Dear Members,

A hearty winter’s read awaits you between the following pages. In Correspondence, two of our members, inspired by the muse of poetry and/or a good red in front of the fire, have penned two fun poems for our enjoyment.

Speaking of enjoyment, the Australian Garden History magazine published two excellent articles recently (Vol 22 No 4) of interest to members. One is by Robin Marks, on Winifred Waddell and the Native Plants Preservation Society and the other, by Jeannie Sim, titled Explorations in Landscape Design Theory - designed landscapes and cultural landscapes. Unfortunately I was unable to obtain permission to reprint them in our newsletter however the AGHS has suggested access through EBSCO host (subscription or public library) where the articles appear in full.

There has been lots of e-discussions between members on matters pertaining to the text and photos for GDSG book no.2. Jeff Howes has kindly offered to file and record the photos emailed to me as possibilities for inclusion in the book - remember, it doesn’t have to be a brilliant shot (but that’s ok too of course) - a record of what may be suitable to rephotograph at a later date is fine as well; don’t forget to include the name of the garden, the owner and date the photo was taken and your own contact details if you aren’t the gardener. There will be a face to face meeting of the book Committee at the annual ANPSA Conference held in Adelaide this year as well as hopefully a GDSG meeting as well. I would love to hear from some volunteers to help organise the GDSG meeting; unfortunately neither Di Snape nor I are able to be there.

Apologies in advance as a hectic October is likely to ensure the November Newsletter is out closer to December. If all articles are in my inbox by first week in November at the latest, it would be a great help (Arial font, size 12).

As I type, gale force winds are lashing the turpentries and blackbutts. En masse, their crowns sway and sigh like a restless sea, the sound is punctuated by jittery bird chirrups - spring must be just around the corner.
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CORRESPONDENCE

Thank you again for a most stimulating newsletter. I found Chris Larkin's 'The Dynamic Gardener' and Diana Snape's 'Easy to Propagate' especially interesting.
I agree with Diana that there are not nearly as many easy-to-propagate native plants as exotics that fit the criteria stipulated in her article. A few that are hardy in our district, the SA South Coast, specifically Port Elliot, may be worth mentioning.

The very hardy ground cover, silver-grey leafed *Eremophila* 'Kalbarri Carpet', grows easily from cutting, along with *Eremophila glabra* "Bev Rice' form (greenish flower) and other grey-leafed, red-flowering forms. As a dainty, dark-leafed ground cover with contrasting pale pink flowers, *Frankenia pauciflora* is easy to grow from cuttings, and looks particularly good beneath light green *Lomandra* 'Tanika' (which is easily divisible, I think.)

Other clumpy, strappy plants that I have found fairly easy to divide are Dianellas (various forms and cultivars) and *Orthrosanthus multiflorus*.
If there are damp, shaded spots in the garden, of course small clumps of native violets are easily transplanted. In our climate, long-flowering *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* (various forms) grows easily both from cuttings and by transplanting suckers.

Perhaps direct seeding of small eucalypts such as Caesia could also be useful in the situation described. I write only from my own experience, never having gardened in Melbourne, so cannot really say that the above will be successful there. Diana will know whether any of these suggestions are relevant.

Judy Baghurst S.A.

PS Just for fun, another garden poem attached.
Phoenix

Judy Baghurst

The garden is riotous -
excess insidious.
In spring competition
no self-control, no rules.
Yes, you, *chrysocephalum*
you sly yellow buttons,
disarming, deceiving
your neat leaves layering -
when our backs are turned
all jostle and force.

Smother, would you, the
black-stumped grass-tree
with your fleshy
mist-green weight?

Summer'll test your mettle.
Fine yakka fronds will
spray up, fan out,
shape the morning
and leave you grovelling beneath!
There’s a leak in the creek!
You can hear my shriek as far away as Mozambique

No, not that kind of leek. It’s an L – E – A – K
in a person-made water-way.

Now to stop being hysterical, I must be quick
and seek the source of the leak
before it wreaks havoc. I’ll have a peek.
Did a noisy miner peck a hole in the liner?
Did a sharp rock make a big pock?

No it’s just a hole where the liner is joined
mein freund, where water can sneak.
In a week when it’s dry I’ll streak treacle-y paint
and tweak bitumen tape to obliterate the hole.

But now I must wait like a geek over many bleak days,
meekly waiting for dry weather, weakly waiting
to see if the leak has gone. Was it one freak leak
or are there more?

Isn’t it great about the Aussie native garden winning a gold medal at Chelsea? I never thought I would see the day when our plants were appreciated in England - they have always been so snippy about our monotonous grey green landscapes despite the fact that they grow all sorts of eucalypts over there.

There was an English gardener in Bermuda where we used to stay for many years and he told me that Australian plants were so boring and that he really didn't like any of them. So I
started pointing out the number of Aussie natives that were in his garden and he was quite amazed. 'Really, is that an Australian plant?' Podocarpus, Casuarina, etc.

Ros Walcott  ACT

I’ve just retrieved the GDSG’s newsletter from the computer.

Brian and I have been in USA and Canada for the last 6 weeks. Our last night was in LA – a place I can live without but we did the ‘LA tour of the city’. Whilst in the carpark, commonly called a freeway, I thought for a minute I was back in Australia. There were gum trees studded over the landscape and under planted with wattles, callistemons and WA melaleucas. But the bus driver brought me back to earth with his California accent.

I loved Canada and northern USA. The architecture mirrors what a valuable resource they have – timber. Rarely do you see a brick house as the abundant use of cedar and fir species is so prevalent and there are timber yards everywhere.

There is a lot of scaring on the landscape from both logging and the dreaded beetle that has become more voracious to the forests due to the warmer weather or climate change. Where once the onset of winter would kill most of these pests, the warmer conditions means that it is thriving and destroying whole swathes of forests and is continuing its flight north.

I didn’t visit one nursery while I was away nor pull a weed.

Suellen Harris  NSW

Good for you Sue! JH

Success at last. Today I had TWO froglets calling – one in the direction of my pond and one in the vegetation in a wine barrel nearby which includes native mint and lemon grass. I am so excited to hear these, and grateful for the help I’ve had in establishing an environment that attracts them. Thank you all!

