Introduction

Ros and Ben Walcott, Canberra

Just a friendly reminder that we are now in a new fiscal year and that your membership subscription may be due. I have emailed those on my email list and sent letters to those on the mailing list who need to renew. If I do not get a renewal for those of you who received reminders, this will be your last Newsletter.

As you have noticed, the Newsletter is now in full colour and we have included photos that you have sent. Printing in colour is more expensive than black and white but to our mind so much more effective and informative. In the past, the idea was to post colour images on the website to which you could refer. That is possible, but a number who get the Newsletter by post don’t have ready and convenient access to the internet. Further, it is so much easier to read and make sense of the articles if everything is together. We would love to hear from you whether you consider the colour Newsletter an improvement and want to continue with it. It might mean increasing the dues by a few dollars per year in the future to cover the added expense.

As you read in the previous Newsletter, we encourage you to document your garden or others that you visit. Every garden can teach us something. We all have the experience of a part of our garden that doesn’t quite work as well as we would like. Seeing what others do can inspire a solution to your problem. As you see in this Newsletter, some have responded to our previous appeal and have prepared descriptions of their gardens. Let’s hear from more of you.

Chelsea Flower Show

Bev Hanson, Vic

On our arrival in London with tickets to the centenary year of the Chelsea Flower Show we were thrilled to see the headlines in the Evening Standard 'Strewth! Chelsea's top gong goes to an Aussie billabong'. We then knew the Fleming entry with Phil Johnson as designer had won best of show. The headlines in the
**Daily Telegraph** were 'Why we should all be camped by a billabong'. It further stated 'The victory for the exotic Australian Garden is the first time in the history of the classically English horticultural event that the best in show prize has gone Down Under'. The garden was described as 'a showcase of Australia's natural beauty and Mother Nature's timeless design'.

The garden has been two years in the planning. Rocks from a land-slip in Scotland were sourced by Phil and a mock billabong built to test the water flows and time the construction. The site given was 50% bigger than any other but still had to be completed in the 17 days. This was a dream come true for Phil, an opportunity to really push the boundaries and inspire the world about sustainable landscape design, but he emphasised it was a team effort with some wonderful volunteers to put it all together.

The soul of the design was the billabong and waterfall simulating a waterhole one might see in the Kimberleys or Grampians. The elevated studio building in the shape of a waratah, reached by a spiral staircase, has a great view from it of the garden, the show area and even the Thames River out the back. The solar panels used to power the site were brought over from Australia. Water used was collected on site and also from the roof of the adjacent BBC media facilities.

The plants of this masterpiece in natural garden design are the icing on the cake. 120 Australian species were chosen from large bottle trees, gums, tree ferns and grass trees, to the shrubs including eremophilas, grevilleas, callistemons etc, to the mass plantings of yellow and pink everlasting daisies, drifts of native violets, down to the small *Pratia* between the steps. No plants were brought from Australia but were grown mainly in Mediterranean countries such as Spain and Italy. The detail to much of this planting could only be appreciated when one entered the garden which was not possible for most but we were privileged to be invited in.

Phil seeks to inspire and educate the world on how we can coexist with nature. Australia owes him a great debt in his showcasing our Australian flora magnificently on the world stage here at Chelsea.

**Correspondence**

**Memorial for Ellis Stones**

Diana Snape, Vic

For some years now there has been interest in 'restoring' a large garden in the grounds of Melbourne University originally designed by Ellis Stones. (Ron Rayment prepared the planting plan.) Ellis Stones is regarded by many as the founder, in Victoria, of an Australian style of garden design. He used rocks beautifully,
with a mixture of Australian and exotic plants, but (like Edna Walling in her later days) would have incorporated more Australian plants if they had been more widely available then in nurseries.

One of our active members in the Melbourne Branch is Bev Hanson, a landscape designer who initially worked with Ellis Stones. She has been a keen supporter of the renovation of the existing garden, which has been benignly neglected over time. Large trees have grown to shade it and little pruning, replanting, etc, has been carried out. The Melbourne group recently had a meeting there to assess the situation and offer ideas (as reported in the May Newsletter). The garden is in a conspicuous position and when renovated would also have an interpretive area honouring Ellis Stones, so students (and others) would learn about him. Possibly even more importantly, it would be a great advertisement for Australian garden design.

