Dear Members,

The general aims of the ASGAP Garden Design Study Group, formulated at the preliminary meeting, are:

* to carry out theoretical and practical investigation of garden design using Australian native plants
* to develop resources for people who are interested in garden design with Australian plants
  * to encourage more successful use of Australian plants in gardens which the public can visit
  * to produce two newsletters a year and publish articles on garden design

We will be working in many different ways to achieve these aims. Our "theoretical investigation" will include reading the literature on garden design (with exotics as well as natives for basic principles), and having experienced speakers talk to us. We plan to define styles or categories of native gardens, e.g. naturalistic, formal, eclectic, to provide a reference framework for discussion and comparison.

A vital aspect of practical investigation will be the keeping of plans and written and photographic records of good garden design. We hope all SGAP members will be encouraged to keep such records. I think many people do this for individual plants, but records of sections of the garden (let alone the whole garden!) are probably quite scarce. To make it easier, we are designing a suitable form so written records can be kept in a consistent format. For a photographic record, it is a good idea to choose a suitable viewpoint (or two) for taking a series of photos of an area over time. Photographs (colour slides if possible) of the mature garden at its best are the most important ones to take. Future cataloguing of records, using a computer, will be a big job.

The resources developed would include the records already mentioned. Study Group members will look for examples of successful plant combinations and well-designed gardens to visit and record; also examples of beautiful natural "gardens" as design models. As time goes by, amateur group members hope they may be able to collaborate in design projects in home gardens and possibly also gardens for local schools, councils, etc. Care would be taken, of course, not to disadvantage professional landscape designers, but to encourage people to make use of their professional expertise wherever appropriate. Other resources will include lists of plants for garden design in various categories for easy reference.

We hope awareness of garden design within SGAP will increase through promotion by the Study Group. Regional groups may consider finding speakers on garden design for some meetings, and members may pay more attention to it during garden visits. To overcome the general public's view of straggly native gardens, we need more examples showing the successful use of Australian plants in gardens which the public can visit. It would be great if more SGAP members were able to enter their gardens in Victoria's Garden Scheme, or other garden visit schemes. This involves a lot of work, so Study Group members might be able to help them prepare gardens for public viewing.
Fascinating topics we could concentrate on in the future include: combining natives & exotics; indigenous gardens; cottage gardens; formal gardens; use of colour, or foliage; 'broadacre' gardens; small gardens; ageing gardens. **Please write to me (or phone) with your ideas or suggestions concerning garden design, or how our Study Group might operate. Articles for newsletters are very welcome.**

**Correspondence**

From Malcolm Reed, president of Australian Flora Foundation. The Foundation will have a planning workshop on August 9, to identify goals for the next five years. Malcolm asks if we could identify important objectives of the Garden Design Study Group for this workshop. He says the Foundation may be able to assist us in the future by providing academics with research funding for applied social science projects, such as looking at peoples' attitudes to neatness/disorder in gardens, or to biodiversity in gardens. Please let me know what you consider are our important objectives (those which underlie our aims.)

**Extracts from members' letters**

"We live in the Otways where special attention has to be paid to strong winds. The garden will be on a north-facing downwards slope into a gully. My fingers are itching to start .... I am particularly interested in mixing natives with exotics, linking forms & colours, easy maintenance as have up to 110 acres to play with!"  Marion Bakker

"It (the Garden Design Study Group) is what I have been searching for, for a long time. I have quite a few landscape books and magazines. Unfortunately a lot of these are written overseas, or if they are Australian they are for southern plants and climate."  Jeanette Heinemann (Q)

"At last!... Design is the missing element in the movement to give native plants their rightful place in Australian gardens. Please count me in as a foundation member."  Geoffrey Long

"I find my tastes leaning more and more to the mass-planting approach with limited varieties rather than a large range of plant types. I find this more pleasing to the eye, and probably closer to the realities of the native bushland."  Don McClintock

"I am a professional horticulturist, currently working free-lance, and have always sought to incorporate native plants in the few urban landscapes I have designed.... I am currently working for the nurserymen/landscape contractors company "Civic Trees", located in Dural (NSW) ... responsible for the installation and maintenance of some very significant landscapes in NSW and Canberra."  Dennis Marsden

"I am a member of SGAP Tablelands Branch which is based on the Atherton Tableland of far north Queensland. I think a lot of our northern plants could be well utilized in a planned landscape design. ...We are lucky to have an outstanding nursery 'Yuruga'in our area. They are pioneers in the cultivation of NQ rainforest plants and other local flora."  Sharon Robinson