I really enjoyed Lindy Harris’ talk at our last evening meeting on her plans for Karwarra. I have heard her speak about her plans at least three times, but this time it all seemed to fall into place. I think it is fascinating how gardens evolve and change, and Karwarra is a great example of this. To see the views across the garden being reclaimed I think is so exciting. I loved the story of the way the Gymea lily was moved, and fully agree, its position near the tennis courts has made a positive difference to the hall there.

On my previous visits to Karwarra I was struck by the enormity of the task of weeding some of the areas, especially near the road on the south side. But Lindy’s explanation of discovering many treasures self sown amongst the weeds reminds us to have patience.

I was chatting to Barbara Setchell from Olinda about the Lyrebirds and she feels she may have one visiting her lately, the evidence being scratchings on her property. Mind you, she also considers it might be that Blackbirds have returned. Hopefully it is Lyrebirds, extending
their range from the Olinda National Park with all the good work Barbara has been doing with Landcare in that area to provide safe corridors for them.

Nicky Zanen  Vic.

Hi Jo, how are you going? Is Sydney getting cooler these days?
I’m fine so far, but am a little bit nervous with the radiation level in the air and the water. Anyway, I have just got the latest newsletter yesterday. In the newsletter, Diana-san was looking for some suggestions for native plants for a small Australian garden. If you and Diana-san don't mind, I would like to suggest some plants.
I would recommend Dianella spp, Native Violet (Viola banksii or V. hederacea), Westringia and Callistemon `Little John'.

All the plants above are in my small garden and are growing very well.
They are also quite hardy and easy to propagate, too.
Those plants above have experienced and survived extremely harsh weather in Japan. (The weather is very hot and humid in summer, very cold and sometimes snowy in winter, very wet in rain season and they even overcome the b***** radiation!?)

Well, I'm hoping my suggestion would be a help to Diana-san.

Koji Miyazaki Japan

I came across your website after looking for information on Leionema elaticus x lamprophyllum. I think your group may be offering what I have been looking for. I am in the throes of landscaping our 850sqm suburban block in Brisbane. I am working around a 1950s stucco and brick house and given the space have elected for a garden style best described as formal (I have attached a plan in progress of the front part of the yard as an illustration of what I mean - the back yard is larger and has more scope for plantings). We are on shale and clay, the block has around a 1in 10 fall in a NW to SE direction with the rear of the block facing due north. While I have already bought some plants (eg Polyalthia longifolia for a tall western boundary screen) and have others on order (eg Faradaya splendida for an arbour in the back yard), I have questions relating to soil composition, choice and appropriate placement of compatible plants. I would prefer to plant native whenever there is a choice that will suit the location and purpose. I would be delighted to join your study group for the upcoming financial year if you think your group may be able to help me.

I have put together a blog at www.abrisbanegarden.net.au You will see that it includes specific questions and welcomes other suggestions. I will include a photographic record of the progress on "The Realty" page as we go. I will paste people's replies under the questions if they are happy for me to do so with replies being identified by initials and date. I hope this does not come too late to be of use for the Newsletter. I am currently working on the plan for the back yard and will have that posted soon.

PS: Went to a regional SGAP (Qld) meeting on the weekend - talk about an amazing font of knowledge under one roof. Incredible.

Susan Rouse  Qld.
“Each garden is an expression of its makers’ character and each one has the power to thrill and provoke people in different ways; that is what gardens are for. Heaven protect us from gardens that are merely soothing, when they can be exciting as well: soothing is only a few short steps from boring. Use an enquiring critical and imaginative eye, because no garden is immune to the imaginative process and the prospect of change.” Stephen Anderton

The Mood of Gardens and Gardeners.

It was after reading Nicky Zanen’s letter, in which she asked “what creates a feeling of peace in a garden” (Correspondence, NL. 70) that I responded in NLs. 71 & 72 with "Change & Redesign to Recapture Garden Peace ".

Stephen Anderton’s quote in the last newsletter (May 2011) has prompted me to revisit the ways in which a garden can affect our mood or do we set out to create a certain atmosphere? (Stephen Anderton is a UK author and gardening columnist for the Times)

His comment "each garden is an expression of it's maker's character and each one has the power to thrill and provoke people in different ways;" made me focus on the evolution of my own garden and how subjective are the feelings evoked by the garden and those of the gardener.

Good garden design includes how the garden is to be used and the mood of the garden is allied to the style. Many variables impact on the atmosphere created, not just trees and birds, but also the surrounding environment

For me, lifestyle changes have guided the use of the garden and how it has evolved since the house was built on a suburban bush block in 1979. The house was stepped into the block to minimise damage to the existing vegetation and to blend with the surrounding bush environment. I was conscious of the need to feel part of nature but design principles per se were not adhered to & there was no design plan formulated.

Life was busy with young children, a husband who travelled frequently and my subsequent return to university studies and employment. The garden was a busy, happy, action filled place and time for gardening was restricted. However the feeling of being in a natural garden was always present. And the need to retain and encourage wildlife to the garden remained a constant.

The walk in L shaped rabbit hutch gave way to a new garden area with curved brick path, the ropes and swings on the pine trees went, as did the pine trees. The pittosporum “cubby houses” made way for another area of “garden design “. A concerted effort was made to remove many weeds and with the removal of the last large pine tree, many indigenous
plants regenerated. These new plants formed the basis to create pathways through the front bush, providing a feeling of seclusion and tranquillity.

Not only do we experience feelings created by the garden style but as gardeners we do too.

The last area which was the most planned is now just over 12 months old. All the best design efforts have demonstrated that in the end nature prevails and as gardeners, we have to adapt to change. Hopefully our drainage problem will soon be resolved as a new pump has been installed in a trench.

For me, working in the garden brings both physical & mental satisfaction and it has been said that it has benefits akin to meditation. If this has the effect of promoting calm, tranquillity and reflective mood, it is a good outcome.

Pam Yarra Vic.

Merely soothing..........a few short steps from boring?

When I read the above quote (top of page 8) from acclaimed English gardener and writer Stephen Anderton, it was certainly food for thought, albeit digested slowly!

Words like thrill, provoke and excite, when used in the context of a garden made me re-examine my gardening style and philosophy and the relationship I have with my garden. Is it garden a world away from his ideal and if so, am I up to the task of comprehending his advice and, heeding it if I wanted to?