Universities nowadays are poorly funded, even the old established ones like Melbourne, and this project would require significant funding. Some support is likely to be forthcoming from various sources for the cost of construction, while recommended maintenance would then become part of regular garden maintenance. However, to start, funding is needed to actually produce a design. The obvious person to prepare the design is Bev Hanson herself and she would be willing to do this. However there is no current source of funding for this initial step and Bev is naturally reluctant to lobby for it.

I therefore wish to propose that the GDSG contribute to funding this design work and garden renovation, at least in part, and I would suggest either $500 or $1000. Frequently having some funding is sufficient to help raise more. (I would expect any significant contribution from the GDSG to be acknowledged.)

I hope you think this would be a worthwhile use of a little of our resources, honouring an important designer and raising the profile of Australian garden design.

**Native Plant Garden at NY Botanical Garden**

The new Native Plant Garden is a cutting-edge 3.5-acre installation with a dramatic 230-foot-long water feature as its centerpiece, making it the most contemporary garden design ever created at The Botanical Garden. The Native Plant Garden, accompanied by educational materials and programs, and a major permanent endowment to secure its future, was made possible by a gift from the Leon Levy Foundation.

The Native Plant Garden was designed by Oehme, van Sweden, landscape architects specializing in the New American Garden style, to harmonize a stunning designed terrain with the diversity of microclimates across the site. The layout, in the middle of the Botanical Garden’s historic grounds, is both sustainable and visually inventive, a radical blend of modern sensibilities along with environmentally friendly elements.

Built to inspire and teach visitors about the beauty of native flora throughout the seasons, it also illustrates how native plants can be used to produce attractive and imaginative gardens. The enclosed facility features a central pool with water cascading over stone weirs. A promenade of broad boardwalks made from black locust, a native hardwood, and intimate paths lead visitors through a range of settings, from the shaded woodland to the dry, open meadow, and lush wetlands.
featuring nearly 100,000 plants. The garden has as its framework a dramatic set of heritage oak trees and is bursting with native trees, shrubs, ferns, grasses, and wildflowers, confirming that native plants can be as magnificent as their exotic counterparts more commonly used in traditional gardens. A covered outdoor classroom pavilion offers a venue for school groups and others to learn about native plants and the birds and insects they sustain. (from nybg.org)

An Australian Garden Record

‘Farncombe’

The Howes garden - 41 years experience in creating and maintaining my garden of Australian native plants

NSW garden location: The garden is situated not far from Hornsby in Sydney’s north.

Area: The land is a suburban block of 700 square metres in area, north facing and relatively flat with only about 500mm fall from front to back. The land shape is unusual in that it has a narrow 10 metre wide frontage and a much longer than normal back boundary that stretches across three properties. The house and separate garage are set well back and there is a long brown coloured concrete driveway from the street to the garage.

Soil: The soil is a thin layer of loam (about 200mm) over a relatively heavy clay base.

Climate: The average rainfall is around 1100mm in a ‘normal’ year. I have found that Sydney is now receiving more frequent tropical weather and often records 120 to 150mm of rain in three days as the tropical lows move down the coast from Queensland and pass out to sea around Sydney, before dissipating – this makes the garden quite wet, especially there are three or four of these events in a year. My semi tropical/rainforest plants respond very well to this moisture, growing and flowering very well, however my dry tolerant plants often suffer from root rot – a no win situation.
**Mulch:** My mulch consists of a layer of local Eucalyptus leaves (front garden) and Oak tree and Eucalyptus leaves in the rear garden. I do not let the thickness exceed 20 to 40mm and I try to keep it fairly open to allow for rainfall penetration. I have tried using a dense layer of chipped mulch and it ended up forming a nearly impenetrable layer as it broke down, effectively preventing any moisture reaching the soil. Having a smallish garden also allows me to keep any weed growth in check as a result of this thin layer of mulch.

**Watering:** This is an interesting aspect for me as many books advise to water the plant in well when planted and then reduce watering until established. This is sound advice, however it is often hard to judge when plants are established. I have found that parts of my garden need watering in hotter times of the year due to the extensive root system of neighbouring trees sucking up any available moisture. A good tip -- the closer plants are planted to large trees the less water they need, as the trees main feeder roots are out under the trees ‘drip line’ and not close to the trunk. As well, when it does rain, a lot of water runs down the trunk to moisten the surrounding area of these plants.
**Front and rear gardens:** The house and separate garage effectively divide the block in half across its length. Access from front to rear is through a gate between the house and garage. Refer to the site plan.

