journey home.

Maree has suggested you ring her ( 0410 405 815, 0249430305) and she can help with suggestions about nearby accommodation.

Please let me know too if you are coming. Our getaway garden weekends are always great fun and never fail as well to provide a real learning experience.

**Words from the Treasurer as at 16 April 2010.**

1. New annual subscription charges for the FY 2010/11 --- This is due on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010

- \$20 Paper newsletter for overseas members
- \$15 This covers up to two members at the same address to receive paper newsletters
- \$ 6 This covers up to two members at the same address to receive newsletter by email
- \$ 10 Concession for pensioners or full-time students – only -- to receive paper newsletters

2. Limit to the number of years payable in advance

**NB: GDSG members PLEASE pay ONLY for a MAXIMUM of two financial years at once.**

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**Members who are financial for the 09/10 Financial Year (FY) since the last Newsletter are:**

Ron and Barbara Gornall, ElsWynen#### Elizabeth and Ken Forbes #Alison Banks, Koji Miyazaki, Vickie Lee, Bev Hanson ##Samantha Tucker, Karwarra Australian Native Plant Garden, APS Victoria, APS Tasmania #Rosalee Davey #Russell Henry#Lyn Barfield # John and Carolyn Gunter ##Jan Baillie#

What do all the#indicate?

If you see # after your name you are financial for the FY 09/10 and 10/11

If you see # # after your name you are financial for the FY 09/10 and 10/11 and 11/12.

If you see # # # # after your name you are financial for FY 09/10 and 10/11 and 11/12 and 12/13 and 13/14 (hope your memory is good if you are in this group?).

**Also a warm welcome to the following new members:**

Alison Banks,Vickie Lee,Samantha Tucker, Rosalee Davey, Lyn Barfield, Russell Henry

## A.N.P.S.A. GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

### Membership Form for Financial Year 2010/2011

*Please print details clearly, especially your email address*

Surname: \_\_\_\_\_ First name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postal Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Post Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email

address: \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a member of ANPS?      Yes      No      please indicate with an X

You must be a member of the Australian Native Plants Society to be a member of the Garden Design Study Group. Which ANPSA District Group (if any) do you belong to?

\_\_\_\_\_ Are there any aspects of garden design

in which you have a special interest? \_\_\_\_\_ Professional

qualifications &/or particular expertise or specialisation you have related to Garden

Design: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If you have professional qualifications and you would like to have your name placed on a referral list and published in the NL, to be passed on to any enquirers seeking professional garden design/horticultural advice?

Yes            No            please indicate with an X

Annual Subscription      **You can only pay for this financial and next financial year.**

- \$20 Paper newsletter for overseas members
- \$15 This covers up to two members at the same address to receive paper newsletters
- \$ 6 This covers up to two members at the same address to receive newsletter by email
- \$ 10 Concession for pensioners or full-time students – only -- to receive paper newsletters

Enclosed is cash/cheque/money order for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ being the membership subscription for the **2010/2011** financial year.

Signed .....

Date ...../...../.....

To ensure I have your correct address and contact details, complete this form (even if you are already financial) and return to: The GDSG Treasurer: Jeff Howes, 41 Gum Blossom Drive, Westleigh NSW 2120.

(email : [gdsgmembership@yahoo.com.au](mailto:gdsgmembership@yahoo.com.au))

Cheques MUST be made payable to the Garden Design Study Group. Please advise if you require a receipt..

Subscriptions will be acknowledged in the next Newsletter

Comments and ideas regarding the Study group or newsletter:

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\_\_\_\_\_ P.T.O.