When I first read the quote, I too was reminded of Nicky Zanen’s thoughts expressed initially in NL. 70, in Correspondence and subsequently in “At One in a Garden” NL 73.

I was very interested in Nicky’s musings as to what makes a garden serene and welcoming and comfortable to an individual. From the outset, here at Yanderra, I have deliberately and thoughtfully, planted and planned a peaceful garden. Hoping to provide a series of serene and contemplative spaces, echoing birdsong and embracing Nature’s own soothing, immutable rhythm. When visitors remarked upon its serenity I was always very chuffed - thrilled that I was able to transmit my objective successfully to others. There is very little man made ornamentation (suitability and cost are have been key factors here) - bark, lichen fungi, foliage, rocks, trunks, blooms and leaves provide plenty to see, feel and smell, and throw in the vastness and varying light of an ever changing sky, the quotidian vagaries and regularities of the sun, moon, wind and rain, and well, a bronze sculpture or two seem almost superfluous… almost.

Nicky decided that peace was probably bought to a garden by a feeling of enclosure and the involvement of several of our senses. At this stage Pam, Nicky and I appear to be in
agreement that peaceful, meditative spaces in harmony with the environment, sustainable and wildlife filled equal a successful garden.

But, is this achievement a few short steps from boring? Other forms of fine art, music, dance, theatre, film and other visual arts excite, thrill and provoke (especially contemporary forms) as well as being able to soothe and induce contemplation.

Despite my garden being peaceful and soothing (obviously, this is an unavoidably subjective appraisal), it never bores me and is not without some mystery. Nothing gives me more pleasure than to have chosen the “right” plant for the garden; one that contributes to the ever present goal of good design, enhances the overall sensorial aspects and sustains itself and wildlife with a minimum of need for reliance on valuable resources such as water and fertiliser.

My thrills and excitement at Yanderra largely come from interaction and observance of flora and fauna. Put simply, from nature doing its thing. Birds, spiders lizards, the odd snake and self seeding birdsnests ferns and staghorns do it everytime!

It is possible I am very, or worse, (from a design point of view) too, easily pleased?

I want to be soothed and calmed and delighted and look to my garden to provide that refuge…dear me….now I am feeling a bit boring, possibly like my garden,…a slightly neurotic Pollyanna to Anderton’s Sartre!

Maybe a better designer would provide all those things that make me delight in a garden AND provoke as well; maybe one should try and excite, thrill and provoke for the sake and senses of others whilst honing those deficient design skills in the process?

Maybe because Mr Anderton is who he is, and has experienced so many amazing gardens - those which effervesce with achievements in horticulture, design and the nurture of committed gardeners. Maybe in some of these gardens there is historically, culturally and necessarily, an obligation to think of the paying public, streaming through the garden gate, expecting an experience, different to the last.

Maybe he is jaded by the sheer quantity and quality of the fare he has to sample?

Maybe, maybe not. Whatever the reason, he has certainly thrown down the gauntlet provocatively ……… especially for those of us on the other side of the world, interested in designing Australian Plant Gardens, a generation and a bit on from the birth of the Bush Garden.

** for background reading check out the GDSG (ANPSA) website “The Rise of the Australian Plant Garden.”

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Provocation part 2: I was provoked by the quote (supplied by Nicky Zanan in her article in NL 73), from well known Australian author and garden designer Michael McCoy, who, when
alluding to the enjoyment his elderly neighbours received from their concreted backyard containing just two reclining rockers, said “if quality in garden design can be measured by its lifestyle match to the owners then that is near perfect design.”

Now here’s another can of worms, thank you Nicky, which I will prise a little, and invite members to finish the job.

A slab of concrete covering the backyard and two chairs, in this case, may answer the individuals’ needs but never in a million years to my mind can it be described as near perfect garden design.

Obviously, it is a very successful lifestyle match for its owners and that is one part of good design; and whilst no doubt it confers a peace and serenity upon its owners (who, as elderly non gardeners have been able to take the no-maintenance backyard to new depths, or heights depending on your perspective), but surely it would not generally do the same for others.

Now, my turn to be provocative, and already I can hear “big brother” mutterings but…now days especially…. is there not some environmental RESPONSIBILITY inherent in owning and properly managing an area of what was originally soil, probably graced by something herbaceous and probably sustaining some population of helpful creatures?

Jo Hambrett NSW

Vertical gardens

The term ‘vertical garden’ is used quite widely nowadays, due largely to the work of the French designer Patrick Blanc. His new book, The Vertical Garden, is, according to publisher John Wiley and Sons, “a luscious, oversized, full-colour book featuring Blanc’s installations in Madrid, Paris, Bangkok, New York, Melbourne, Sydney and many more.” It is available from bookstores for $77.95. A quicker (and less expensive) way to see pictures of many examples of his work around the world is to Google his name and you’ll also find references there to the work of other people.

The following is one brief description of the creation of a vertical garden, in San Diego. “Galvanized steel makes the frame. The poles are set in place with concrete footings. Next, marine plywood and corrugated plastic are attached to the frame. Two layers of synthetic felt are stapled to the plastic and then slits cut in the first layer. The plants nestle between the layers of felt, which helps to evenly distribute the water across the wall from the drip irrigation system at the top. The plants used are epiphytes and lithophytes (plants that usually grow without much soil, as on rocks).”
Australian designers such as Phillip Johnson have worked with Patrick Blanc. An article in the latest *Australian Horticulture* mentions Johnson receiving an award for the tallest green wall in the world, adorning the Trio apartments building in Camperdown, Sydney. Quoting the article, “At 33m high and 5m wide, across 12 stories, the wall comprises 4528 Australian plants from 71 different species, all planted from 50mm tubes, which have grown to more than 305 times their initial size. A dedicated 36,000 litre tank collects storm water on site, which feeds the bespoke dripper-irrigation system. … The tank allows the reuse of water and fertilizer, and they created automatic fertilizer testing and dosing systems, as well as remote access for the irrigation system.” Have any NSW members seen this wall?

I started thinking about the term ‘vertical garden’. A creeper growing on a fence is certainly a ‘green wall’ (an alternative term). If we grow two light creepers together, eg two different billardieras with differently coloured flowers, it becomes a little more garden-like. I’ve become very keen lately on the billardieras in our Melbourne garden, which are thriving, possibly due to the recent two wet years. *B. erubescens* has bright red flowers, *B. ringens* orange-yellow flowers and *B. variifolia* purple, for just a few examples. Though there wouldn’t be the wonderful variety of Blanc’s vertical gardens, I think a wall of several different creepers chosen for an attractive effect could be considered a simple form of vertical garden, lacking the horizontal layers of variation.