**Garden design concepts, layout and family use:** My wife and I built our house and moved in during May 1972. When we moved in there was not a tree or shrub on our land (see photo). The first few years consisted of removing weeds, piles of builders’ rubble and clay subsoil, all by hard labor as we were cash poor. When the area surrounding the house was finally levelled, a lawn was established in the front and rear gardens and a driveway installed. In the first ten years or so there was not much difference in the amount of sunlight and plant selection between the front and the rear gardens. However, over time, the front and rear gardens each developed their own microclimate and the plant selection and design ended up very different between them, mainly due to the changes in light and moisture as a result of neighbouring trees.

For many years there was no formal plan for the garden. Improvements and additions to the garden were a result of our lifestyle requirements. Paving was completed for the area between the house and garage furniture added for outdoor entertaining. Paths were completed around the house to ensure good drainage. Areas in the rear garden were created for children’s play equipment and a BBQ built. The plantings and creation of gardens were always years behind our lifestyle and little thought was given to what the garden would mature into in 20 or more years’ time.

![House in 1972](image)

**Selection of Plants**
When selecting plants, I try to group foliage types and shapes together in a garden bed. I have found mixing plants with small, fine, broad or ferny leaves together results in a mismatch of style and is not a ‘good look’. I suspect in larger gardens these design limitations could be overcome by grouping these types of plants in groups of five or more. Perhaps I should just become a collector and plant whatever takes my fancy and not worry about matching leaf shapes and growing habits as that would be the easy option to ‘garden design’.

I also try to group my plants with like growing conditions together. Plants with low water requirement together, shade loving plants together, moisture loving plants together as this makes maintenance and growing them easier.

The front and rear courtyards are both ideal for entertaining as they have easy access to the house and have an outdoor table and chairs together with soft lighting at night. The warmer front courtyard is used in winter and the cooler rear courtyard is used in summer – an ideal all seasons arrangement.

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Front garden in detail: Not long after moving in to my house, the neighbour on my east and front boundary planted an *Eucalyptus citriodora* (Lemon Scented Gum) which is now well over 20 metres tall and 15 metres wide. It is a beautiful tree that enhances the streetscape. However, my front garden is now a relatively dry garden with morning and afternoon dappled shade and full sun during the middle of the day.

The early plantings were on the western side of the driveway in gardens of slightly raised beds. A few my first plantings such as *Sannantha pluriflora* (syn *Baeckea virgata*) are still happily growing there. The other side of the driveway was all lawn as it was a gathering place for both my children and our neighbour’s children. An enclosed front courtyard (see photo and garden plan) with access from our driveway and house, was built in the early 1980s. In this courtyard a paved entertaining area (with outdoor wooden table and seating) was made together with a surrounding garden featuring a large 5 tonne Hawkesbury sandstone rock (see photo). Over time this rock had an extensive coverage of *Dendrobium* orchids which flowered prolifically in spring. Leading down from this rock I have made a short ‘dry creek bed’ leading to a small rock pool made from an old 47 litre laundry tub (see photo). In the other corner is a Gymea lily, *Doryanthes excelsa*, which only flowers in the really wet years. The large rock and Gymea lily are the focal points of this courtyard.

During the many times I have opened my garden as part of the Open Gardens Australia visitors get a real surprise as they come up the driveway and expect to see only the garage at the end. On turning left, they looked into a courtyard to see a very large rock and masses of orchids (see photo). The plantings in this courtyard have changed over time and are now much simpler with plants grouped in threes. I have come to the conclusion that small courtyards and small gardens need some degree of formality, not overplanted, some degree of repetition and the minimum use of different flower and leaf colours and materials to be a success.

By the time my children left home there were gardens up the western side of the driveway and along the eastern boundary and between these gardens was lawn. The lawn was performing badly so I took this opportunity to create another garden (as you do). After removing the lawn I rejuvenated the soil by adding some compost and created a path through it. I decided that grasses *Poa labillardieri*, *Dianella* speciess and *Lomandra* ‘Tanika’ would create a meadow type effect. How wrong I was - the area was too small to have the desired effect and the *L*. ‘Tanika’ grew twice the size suggested on the label. It was after this little exercise that I came to the conclusion grasses and other wavy flax type plants only look good in a large...
area with the majority of plants being of the same species. The northern end of the Australian War Memorial building in Canberra is a great example of this. So, I got out my trusty mattock and removed a lot of plants, just leaving a few of *Poa labillardieri*. I then went back to my old practice of planting in groups of threes (or other odd numbers) plants that grow not too tall and leaving plenty of space between plants so as not to overplant – I am very happy with the result.