"In my view, the development of an uniquely Australian garden design would be greatly assisted if overseas practices were jettisoned or at least greatly modified. This is partly forced on us because of the unusual characteristics - colour, form, etc. - of Australian plants."  Geoff Simmons

"7 have an area of over 2/3 acre initially, with additional and informal land attachments. .... This land, and my land too, are in the process of regeneration - with the attraction of Australian birds being foremost, and visual displays overall."  Anthony Heawood

"Although our garden is lacking in flowers at present, it is beautiful in the colours of the foliage - flowers can sometimes distract you from the form of the plant."  Cherree Densley
“Easy care - this suits our culture. We want gardens from which we can extract pleasure, but which leave time for other relaxing pursuits as well. Simplicity - for me this is the key. I want to create that "bush" feeling around the house, without it developing into a jumble of old dried sticks.”  Janet Woodruffe

"I want to have the area round the house comparatively formal, with the woodland beyond what I call embellished bush. ...I want to develop a wet area behind the house using runoff from a reasonable roof area.” Other ideas raised include "plants from heathland which grow supporting each other and reaching much the same height;" "layers in the garden"; "plants which reflect or absorb sunlight".  Barbara Buchanan

I have written to leaders of 12 ASGAP Study Groups to ask them if they (and their members) can help us by providing a list of the species in the genus (or family) they are studying which they would regard as "reliable" plants for garden design. We appreciate the difficulties in this, of course, but "reliable" is intended to mean reliable under the conditions described in the literature as suitable for that plant. (Restricting the list to a particular state might seem to help a little, but does not really solve the problem of "reliable where?") Plants on the list also need to be reasonably widely available. So far the response from group leaders has been encouraging.

Books on garden design/landscaping

(List compiled by Barbara Buchanan, Jane Calder, Diana Snape, Paul Thompson & Aliki Zouliou)

**Australian natives  *Gardens in Australia, but not many Australian natives


Bellamy, David (1984) *The Queen's Hidden Garden* David & Charles


*Davies, Rosemary* *The Creative Gardener's Companion*

*Edmanson, Jane & Lawrence, Lorrie* *The Australian Garden*

**Elliot, W. Rodger (1990) *Gardening with Australian Plants* Lothian, Melb.


*Galbraith, Jean* *Garden in a Valley*


Harris, J ed. (1979) *The Garden: A Celebration of One Thousand Years of British Gardening* Mitchell Beazley


**Hunt, John (1986) *Creating an Australian Garden* Kangaroo Press, N.S.W.


King, Ronald (1979) *The Quest for Paradise* Mayflower

*McMaster, N. & Edmanson, J. (1986) Ideas from Private Gardens* Anne O'Donovan, Victoria

Maddock, Cheryl *Garden Style*


**Molyneux, Bill (1980) Grow Native : Creating an Australian Bush Garden** Anne O'Donovan, Victoria

**Molyneux, Bill & Macdonald, Ross (1983) Native Gardens: How to create an Australian landscape** Thomas Nelson (Aust.), Melbourne


**Parry, Nola & Brian (1990) Cottage Gardening with Australian Wildflowers** Macmillan


*Polglase, P. ed. (1983) Australia the Beautiful Great Gardens* Wattle Books


**Snape, Diana (1992) Australian Native Gardens: Putting Visions into Practice** Lothian, Melbourne


*Stones, Ellis (1971) Australian Garden Design* Macmillan, Australia

**Stower, John (1992) In Sunshine and Shade** Kangaroo Press

*Tanner, Howard (1983) Towards an Australian Garden* Valadon


**Thompson, Paul (1991) Water in your garden** Lothian, Melbourne


**Wilson, Glen (1975) Landscaping with Australian Plants** Thomas Nelson (Aust.) Ltd., Melbourne

In addition all books with horticultural information about Australian native plants are helpful. The following include useful lists, though the last two are restricted to Melbourne:

Australian Plant Study Group (1980) *Grow What Where* (available on disk),


Elliot, Gwen (1979) *Australian Plants for Small Gardens and Containers* Hyland House, Melbourne

Elliot, W. Rodger & Jones, David (1980 -) *Encyclopaedia of Australia Plants suitable for Cultivation* (Volumes 1 - 5), Lothian, Melbourne

Shann, F. (1990) *Australian Native Plants in Melbourne: Where to find them* S.G.A.P., Vic

We would like members to write summaries, extracts or reviews of some of the books on garden design/landscaping for future newsletters. (Before you start on your favourite, let me know so we avoid duplication of effort.)