It’s possible to espalier plants against a wall, with two (or several) types of plants growing against the same wall to make another sort of vertical garden. We have tried several over the years, with different degrees of success. Currently we are trying plants of *Correa* ‘Marion’s Marvel’ on a south-facing dividing fence within our garden. It would be interesting to survey members to find the range of shrubs that have been tried. As with growing creepers, growing plants at ground level makes watering either unnecessary or certainly much simpler.

Another version of a vertical garden might be a wall with a number of containers – those with flat backs and curved fronts of different shapes - hanging from it or supported against it. Selection of the containers and the plants to grow in them makes this a garden. The plants require watering, of course, one of the considerations with any vertical garden. Containers, soil and plants all have weight, so it’s a second challenge to make allowance for this.

The treatment of a wall could be more artistic yet. In the Australian Garden at Cranbourne, one dividing fence consists of a 3-D structure with spaces (a foot or so square) containing coloured glass panels (red for green), or ornaments, interspersed with completely open
spaces. A structure like this could well include pot plants and also mirror sections, to add reflections of the garden to the mix.

With shrinking garden sizes, walls become much more important, often visible and quite conspicuous from all parts of the garden. It will be interesting to see whether smaller Patrick Blanc type vertical gardens become more common, as methods of constructing them become more widely known (and probably more standardized). Knowing which plants respond best and being able to recycle water and knowing fertilizer requirements are important factors.

Have any members seen other examples of interesting, successful treatments of vertical surfaces in gardens – or vertical gardens? I look forward to these becoming abundant.

**Diana Snape  Vic.**

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**Garden Design in South America**

Helen Kennedy, visited some major gardens in several South American countries on a tour led by Warwick Forge for Australians Studying Abroad.

The talk concentrated first on the private gardens created by Chile’s leading landscape designer, Juan Grimm (his own garden, its spectacular house crouched on rocks overlooking a wild ocean and which featured in Monty Don’s ‘Around the World in 80 Gardens’, was a huge highlight); next came some of the significant work, both public and private, which is the legacy of Brazil’s famous Burle Marx - and the talk finished in Argentina, showing some of the gardens of 3 of that country’s leading female landscape designers.

Despite the countries being foreign, the principles underlying the gardens’ designs proved to be universal. Every garden, whether created on Chile’s fierce seashore, on a vast rural property in Brazil or in a tiny urban space in Buenos Aires, was planned; mass plantings, the use of blocks of contrasting foliage colours and tall plants for height, careful placement of ornamentation and, usually, water for visual and aural restfulness, were common themes. One other stunning house, designed by Oscar Neimeyer, nestled among an equally spectacular Marx landscape, made everyone salivate! Both Grimm and Marx were ardent advocates of their country’s own flora and used it extensively. However, it was also wonderful for the Australian visitors to recognise eucalypts or magnificently flowering callistemons, both of which are used widely in all countries. And at least one grevillea was spied in one of Juan Grimm’s gardens!
The range of gardens was very wide, their settings varied; hopefully people enjoyed experiencing something of gardens in a very different part of the world. The session finished with a handful of views of the magnificent national park ‘gardens’ around Iguazu Falls, and some vistas out over Peru’s Machu Picchu, where the Incas once produced crops on narrow terraces.

**My Garden**

Work will begin shortly to build a levy bank outside my front door to prevent future flooding. I am looking forward to this because my garden will be expanded with the removal of the concrete footpath. The footpath prevented natural water reaching the area under my eaves and I have to report that billy buttons and *Ajuga australis* performed well in this dry, only getting watered when I remembered they were there. I made an enormous error in hacking back the *Goodenia ovata* which stands in front of my gas meter, surrounded by concrete footpath and driveway and against a brick wall. A tough plant. A little retaining wall is now being built away from it instead of where it stands so it didn’t need to be removed. I wonder if it will come good or will need to be replaced. It thrived under the rigorous pruning regime I gave it.

Redoing the garden forces me to reconsider the plantings I made when I first moved in. This was totally reactive. I bought plants I was fond of and had emotional attachments to. They were planted in an ad hoc fashion and now all have to be removed, or potted on. I am intrigued to see if any will survive transplanting at this time of year. I am nursing them by providing shelter in a plastic container turned on its side. One plant I was removing was the *Isolepis nodosa*, a knobby club rush. In doing so I found some lovely new shoots, ideal for putting in a pot.

My aspiration is to have a garden that resembles Peg McAllister’s garden. In her garden it has taken several years for flannel flowers to self sow – Peg allows them three years and then removes them, but seedlings occur every year. I love the colour the epacris give to her garden in winter. This does mean cutting out planting shrubs and it will be interesting to see if I can achieve anywhere near the effect that Peg has.
Peg McAllister’s garden

This area is on the east side of my unit but protected from the sun by the row of gum trees and shade cast by the building. Some of the plants I put in were entirely unsuitable, including several kangaroo paws. But some have thrived. A *Leucophyta brownii* performed extremely well alongside the temporary footpath I created. Its light colour was ideal for highlighting the path at night. A *Grevillea jephcotti* which is finally flowering well, needs to go.

I was reminded of a transplanting programme we did when we first moved into our home in Scoresby. We had no knowledge of gardening but some friends of ours from Noble Park decided to thin out trees surrounding their pool. In retrospect their choices were totally inappropriate, but we were the winners. Each tree transplanted survived. These included a silver birch and a *Eucalyptus lehmanii*. The tree was already about 15 ft tall and thrived. It grew and grew and provided much needed shade. We had no clue as to what we were doing and definitely had beginner’s luck! Duncan brought in a bushy yate flower to our last meeting and this brought back memories of games we played with our children putting the caps on our fingers to make witches hands – a lot of fun.