**Rear garden in detail:** Access to the house and rear garden is through a gate between the house and garage. Immediately on entering, there is a small area filled with tree ferns, smaller ferns and a few smaller rainforest plants before arriving at a paved courtyard and with an outdoor wooden table and chairs. This outdoor furniture area was recently covered with a triangular shade cloth and this to my surprise added to the ambience. It is surprising how much more comfortable my friends and family felt having some overhead protection while sitting at the table.

The rear garden is naturally shaded in early morning and from noon onwards due to the two now large trees. The first large tree on my western side is an English oak tree on my neighbour’s property. This tree was reportedly planted from an acorn from the then famous Anthony Hordens (a very large Sydney department store) English oak growing at Razorback (near Picton NSW) that had a large sign displaying the stores motto – ‘While I live I Grow’. These acorns were given out to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the commencement of the first white settlement in Australia. The Oak tree is now 15 meters high and 20 metres wide and still growing - huge. The other large tree is an *Eucalyptus haemastoma* (now 10 metres tall) that I planted very soon after moving in. These two trees provide welcome afternoon shade in summer as well as helping to keep the house cool in summer. However, their roots make for a drier, cooler and shadier garden.

The first landscaping project was to establish a lawn for my young children to play on. This lawn is the strongest point of the rear garden and it acts to tie the house and all the plantings together. When the neighbour’s oak tree was small, the area under it was paved and used for my children’s swings and sand pit as it was an ideal area that received only morning sun. Now with the children long gone the area has been turned into garden with hardy ferns and some tree ferns and smaller growing rain forest plants - not
Along the quite long rear boundary there is a double row planting of *Acmena smithii* var *minor*, *Syzygium paniculatum* dwarf (Magenta Cherry) and *Elaeocarpus reticulatus*, the Blueberry Ash. These provide a degree of privacy as the house behind me is double story.

Quite recently I had a friend build a two seater chair out of old fence palings and rails (see photo). I positioned it where it receives morning sun in winter (about the only place that does) and it has been a great success and is an ideal place for the morning cup of coffee.
Plant selection and what I am growing: Only a few introduced and native shrubs were planted in the first few years and what I did plant I lost as they were inappropriate for my soil and conditions. During my research into plants in general, I developed a love of our Australian native plants and in 1976 I joined the local group of the then Society for Growing Australian Plants (now the Australian Plants Society - APS) to gain more knowledge.

Initially my aim was to grow any native plant that was available at nurseries or from the then large regional APS shows that took my fancy (and many did). Using this criterion I lost a lot of plants and the garden had no uniformity or style. Over time, as I gained a bit more knowledge about our native plants, I learnt before I purchased any new plant I needed to know what conditions the plant naturally grows under and if they are close to my soil and climate conditions. If they do match, they will perform well for me. As I have a relatively thin layer of top soil and a clay base I try to use plants growing naturally in the same conditions, as these plants usually have a stronger root system to allow them to penetrate heavier soils. Initially I lost a lot of plants that come for areas with lighter deeper soil/loam. Plants that grow in these situations have a weaker root system that cannot penetrate my heavier clay subsoils. They needed staking and frequent watering and often did not survive the hot summers.

I tried making raised gardens with imported ‘native plant mix’ and even crushed sandstone but that did not improve my success very much. The reason for this I later found out, was because the ‘native plant mix’ soil I purchased reverted over a few years to its original inert and water repellent form after the humus that had been originally added was used up. The crushed sandstone I purchased was too fine (<30mm) and when wet was a solid mass that was far too wet for most natives and as a result they died of root rot. Now if I need a raised bed I excavate the adjacent paths to raise the surrounding soil a little.

I have kept a list of all the plants that I have planted and tried to grow. The vast majority have not survived more than a year or two. Looking at this list I was dismayed to see the biggest loss were Grevilleas. Looking back, a lot of the plants I tried to grow would never be successful as they were not suited to my heavy soil or were from a different climatic zone (eg Western Australia). I soon learnt to plant a selection of hardy, long lived plants to form the backbone of my garden.