**Designing Australian Bush Gardens** by Betty Maloney and Jean Walker (published by Horwitz)

This small book was very popular when first published in 1966, as Australian native gardens were becoming fashionable but practical advice on designing them was rare.

Plans with details of plants, pathways, boulders, etc. are given for 5 gardens which are illustrated with many excellent black and white photos. The gardens depicted are:
1. a small suburban garden with a 50’ frontage (15 metre)
2. a school courtyard 30’ x 18’ (9m x 5.4m)
3. a sea-front site affected by salt spray
4. a sand-dune site
5. a steep mountain weekender site

Mulches are given great emphasis and photos are included of various sand, pebble, leaf and living ground covers. This book is a very useful reference for landscaping with Australian plants.

Its sequel **More About Bush Gardens** (1967) (same authors, same publisher) emphasizes horticultural aspects, and gives details of ferns, pines, palms, eucalypts etc. Plans of a bracken and an angophore garden are included; suggestions for a sand dune and a nectar and pollen garden are made.

**Landscaping With Australian Plants** by Glen Wilson (published by Thomas Nelson)

After Betty Maloney and Jean Walker's two small books, Glen Wilson's book in 1975 was the first substantial book for enthusiasts. Barbara Buchanan speaks for many when she says "I remember well my joy when Glen Wilson's book became available."

First a few quotes from the book:
"We are barely on the threshhold of discovering the adaptability of hundreds of potentially useful plants for landscaping and gardening."
"We are interested ... in selecting plants of known and proven reliability."
"A 'landscape plant' is defined as one which is generally reliable in performance as well as having a number of features useful in the landscape."
"The fewer the plants, the more surely must each earn its place."
"All native landscapes, other than perhaps large-scale parklands, need a regular program of replacement to keep them close to the original intent."

**General themes**
* "sculpturing the surface" - good ground contours and open space - creating impressions of space
* careful combination of species
* blending foliage with regard to leaf size and form
* lawnless landscapes by the Schubert method
* plan domestic work for roughly a 20-year period
* five basic landscaping genera - Acacia, Callistemon, Eucalyptus, Grevillea and Melaleuca; next in importance - Angophora, Banksia, Casuarina, Hakea, Leptospermum and Prostanthera
The emphasis in Glen's book is on the broader landscape and the use of trees (the most significant plants in the developed landscape) and medium to large shrubs.

**Thoughts about trees**
- their special features - trunks, coloured foliage, leaf litter, perfume
- shade, wind and frost protection, visual and dust screens
- heavy concentration of trees in scale with the site
- close planting to form a copse - one species or more
- 'drifting' to soften edge or transition
- coppicing for mallee effect, or planting several trees in one hole
- small trees in narrow spaces - can espalier (also shrubs)

Many of the ideas introduced in this book have now become part of the "conventional wisdom", but it is still inspiring to read "LWAP" again today.

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**Colours in the garden**

Barbara Buchanan has given me a copy of an article entitled "Getting the colours right", written by Pamela Polgase for 'Australian Horticulture' Dec. 1989 No.12. The author suggests three possible colour schemes for gardens based on gold, silver and copper, and she reminds us we should consider colours of houses, fences and paving as well as flowers and foliage.

**Gold** includes the warm colours - gold, yellow, cream and orange. Red is often considered a difficult colour to use well, but scarlet (or yellow-red) can be used here. These colours go well with plants which have golden-variegated foliage, and with yellow or cream bricks.

**Silver** combines the cool colours - silver, white, grey, mauve, pink and lavender blue. Deeper shades which belong here are purple, violet and crimson (or blue-red). These colours team with silver-variegated foliage, a white or grey house and even concrete.

The **copper** shades are copper, salmon pink, apricot and terracotta, good with coppertone foliage and a terracotta brick house. Grey-green foliage is sympathetic with these and also with silver. True blue flowers (which are rare) can be used successfully in all three colour schemes.

This new approach to thinking about colours provides a useful guide, but as Pamela Polgase says "Some people have the skill to combine clashing colours in a way that is exciting and stimulating. . . . As long as you stick to the rules you will not go too far wrong, but breaking them requires talent." What are your thoughts about colour schemes in the garden?