Cheryl Southall’s Garden

We had a super turnout on a sunny winter’s morning. Cheryl is going to sell her property and this was too good an opportunity to miss to see her garden. She has lived in Croydon for over 26 years and gave us a short introduction about the trials and tribulations of establishing her garden, the first trial being threatened by flooding just after they moved in. She has propagated most of the plants in the garden and it felt like a little oasis so close to suburbia. The block is relatively steep but she has skilfully designed paths that lead you on flat lines so the steepness is not as noticeable. Both Peg’s and Cheryl’s gardens are a part of the Open Garden Victoria.
The view from a balcony over her back garden was stunning, and likewise from the bottom of the garden looking up to the house.

**Hindsight and Garden Design**

or I Wished I had.....

lomandara tonika??

1. learnt the benefits of really hard pruning and lots of it early on.

2. in the beginning, used much more plantings of: *Elaeocarpus reticulata*, Blueberry Ash, Aracaurias especially Bidwillii, *Lomatia silaifolia*, Crinkle Bush, Lomandara Tanika (utterly marvellous) and Banksias.

3. realised how much rabbits would dictate the plants used in the garden; things small, soft, pretty and delicate do not survive ....ever. Rabbit proof fencing the entire property where applicable is a wonderful idea and helps keep out other varmints (cats, dogs, foxes) as well!

4. totally disregarded callistemons and melaleucas for my situation - see point no.1.
I should have planted banksias instead.

5. known that, *Acacia fimbriata* gets too tall too quickly - see point1. *Casuarina torulosa* is unbelievably glacially slow, especially from tube stock and speaking of tubes, tube stock eucs will not, no way, no how, grow under existing big bully eucs - forget it!

6. not confused the grasping, unkillable South African dietes with the beautiful Lord Howe Island dietes ( actually, I didn’t, a landscape architect did!!)

7. realised that some ideas which sound so wonderful are virtually impossible to achieve - like wildflower meadows. Some ideas sound wonderful and are possible but are much more labour intensive than you would ever have thought - like grass beds.

8. realised the importance of planting out your boundaries - no matter how fabulous your neighbours are and how well you get on or even if you haven’t got any….the good ones will move and the not so perfect will arrive so - first thing - design your buffer zones - as big as is practical

9. realised that allowing rampant self seeders the benefit of the doubt is a double edged sword.

    Jo Hambrett   NSW

**PLANTS**

**Violets on the move**

During the twelve years of drought, violets (*Viola hederacea*) almost disappeared from our garden. Previously we had them growing in several moister areas as a pleasant groundcover of green foliage, usually scattered with pretty little flowers. Towards the end of the drought, there were only a few small patches left and I really began to miss them. I wondered whether these isolated patches would survive, let alone ever recover to something like their former selves.

I need not have worried. After the last two years of ‘normal’ rain, the violets are back again healthier and more vigorous than ever. I’m not sure just how all these plants (hundreds of them, possibly thousands!) have re-appeared so quickly – ‘runners’ is a good term for their method of spreading. They are advancing rapidly across mulched pathways and seem to be trying to take over whole areas of the garden. I’ve had to ‘weed’ violets out of areas where they are over-running low-growing plants such as Pretty Grass-flags (*Libertia pulchella*), or a prostrate persoonia (*P. mollis* ssp. *revoluta*).

The return and spread of the violets has made me think about the vagaries of climate change and the effects on gardens. Along with violets have come the foreign weeds of course, ivy seedlings and others that I did not have to worry about during the years of
drought. There’s also the need for more pruning now, with the exuberant growth of shrubs that grew only slowly during the dry times. Mallee eucalypts no longer have sparse foliage and the daisies are all flourishing. It’s great to see the comparatively lush growth, while at the same time I wonder about its longevity. All our creepers are growing more vigorously too, some of which I’m definitely not so pleased about. There are always pluses and minuses.

How can a gardener plan for the future when there is so much doubt? How long will this wet phase continue? When drought returns, as I assume it will, the violets will retreat again, foliage will become more sparse, some daisies will die. How much watering is it sensible to do to keep plants happy, or even alive?

I think, like the violets and also like natural areas, much of the garden will look after itself, doing the best it can in the circumstances it finds itself in. Individual shrubs can’t shrink or spread like patches of violets; they live well, live miserably, or die. If a shrub lives but looks too miserable, I suppose we ultimately have to make a decision - is it worth keeping it in the garden, looking miserable, just in case the rains return?

Over the drought years, I was impressed with how many of our plants did survive and how many looked reasonably healthy. Very few died or looked so miserable we removed them, though some certainly did. I suppose it relates to choice of plants – we are probably more careful now and don’t gamble on plants as much as we used to. (If we do gamble, with a plant with doubtful prospects, we know we’re taking a risk.) We repeat plants that we know grow well here and also propagate from our own garden. We try to take greater care with positioning of plants, especially in regard to exposure to sun. In very hot summers, we organize some shade for a few key exposed plants we’re concerned about. We mulch a lot.

Assuming action is taken on climate change, I think we gardeners should not despair over the changes in weather patterns and prospects for the future. We have a marvellous range of Australian plants to choose from and many are versatile and can grow in a wide range of conditions. Many are really tough. It may mean in the future we have a few more plant deaths in the garden, or a few more hard decisions to make, but probably not too significant as a percentage of the whole. (The death of any framework plant is a problem, so they’re the ones to choose most carefully.) We'll regret some plants we can’t grow, but hasn't that always been the case? We can concentrate on the positive, on the plants we can grow. As with garden design, I think it’s a case of keeping it all in proportion!

Diana Snape Vic.

Growing Native Plants in Pots

Readers of this Newsletter will not need to be convinced of the value of growing Australian native plants. The variety of form, foliage, texture and flowers make them attractive and interesting.
There are at least three good reasons for growing native plants in pots.

1. You can grow them where there is no soil, i.e. on a balcony or terrace
2. You can grow plants that won’t tolerate clay soil, alkaline soil or bad drainage
3. You can control the moisture regime and protect the plants from frost and wind

If you live in a unit, there is often a balcony or if you have a house, there is usually a deck or terrace that could be softened with the addition of a plant or two in a container. At a house we visited in Canberra, a large pot on the edge of a paved terrace was filled with *Banksia blechnifolia* that was spilling out of the pot forming a dramatic focal point (Fig 1). The pot provided height and “contained” the plant showing it off without taking up too much space. Pots can also be used at the edge of driveways, paths and even within the garden itself where the plant needs emphasis or the soil is unsuitable. Within the garden, the pot can make the plant stand out from the surrounding plants or it can be hidden to good effect.