The current hardy and reliable plants growing in my front yard are: Austromyrtus dulcis, Acmena smithii var minor and its many seedlings, Acacia myrtifolia (local) A. fimbriata dwarf and A. covenyi, Sannantha (syn Baeeke/Babingtonia) crenatifolia, Sannantha (syn Baeeke/Babingtonia) virgata, Banksia spinulosa various forms, Brachyscome multifida and B. angustifolia, Calytrix tetragona, Correa glabra, Senna (syn Cassia) artemisioides – this was the first native plant that I grew and planted in my garden, Conostylis aculeata and C. aurea, Crinum pedunculatum, Callistemon subulatus, various Dianella
species, three grafted *Eucalyptus ficifolia*, *Hibiscus geraniodes*, *Homoranthus flavesceens*, great plant as it has a flat top and lovely bluish/grey foliage, *Hibbertia serphyllifolia*, *H. vestita*, *H. pedunculata* all great small ground covers, *Indigofera australis*, many small and large *Anigozanthos* species, Kangaroo paws (if I keep the water up to them when they are growing their flowers), *Isopogon anemonifolius*, *Lomandra ‘Tanika’*, *L. multiflora* (an attractive local plant that should be more widely grown), *L. Aussie blue grass*, *Lambertia formosa*, *Prostanthera ovalifolia Rosea*, *P. scutellarioides*, *Leionema* (*syn Phebalium*) *squamosum*, *L. glandulosum* and *L. lamprophyllum*, *Philotheca* (*syn Eriostemon*) myoporoides, *Scaevola aemula*, *Thryptomene saxicola* and *T. baeckeace*, *Westringia ‘Wynyabbie Gem’*, *W. fruticosa ‘Zena’*, *W. linifolia*. 

Orchids include: *Thelychiton* (*syn Dendrobium*) *delicatun* and *D. kingianum* (various varieties).

*Grevilleas* – I could write a book on the many, many plants I have lost. Any species with *G. alpina* parents are short lived in my garden. Currently, the reliable *Grevillea* species that are happy in my garden are: *lanigera* dwarf ‘Greencape’, *rhyolitica*, ‘Lady O’, ‘Pink Midget’, *lanigera* sold as ‘Mt Tamboritha’ form (a great small ground cover), ‘Firesprite’, ‘Forest Rambler’, *sericea*, ‘Moonlight’ and ‘Peaches and Cream’ (wrong leaf shape where I have them planted but a great flower colour). My lack of success could be due to not enough sun or most likely too dry and not enough deep friable ‘top soil’.

The current hardy and reliable plants growing in my back yard are: *Acmena smithii* var *minor* and its many seedlings that I have planted out, *Archirhodomyrtus beckleri* (Rose myrtle lovely fragrant flowers), *Anopterus macleayanus* (Macleay Laurel), *Correa glabra*, *Cordyline* *sps*, *Grevillea ‘Orange Marmalade’*, *Syzygium paniculatum* dwarf (Magenta Cherry), *Syzygium ‘Little Gem’, Alchornea ilicifolia* (Native Holly), *Leionema*, (*syn Phebalium*) *squamosum* and *L. lamprophyllum*, *Rhododendron lochiae* (flowers very well with only a little morning sun). Many varieties of small ferns, quite a few *Dicksonia antarctica* tree ferns and the taller *Cyathea cooperii*. One very tall and old *Cyathea cooperii* has a huge stag horn *Platycerium superbum* with an equally large Birds Nest Fern *Asplenium nidus* growing with it. This poor tree fern is so top heavy, especially when wet and I am expecting it to fall down any day soon. (See photo).

Plants that come and go in both gardens are: *Crowea ‘Festival’* and *Crowea saligna*, various *Correa* species but not *C. glabra*, *Darwinia citriodora*, *Isopogon anemonifolius*, *Melaleuca fulgens*, *Melaleuca thymifolia*, *Melaleuca lateritia*, many *Grevilleas*, *Ziera ‘Pink Crystals’* to name a few.
**Favourite Plant:** If I had to name one, it would be *Banksia spinulosa* as their autumn golden coloured flowers light up the garden – just magic.