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**GARDEN DESIGN PROJECTS**

The aims of garden design projects are:
- to raise awareness of garden design in SGAP & help SGAP members
- to increase our knowledge in a practical and useful way
- to help produce good examples of design in different styles

If an SGAP member (or a non-member) asks for help in garden design, we must first ask whether they want professional help.

*If they say yes, refer them to a list of the professional members of the GDSG who are currently practising as landscape architects or garden designers.*
These members are willing to help professionally, and the extent of their professional advice may vary from just an initial consultation to full preparation and implementation of plans. They are happy to adjust their role to whatever suits the client.

*If they say no, ask them if they would like to take part in a garden design project.

A garden design project would be an arrangement intended to benefit both the owner and the study group. It would involve the owner consulting with one or more volunteer amateur members of the group. The project might be for their whole garden or a section of their garden, and it would be based on their ideas for the style they want. The owner plans it with help and input from group members, then carries out the project.

The owner is asked to try to maintain the original design, monitor the garden's progress (the group member will be interested too), keep brief records and take photographs (or contact a member to take photos) as or when the design matures. (Coloured slides are probably the most useful and versatile.)

Examples of design projects might include:
* a formal garden in a courtyard
* an area in a back garden featuring a naturalistic pool
* an indigenous garden (naturalistic or formal)
* in an eclectic garden, an area concentrating on plants with silver-grey foliage and white flowers

Each design project would be unique; different styles (or combinations of styles) would be welcomed. Over time the records could be collated and contribute to a publication.

If people are not interested in participating in a garden design project, then we can refer them to good garden design reference books and to our articles in newsletters.

Another possibility might be for Study Group members to take on design projects for underprivileged groups in the community e.g. a disabled person's garden.

Please let me know (if you haven't already done so) if you:

* are happy to be involved in garden design projects in your area;
* are a reasonably experienced photographer, and/or
* have a collection of photos showing aspects of garden design &/or vignettes of natural landscapes (as inspiration for a garden).

Native Plants for Mini-hedges

Geoff Simmons (Queensland)

Do those acclaiming the virtues of Australian plants really think of them in specific landscaping terms? The first priority in choice of plants is suitability for inclusion of a plant in a landscape feature. It is the selection of specific plants that should be emphasised. However the data base, especially one's own knowledge, is limited. Hence a choice may have to be made on whether to use a frequently planted, well known species or a relatively unknown one. In many cases the SGAP member will be keen to include the unusual or little tried plant. This should be encouraged as data will be accumulated for the landscaper to plan a more rational garden.
I call small clipped hedges mini-hedges, although they may have a name designated by landscapes. Nowadays clipped hedges are not as favoured as they once were, no doubt because of the work involved in their cultivation. Recalling famous overseas gardens containing mini-hedges of box, and watching Australian TV programs advocating exotic plants for this type of landscaping, one wonders where there is information about the use of native plants for this purpose.

To start the ball rolling, I recount my experience with *Graptophyllum excelsum* (Letter-leaf or Scarlet Fuschia). I have several large plants of this species but about two years ago I decided to include a mini-hedge as part of my garden. Why use *G. excelsum*? Because I had a source of propagating material, it grew well in my garden, it had relatively small leaves and a good appearance. The drought has not produced favourable conditions for growth and survival but nevertheless the plants are starting to assume the effect that I hope for. It is easy to propagate which is a bonus as about 300 plants were needed. Clipping seems to be possible. If someone could find a tiny leaf variety it would be an even better plant for this purpose.

What about other species? One that I have growing as single plants is *Cithobatus spinescens* (Native Orange). The dwarf Baeckea could be a candidate but I have preferred to let it grow naturally so I do not know whether it could be repeatedly clipped and still look so attractive. The life span and hardiness are important factors for clipped mini-hedges because discontinuity and dead plants detract from the beauty of this garden feature.

Larger hedges of a metre or so in height are not considered here but *Backhousia citriodora* (Lemon-scented Myrtle) and again *Graptophyllum excelsum* are possibilities. *Leptospermum petersonii* (Lemon-scented Tea-tree) was being advocated as a plant for screening hedges some years ago but in my experience it really did not prove a winner as it tended to become straggly and lose foliage at low levels. In summary, we need to know much more about Australian plants for specific purposes in landscaping and to build up a data bank of information and experience so that future gardeners can have a better basis on which to make a choice.