In our garden, we have a shady protected patio area where we have two large pots of *Rhododendron viriosum* which produce profuse red flowers in the summer (Fig 2). These plants could be grown in the ground but require a lot of moisture and shade which we do not have available. At Royal Botanic Garden Cranbourne, there are many different types of containers of plants which are placed on patio areas for display (Fig 3). One example is a metal tub of gravelly soil which is filled with a single species, *Banksia spinulosa* ‘Birthday Candles’. This treatment raises the rather small plant and makes it more easily presented to the visitor. Other tubs contain mixtures of plants which provide an interesting contrast in textures and flowers. One should not be afraid to experiment with different plants in a single pot creating a mini ‘natural’ environment.

One of the main reasons for growing native plants in pots here in Canberra is because they won’t tolerate our clay soil. Many of the most dramatic flowering plants come from Western Australia where they grow in sandy soil. Often these plants are also very sensitive to root fungal infections by Phytophthora. There are many Anigozanthus, Boronias, Banksias and Lechenaultiats which are beautiful plants but will survive only a year or two at the most in our soil even if that soil is well prepared. Yet having a pot or two of *Boronia megastima* near the back door when in flower provides a wonderful scent as you enter the house over many weeks. When they have finished flowering, you can move the pots to a “less public” area to grow on for another season. Some plants need larger pots and so have to be placed where they can grow and be admired year round. For example, we have a *Banksia grandis* in a large pot on the edge of a terrace where it gets lots of light but is protected from heavy frosts. This plant, also from Western Australia, needs good drainage and will not tolerate heavy frosts. So far (3 years) it is thriving and growing at least 60 cm per year. In the wild, such plants can be large but in a pot will effectively be dwarfed by having its root system restricted in the same manner as bonsai. Another successful plant is *Hibiscus splendens* (Fig 4) which has large apricot pink flowers in the spring and summer but has lush dramatic foliage when not in bloom. It grows very rapidly when protected from frost and has bright light.

Many books recommend that you gradually increase the size of a pot for a plant by repotting it every year or so. We have taken a different approach based more on our experience in the garden. We have selected the final pot for a plant and filled it with the appropriate mix and then planted the plant even though it is small in the middle of the final pot. This avoids the trauma of repotting for the plant and the gardener. After all, in the garden you don’t repot the plant so why should a pot be different? A small plant, however, will require less water than when it is fully grown so watering has to be regulated. The mix
we use is about 1/3 washed river sand and 2/3 native plant mix. Some plants that need more drainage get more sand and less native mix. It is essential that the pot have good drainage holes. We have found that it is best to cover those holes in the inside of the pot with fly screen mesh which prevents the invasion of the pot by ants and other insects yet easily lets the water drain out. After the plant is in the pot, we use a layer 2-3 cm deep of light coloured coarse gravel as mulch which reduces evaporation and keeps the potting soil cooler. This mulch also tends to reduce but, unfortunately, not eliminate the growth of weeds in the pot. All our pots are raised off the substrate with feet so that there is free drainage.

Native plants will grow in almost any type of pot. You can choose a variety of pots with different colours and shapes or chose one type of pot for all your plants. We have seen large banksias in full flower that are grown in plastic tubs. A decorative pot can complement the plant and its environment. It is important that the pot has holes and that it have a lip or handles so that you can lift it. Pots with smooth rounded sides are difficult to manage because there is nothing to hold onto and pots become heavy when they are filled with mix. We find that pots that are glazed work well because they don’t lose moisture as rapidly as more breathable pots such as terracotta ones, but the choice depends on your growing conditions. Watering is an essential activity with pots. Since they are often of different sizes and have different plants in them of variable sizes, they will dry out differently. You have to learn how often to water your plants and that will vary with the weather and where the pot is placed. Some of our pots are in the open and so get rain but others are more protected under the eaves or in a covered porch and so require more hand watering. Some pots can be connected to an irrigation system using drippers and that works well. Growing native plants in pots increases the variety of interesting plants that you can have in your garden and can introduce natural elements to those hardscape areas around your house or flat. Give it a go!

Ben and Ros Walcott ACT

Karwarra Gardens, Kalorama, Melbourne – a talk by Lindy Harris

Lindy spoke enthusiastically about the work and plans she has for Karwarra. Many improvements have already been made including the welcoming entrance and widened track round the garden suitable for wheelchairs and pushers.

Lindy mentioned that they are reverting back to the design principals introduced by Kath Deery, which includes reclaiming the sweeping views throughout the garden. Some of the species she listed are no longer appropriate and are being replaced by other plants. With the clearing and cutting back they have done one can now see the rockery designed by Ellis Stones.

More signage is being placed so that people can FIND Karwarra as they approach the Kalorama Memorial Reserve.

Seats around the garden are being relocated to place them out of harm’s (falling branches) way. Karwarra has the Garden Plant Conservation Association of Australia (GPCAA)
(formerly the OPCAA) collections of Boronia and Telopea. The Boronias are being moved to areas more suited to their requirements.

I found I took home several leaflets that Lindy left. One includes the orchids of Karwarra. There are 12 naturally occurring species and three new species have been discovered on site since 2010.

These are *Acianthus pusillus* (gnat or mosquito orchid) discovered in May 2011. Appears between March to August.

*Caladenia carnea var carnea* (pink fingers) – Sept to Oct.


*Corybas diemenicus* (veined helmet orchid) start flowering in July. Worth visiting Karwarra for to see them.

*Cryptostylis leptochila* (small tongue orchid). Flowered at Karwarra in November 2010.

*Dipodium roseum* (hyacinth orchid) – flowers late November to December.

*Gastrodia sesamoides* (potato orchid) late October.

*Microtis parviflora* (slender onion orchid) – appears in August and flowers in Nov to January.

*Pterostylis melagramma* (tall greenhood) flowers July to Sept.

*Pterostylis alpine* (mountain greenhood) common in Karawarra and flowers Sept/October.

*Pterostylis pedunculata* (maroon hood) – known from a single specimen which flowered in the Boronia Garden before being dug up by a blackbird. September.

*Thelymitra media* (tall sun orchid) November to December, but the erect leaf appears in May.