**Wildlife:** in the early days of my garden I had many types of birds visiting my garden, silveryeyes, pee wees and many varieties of wattlebirds to name a few. I now do not see them at all and have not for many years. The only bird species I now have visiting my garden despite having bird baths in both the front and rear gardens are noisy miners, rosellas, currawongs and an occasional butcherbird. There are many cats that roam my street day and night and I am sure this is a major factor in not having a healthy bird population. I also have a few blue tongue lizards in my garden but the cats unfortunately kill their babies all too easily. So having a garden filled with native plants is not always conducive to a healthy population of various birds, insects etc.

**Maintenance and Pruning:** I try to select plants that do not grow taller than needed where I will be planting them. That way it minimises the need for heavy pruning as they mature so to keep them to a manageable size. I have found the best time to prune into hard wood is after heavy rain as this ensures the sub soil is damp and the plant has some reserves to draw on. I avoid heavy pruning in hot and dry weather. I tip prune all my plants quite often to keep them compact and maximise flowering, however you need to know your plants to ensure that you are not pruning off next season’s flower buds. I do give my plants too much fertiliser and never at planting. I wait for a month or two after planting to give them fertiliser as their root system will be established enough to take up any fertiliser. I use Blood and Bone and/or some liquid Power Feed fertilisers as both are safe for native plants. I also use half strength Power Feed occasionally on my orchids and Kangaroo Paws during their growing period.

**In conclusion:** My passion for growing native plants has been nurtured for over 30 years and I grow them because they have spectacular and unusual flowers especially the *Grevilleas*, Kangaroo Paws, *Eucalypts*, Gymea Lily and *Banksias* to name a few. They also have interesting foliage, bark and aroma eg *Eucalypts* and *Prostantheras* (mintbush). There is also a richness of association with the people, places, literature and history and growing our native plants will bring these associations to my garden. All we need now to make the picture complete is to have our own flag and to become a republic (I live in hope). In trying to put these words together about my garden history and design, I realised how a small suburban garden imposes design limitations with regard to plant selection and how they are used if one wishes to create a harmonious and pleasant ‘look’ to the finished garden.

In all my years of gardening the main principle I have learnt, is not to fight my site. The plants natural growing conditions must closely match my garden to maximise their growth. Failure to do this has resulted in many plants growing far below their best and they needed to be removed as space is limited for underperforming plants in my garden.

**Owners:** Jeff and Glennis Howes
Light and Shade in the Garden

Ros Walcott
Photos by Ben Walcott

The Italians call it chiascuro, the treatment of light and shade, when applied to drawing and painting. The definition of the word includes the contrasting effect of light and shadow created by light falling unevenly or from a particular direction on something. I consider that the word could also apply to garden design. Light and shade in the garden are both inside and outside phenomena. The garden comes inside with light and shadow shimmering on the ceiling or waving on walls in the breeze. Water movement in the garden ripples with light and this is reflected on inside walls and ceilings (see photo below right). The shadow of a Crimson Rosella perches on your dining room wall and begins to remove the fronds from your tree fern. You do not need to look outside to witness this destruction. It is clear from the shadows on your walls that bring the garden inside. The pattern of *Leptospermum* ‘Aphrodite’ on the window below is as decorative as any screen (see photo below left).

Deliberate patterns of shade can be made in the garden to great effect. A planting of small shrubs in a checkerboard pattern will always be interesting to the eye no matter what time of day. The sun makes a continuously moving pattern of shadows throughout the day. Light glistens on shiny foliage and bounces off paving materials and walls. When there is too much glare for comfort, plantings can save the day. The photo below on the right shows a solution to one problem by Russell Page. He says ‘the stone paved terrace of a house in the forests south of Orleans looked too large and reflected too much light into the main living-room. I removed the central part of the paving and replaced it with diagonal bands of stone which outline square sunk beds planted with dwarf box clipped flat at ground level’ p. 48, *Education of a Gardener*. This type of solution for too much glare could easily be adapted for use here. On the left *Diplolaena angustifolia* makes a sharp design on the wall behind.
Landscape architect Steve Martino of Arizona is noted for using native plants for the gardens he designs, palo verde, saguaro, octotillo, agave, cacti, etc. Below in the garden of Cliff Douglas from Mesa, Arizona is a stunning effect of light and shade on walls and water surfaces. Steve has long been a catalyst for using native plants for gardens in Arizona, just as we are doing here in Australia. He designs in the Sonoran Desert in the southwestern United States, one of the world’s most beautiful and sensitive environments. The desert typically gets **between 5-7 inches of rain** a year with contrasted **nine feet of evaporation**. The Sonoran desert is about 120,000 square miles, approximately the size of Italy. About two-thirds of the Sonoran desert is in northern Mexico. Last year they had 33 days over 110 degrees (43 degrees Celsius). Garden plants have to deal with high heat, low rainfall and blazing bright sunlight, conditions that are not unknown in Australia.