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**More on low hedges**

Lists of plants (generally well known species) suggested for low hedges are included in "Grow What Where" by the Australian Plant Study Group (based in Melbourne). It lists 17 suitable species in the prostrate to 1-metre category, and 65 species between 1 and 2 metres in height. In Volume 1 (Pp 307) and Vol. 5 (Pp 257) of the "Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants" by Rodger Elliot and David Jones there are lists of plants for both formal and informal hedging. Other books too contain information on plants adaptable to hedging.

In a recent article in the Melbourne "Age" (20/2/93) Bill Molyneux wrote about plants he has used for hedges. He mentioned 15 species, some of which are included in the "Grow What Where" and/or "Encyclopaedia" lists. Among the plants for mini-hedges were *Austromyrtus dulcis* (Midgen Berry) and *Agonis flexuosa* (Willow Myrtle) (dwarf), and for small hedges *Correa 'Dusky Bells'*; *Westringia 'Wynnyabbee Gem'*, *Eutaxia obovata, Leptospermum obovatum* and *Melaleuca bracteata 'Golden Gem'*. I do not know how many of the plants listed for hedges in the Encyclopaedia and "Grow What Where" have actually been tried and in what areas. Geoff Simmons says that *A. dulcis* plants grown in Brisbane tend to have a loose, sprawling habit and require much weeding. In Melbourne, however, growth is quite dense.
It is important for people who experiment to record how successful their hedges (or any other specific projects) are. Both written records and photographs are useful. The Study Group is interested in the different ways in which hedges may be used in the garden landscape.

Clipped hedges are likely to be used in the creation of formal gardens, and plants suitable for such hedges are probably useful for other purposes in formal gardens (even topiary?). Some members may already have created formal native gardens, or a formal section in their garden. Please contact me if you have grown or plan to grow, or have any ideas or suggestions for:

1. hedges of native plants or
2. formal gardens.

More requests!

We are just beginning to build up various lists as resources. Our resources will benefit from input from all our members. If you can, please help us with the following now, and also add to these lists any time in the future:

1. a list of native plants which you would recommend, and have found to be reliable in your garden (and not difficult to obtain)
2. a list of the nurseries you know which: are all native/ have a good range of natives/ have indigenous plants/ have tube stock (say which apply for each one)
3. examples of good native gardens you know - private, public, council, commercial, park, street etc. (Let us know if you have photos of them too.)
4. suggestions for native plants to replace specific exotic ones in gardens

Thank you!

Calling all designers

It has been suggested we should have a logo for our Study Group. I think it's a good idea, but I suspect it's not easy to design one. See what you can do.

Meetings

So far we have held two meetings in Melbourne, on 4/4/93 and 2/5/93. (I hope in the future members in the other states will be able to arrange meetings.) Our next meeting will not be at 2 p.m. on the usual first Sunday of the month - i.e. there will be no meeting on Sunday June 6. Instead we will meet at Helen Morrow's place (see page 10 for address & phone no.) on Sunday June 20 at 12 noon. Bring a picnic lunch. At 2 p.m. there is a garden visit, which members are welcome to join, to the nearby award-winning Joyce garden.

Enough for one newsletter, I think. (Don't miss the list of members of the Garden Design Study Group (GDSG) on the back of this page, and file it away carefully for those addresses and phone numbers.) Please help by contributing in whatever way you can to increase the interest and knowledge of our Study Group. Best wishes

Diana Snape
Members of the Garden Design Study Group

John Armstrong*  
Marion Bakker  
Joan Barrett  
Barbara Buchanan  
Jane Calder*  
Janet Coghill  
Bev Courtney  
Glenda Datson*  
Cherree Densley  
Catherine Drew*  
Linda Floyd  
Margaret Garrett  
Chris Hampson  
Bev Hanson*  
Jeanette Heinemann  
Anthony Heawood  
Dawn James  
Rex James  
Barbara Kennedy  
Paul Kennedy  
Catherine King  
Margarete Lee  
Nicole Lenffer*  
Geoffrey Long  
Don McClintock  
Doug Mclver  
Dennis Marsden*  
Helen Morrow  
Bruce Muir  
Dorothy Parris  
Sharon Robinson  
Geoffrey Simmons  
Diana Snape  
Roger Stone*  
Paul Thompson*  
Spencer Wilson*  
Janet Woodroffe  
Aliki Zouliou*

(*professional qualifications &/or practice)

(Please let me know of any errors. D.S.)