There are many reasons to visit Karwarra which is open 10.00 am to 4.00 pm Tuesday to Friday and 1.00 pm to 4.00 pm on Saturday and Sunday. Opening on public holidays is dependent on volunteer availability so check the web or by phone. There is a friends group which people can join and a variety of tasks that people can assist with including propagating, garden maintenance and plant record keeping.

Nicky Zanen  Vic.

**BOOK REVIEWS**

THE GARDEN IN THE CLOUDS; From Derelict Smallholding to Mountain Paradise


I recommend this book to all those interested in garden design and especially those with rural properties. Antony Woodward is a well known British author who bought five acres of
rocky sloping ground in the Black Mountains of Wales with the ambition of building a garden which would be worthy of inclusion in the ‘Yellow Book’, those gardens listed in the National Gardens Scheme of England and Wales.

Of course, these are not our native plants and not our native animals but he struggles with all those problems so familiar to those with rural properties, fencing, gates, hedges, weather, mowing, marauding stock, not to mention the locals. He plants an orchard, he keeps bees, he buys a tractor and tries haying, and he excavates a pond. He attempts to remain true to the traditional ways of doing things in his part of Wales. He builds proper Monmouthshire wooden gates and proper dry stone walls.

The cunning of Welsh Mountain sheep knows no bounds and his attempts to keep them out of his fields are very funny and somehow familiar. The chapter on honey extraction had me laughing out loud as the stickiness spreads everywhere. It reminded me of the time when my husband’s family extracted the honey from their hives in the basement one day, then plucked ducks the next. The basement was properly ‘tarred and feathered’ and my mother-in-law said ‘never again’.

It is not giving away the plot line to say that he ends up winning over the ‘Country Organiser’ and opening Tair-Ffynnon to the public. This is a really well written, funny and touching book.

Rosalind Walcott  ACT

“GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS in Subtropical Gardens”

Jan Sked

Published by Society for Growing Australian Plants
Pine Rivers Branch
192 pages – A4 size - soft cover. Price $35.00 plus postage - $10 in Queensland - $12 interstate

Jan Sked of Lawnton is a noted local naturalist with a deep love and understanding of native plants. She has written a number of books on the subject and, as the long-time editor of the SGAP Queensland “Bulletin”, continues to share her amazing knowledge with the wider community. This book is specifically written to guide local residents in choosing and growing Australian plants in the gardens of eastern subtropical Australia, although the extensive botanical and horticultural information is really suited to most areas of Australia.

Jan’s text describes each plant simply and with flair providing all you need to know to help select and grow the plants successfully. Each plant description has a simple pronunciation guide to help readers with botanical names. A chapter on simple methods of propagating native plants is included, plus general cultivation techniques to ensure you provide the best growing conditions for your plants.

There are numerous detail sketches throughout the text, and many colour photographs of the most interesting species to show just how colourful, unique and suitable Australia’s native flora really is for incorporation into our gardens.
There is a section written by well known landscape architect, Lawrie Smith of Whiteside, on how to plan your garden within a simple check list format that leads you though the design and establishment process from bare block to a wonderful functional garden for your family. There is also a section devoted to the process of developing a rainforest garden, which is a special interest of Jan’s.

Perhaps the index and quick reference chart is the most important and informative component, where you will be able to quickly find out all of the characteristics of well over 1,000 plant species contained in this book. This schedule will give you the size, form, flower and fruit colour, seasonal display, preferred aspect, and soil preference.

The Society for Growing Australian Plants (SGAP) is a not-for-profit organisation with the philosophy to promote the preservation and appreciation of our native plants through growing them in gardens and sharing knowledge about their habits and character. This book fulfils those aims admirably and is a worthwhile addition to any home library, but keep it handy as you will refer to it on a daily basis.

For more information contact:

Jan Sked                            Lawrie Smith
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E: jansked@powerup.com.au          E: Lawries@landplanstudio.com.au

MEETINGS

CANBERRA

Report on a visit to Diana Bennett’s garden in Calwell, ACT Tuesday 17 May,

“ a garden designed by Landscape Architect and ANPS Canberra member, Leon Horsnell. The garden was open last year as part of the Open Garden Scheme. It is a native garden with a skilful mix of local and commercial native plants and with innovative landscaping hardware such as a water course that flows through the back garden down to a pool with water plants in floating 'rocks'. The garden also has a native 'lawn'. The designer and the owner have pooled their skills and desires to build and develop a native plant oasis within a suburb of increasingly exotic plants'.

On Tuesday 17 May more than 20 people attended a combined meeting of the ANPS (Canberra) Daytime Activity and Canberra Branch GDG. Diana’s garden began its makeover to a predominantly native garden in February 2002. She had only been in her house for a couple of months when she had her ‘Eureka Moment’ and realised that what she wanted in her garden was already there in the borrowed landscape of the hill behind her house. She wanted a place of peace and tranquility which would harbour wildlife and blend with the rocky hill beyond.

Leon Horsnell is a local landscape architect and staunch ANPS member with a particular passion for native plants. He started this project by demolishing most of the existing garden except for two large Photinia hedges at the back of the property. The contours at the front
of the house were left intact and those in the back remodelled for both aesthetic and structural reasons. Stone retaining walls were built in the back garden and many rocks added to the design. Leon obtained permission from a neighbour to open the fence at the back highest point and carefully manoeuvre the rocks down the hill with the Bobcat in reverse gear.

Diana wanted a natural effect and wanted her house to be embedded in the garden rather than separate from it. She originally wanted all plants to be indigenous to the region, but found that it was often difficult to obtain local plants, so settled for ‘spirit of indigenous’ as her guide. There are many local plants growing happily in this garden which provide bird habitat and colour all year round. The three lawns are planted with native grasses. *Microlaena stipoides* (Weeping Grass), *Bothriochloa macra* (Redlegs Grass) and *Chloris truncata* (Windmill Grass). Coverage is good and the lawns need much less water than conventional lawns.

The large pond began as shallow but has been redone in 2006 to accommodate Diana’s fast growing (and enormous!) Koi. Dry creek beds were established on either side with granite rocks from a local quarry. Drip irrigation has been installed throughout the garden, but in practice the lawns are watered almost entirely with grey water.