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**A must see iconic garden – the National Arboretum Canberra**

**Jeff Howes, NSW**

I was so impressed with my visit to the National Arboretum in March 2013 that I thought I should write a few words about it to encourage you to visit it. In my opinion, the site concept, layout and views are one of the most memorable I have seen in Australia and my travels overseas. A good definition of an Arboretum is - a park planted with trees to become an exceptionally beautiful place for enjoyment, recreation, education and research.
The National Arboretum Canberra is 250 hectares in size and just 6km from the centre of Canberra and near Lake Burley Griffin. It was created as a result of the 2003 Canberra bushfires which burned out the commercial Radiata Pine plantation and one third of the adjoining Himalayan Cedar forest, thus providing the area needed for such a project.

In 2004, the Government of the Australian Capital Territory held a nation-wide competition for an arboretum, which was to be part of the recovery from the 2003 bushfires. The winning design by landscape architects Taylor Cullity Lethlean and architects Tonkin Zulaikha Greer proposed ‘100 Forests and 100 Gardens’, focussing on threatened, rare, and symbolic trees from around the world. This design intends to create a breathtaking mosaic of forest trees that are rare and endangered of have ethno-botanical (the scientific study of the relationships that exist between people and plants) symbolic value and can most importantly, survive on the site. Some of the plantings to date include: Wollemi pine (Wollemia nobilis), Camden white gum (Eucalyptus benthamii), Ginkgo (Ginkgo biloba), Giant Sequoia (Sequoiadendron gigantum), Moroccan cypress (Cupressus atlantica), Dragon tree (Dracaena draco), the Californian Fan Palm (Washingtonia filifera) and the Chinese Tulip tree (Lirodendron chinense).

There is a great visitor centre which also houses the National Bonsai and Penjing Collection of Australia. This was a real eye opener and a must see for me as there were about 35 mature examples of native plants as bonsai (who said you cannot bonsai native plants successfully?).

The Arboretum is still a few years away from completion, however this should not stop you visiting it and more than once, if for no other reason but to see the plantings and the fantastic concept mature. There are some great lookouts which all have stunning views over Canberra, the Brindabella Ranges as well as the Arboretum itself.

Jeff Howes
27 Mar 2013


A Floral Streetscape – Waikiki, Hawaii          Ros Walcott          Photos by Ben Walcott

On a recent visit to Hawaii I was most impressed by the floral streetscape of Waikiki. Space is at a premium in the crowded tourist precinct, but every spare inch is used for greenery and flowers. Of course, it is easier in a climate such as Hawaii’s to have plants in flower the whole year round, hibiscus, frangipani, gingers and a wide variety of tropical trees are always in bloom. However the energy and care put into the tiny gardens is noticeable.
I was also pleased to see an important avenue lined very successfully with casuarinas, showy bottlebrush is everywhere and I was surprised to see Norfolk Island Pines planted very close together as a windbreak or tall hedge protecting a coffee plantation in the interior of Oahu.
Most small gardens on the street appear to be cared for by the shop and restaurant owners, although some planting was obviously done by the municipality (see photo below left). These water containers are used all over the US to jump start new plantings. They can be refilled when needed and the water leaks out gradually without wetting the surrounding pavement.

Even the check-in line in the hotel lobby is a chance to add some blooming orchids for the visitors’ pleasure. The buildings are dripping with foliage and the streets are planted with extravagantly flowering trees like this one below.
The tropical aspect is emphasised by palm trees and tropical foliage. Colour and greenery are restful to the eyes in the middle of all the glaring hardscape of buildings and roads. The businesses of Waikiki are to be congratulated for their attention to the creation of a relaxed and exotic atmosphere by the judicious use of plants at every opportunity.