After five years the native plants grew well enough that Diana could remove the Photinia hedges and replace them with Callistemons and Acacias. She has some of the best growing *Grevillea iaspicula* (Wee Jasper Grevillea), a rare and endangered local grevillea, that I have seen. Her plants are topping four metres in height and love the sharp drainage and dry position that they have been given. She also has many other locally developed grevilleas from Bywong Nursery, ‘Bedspread’, ‘Goldfever’, ‘Ember Glow’ and ‘Lady O’, as well as correas such as ‘Federation Belle’. Many of these are regularly pruned by the local kangaroos but are thriving anyway. A couple of large Grass Trees (*Xanthorrhoea australis*) and two enormous clumps of Kangaroo Paw (*Anigozanthos flavidus*) add to the authentic Australian appearance of the garden. There is excellent use of grasses in the garden, especially *Austrostipa verticillata* (Slender Bamboo Grass), which catch every breeze. Diana has two mammoth pots of *Banksia blechnifolia* which are very attractive in every season.

Leon calls this style of planting his 3D design, with vertical elements blended into the borrowed hill behind the house. All paving is on the diagonal and not intrusive to the eye. All rocks were handpicked and placed carefully to achieve this ‘natural’ effect.

Diana and Leon are to be congratulated on an effective partnership in the design and maintenance of this very successful native garden. Neighbours, who garden with exotics, often comment on how much they enjoy walking or driving past Diana’s native garden. Let us hope that more of them follow her example.

Rosalind Walcott  ACT
Garden visit to Rob & Val Henry's garden, May 29 /2011

Rob explained there were two main problems he had to face with his garden. The first was the Silurian mudstone providing the base for his soil, the second a number of large trees that made it difficult for underplanting in some areas. In the front were a small group of Lemon-scented Gums (*Corymbia citriodora*), at the side an Argyll Apple (*Eucalyptus cinerea*) and there were more trees round the back. However the trunks and mature canopy of these trees contributed greatly to the interest and attraction of the garden.

Like most of us, he has had recent losses of plants (especially grevilleas) that had adapted to dry conditions and objected to so much rain. He also mentioned the usual occasional problems with hydrophobic soils.

The small garden is almost 30 years old and Rob and Val have done everything themselves. He is an extremely enthusiastic gardener, full of ideas and initiatives that result in a garden of great interest. In the front garden they built up an area with two feet of sand and here he created a pond to which rainwater is diverted. This leads to a bog garden and another pond, the water being filtered through plants - reeds and various strap-leaved plants. Rob and Val like the sound of water in the garden. There is a similar system of ponds in the back garden, not surprisingly as Rob works with wetlands professionally. He has two large tanks to store water.

Some plants in the front are left to grow into each other, while others such as *Correa alba* are pruned to rounded shapes. Along the side is a long, narrow garden with a small lawn (also long and narrow) of a special Buffalo Grass beside the path to the front door. This long area has been visually divided by a pebbled area at right angles to the length, leading to a birdbath. Curved lines of strap-leaved plants on either side of this area (not symmetrical) lead back to the side fence, with its shrubs and trees. There were also clumps of strap-leaved plants for continuity.

Although many different materials have been used as groundcovers, as appropriate – pebbles, pea gravel, wood chips, plus granitic sand for the back paths – I wasn’t particularly conscious of these changes. Some garden beds have timber edging and there are also many pots, often arranged in unusual ways, for example attached to a tea-tree fence. Many creepers are used to clothe fences or walls, or to divide areas, including an unusual variegated pandorea. Often the area in which the creeper is situated is very contained, so pandoreas for example can’t go wild.

Rob explained the largely shady back garden had previously been the children's playground but has since been re-designed. In a fairly central position is an attractive ying-and-yang feature of a small tear-shaped lawn nestled against a similarly shaped paved
area. Where two paths meet at a T-junction, an attractive three-way arch made by Rob has three creepers growing on it. Not many plants were flowering at this time of year, one exception being a lovely cream-flowered rainforest plant, possibly a lomatia.

Against the back wall of the house and under an eave, above ferns and between tree-ferns, two tall mirrors on old timber (one was a door) reflect some of the garden. There’s also a rustic bench seat against this wall and, nearby, a water-bird sculpture stands beside a pool. The very back garden comes to a point where the busy work area is partly hidden away, with one wall displaying an array of interesting old garden tools. Near this, beside a small sitting area, Rob is planning to create a rain-garden. I’m sure there will always be new projects for this garden.

** The NEXT meeting will be held on Sunday August 28th at Merele Webb’s, 83 Edinburgh Rd Lilydale. Bring a picnic lunch at 1pm before the meeting at 2pm.

**Dates and venues for 2012**

We decided that we should continue to have our meetings next year in February, May, August and November as we have done in recent years. We thought we might try to have meetings on the 4th Sunday of these months, unless APS Vic meetings or other major events make that date unsuitable. So the proposed dates for 2012 would be:

February 27, May 22, August 28, November 27.

We had one Saturday meeting this year. Are there any members for whom Saturday is better?

Merele Webb, Bev Hanson and Chris Larkin suggested gardens we might visit next year, so I’ll get to work and follow up possibilities. Then there are some of our members’ gardens, including Merele’s, Chris’s and Pam Yarra’s. Chris’s, for example, suffered a severe pruning by the terrible hailstorm this year, so it will be interesting to see how it has recovered (maybe even benefited) from this.

Diana Snape Vic.

**SYDNEY**

Sunday the 26th June must have been a hectic day for Sydneysiders as not one person contacted me about the meeting on that day! As I will not have the time to organise a meeting over the next 3 months, I would be delighted to hear from any NSW member(s) who have any suggestions and/or are able to take on that job.

Jo Hambrett   NSW
TREASURERS REPORT

Thanks to all of you who have renewed your membership. I will be sending out reminders to all those who have not yet got around to it with the August Newsletter which will be your last if you haven’t renewed.

Below is the financial statement for the fiscal year 1 July 2010 – 30 June 2011. Note that under Expenses in the Sundries and book support, $5,000 was paid to Blooming Books for reprinting our book *The Australian Garden*. It is selling well and royalties should come in to cover the cost over time.

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- Cash balance 30 June 2011    $9,497.41
- Term Deposit matures 21 Sept 2011 $20,769.32
- Total Resources             $30,266.73

If anyone has any questions or comments about these accounts or their membership details, please let me know.

Ben Walcott  ACT

(bwalcott@netspeed.com.au)