Small gardens are crammed into the tiniest spaces. Here oversized tropical foliage is surrounded by flowering shrubs and a tiny patch of soothing green lawn. The shade from the street trees is doubly welcome in the humid tropical heat.
I would be happy to see more streetscapes like this in every locality showing off the flora which grows well there. In Australia we could be less dependent on the government to plant our streets and encourage individuals to add colour and variety to our living areas, although in some areas I know there are legal restrictions on street plantings by individuals.
Quote of the Season:

Steve Martino (from his blog [http://stevemartino.blogspot.com.au/](http://stevemartino.blogspot.com.au/)). Steve is perhaps a bit extreme in his views, but the gardens he designs are breathtaking (see p.14).

‘I have developed a very narrow definition of what is a good landscape design. I separate landscape design into two categories based on a project’s usefulness to the natural environment: native plants-good, exotic plants-bad. It’s that simple; it’s good for the planet or it’s bad. The following graphic demonstrates this.’

![Landscape Sustainability Diagram](image)

Meetings and Garden Visits

Meeting of GDSG Melbourne Branch held on Saturday May 18 at Knox Park Primary School

Diana Snape, Vic

The main purpose of this meeting was to visit Knox Park Primary School and its Australian garden, which some of our members (and other APS Foothills Group members) have been involved in helping maintain. It was started in 1972 by the first principal, Fred Rogers, a stalwart of the Australian Plant Society in Victoria (please see separate report of garden visit).

In our short indoors meeting, we also discussed garden records. Members agreed with the idea of widening the scope of records by having different categories, including that of significant gardens as previously decided. We thought some process of vetting photos was desirable, for example by the leader and newsletter editor. Chris Larkin suggested having the format for recording gardens at (or near) the back of every newsletter to remind and encourage members to make use of it.

Christine Gaiardo told us that Angelo had made a DVD of our visit to the Freake garden, which we'll look forward to seeing (and hearing) as soon as possible, probably at the next meeting in August. I've also emailed Malcolm and Monika to ask them if we could complete a 'significant garden' record of their garden, extending Chris Larkin's report, to put on the GDSG website.

It was difficult to find a date for our next meeting, as August is busy (and September is busier). So our next meeting will be on another Saturday, August 24, at Maranoa Garden (Melway 46G7), coinciding with the Maranoa Festival. We thought it was a good idea to support the festival, when there will be guided tours of the garden and other attractions. It's probably best to visit Maranoa independently during the day, before and/or after lunch - maybe arrange a car-ful to go with. We'll meet at 1pm in Beckett Park opposite the entrance from Parring Road and find a spot for a picnic lunch (BYO chair might be a good idea). We'll
then meet again at 3.30pm nearby, outside 45 Banool Road where we now live, to have the meeting and afternoon tea in our apartment (and see Angelo's DVD).
We thanked our hosts and guides, Shirley and Ron Smith, for showing us around and telling us about the school and its activities and also for their dedication in working (with others, including some of the children) on these gardens. We also thanked them for arranging the use of the staffroom (and the school principal who happened to appear just then).

**Garden Visit May 18  ** Diana Snape, Vic

Knox Park Primary School was started in 1972 and a plaque on a mature *Eucalyptus scoparia* records Fred Rogers' role as the first Principal. Its current 250 fortunate children enjoy a remarkable garden playground. In addition to gardens, the spacious grounds have extensive grassed areas and a variety of mature trees, mainly eucalypts. Some of the Stringybarks are even on the State Register. Both seats and playground equipment are under trees, which are inspected regularly for safety. Roots are protected from compaction by a generous layer of mulch, donated by a friend of the school.

The grounds are adjacent to Lakewood Nature Reserve, a marvellous wildlife area with a birdlist of about 100 species and also a number of frog species. Different colonies of frogs frequent different depths of water. A small group of volunteers including Shirley and Ron Smith, our hosts for the visit, plus school children planted about a thousand plants along inside the front fence. The plants were mostly indigenous and included trees, shrubs (some prickly) and grasses. The purpose was to create a corridor for small birds from the Reserve to a treed area in the housing estate on the other side of the school.

The garden contains only Australian plants, again mostly indigenous, because volunteers want to create a garden that helps children learn, both culturally and educationally. Teachers often use material from the garden for teaching, for example the *Seneccio* caterpillars that were noticed one day and live only on rare seneccios. There is constant change in a school grounds so volunteers have to be flexible, as it is a "kids' playground, not just a garden". For example a new path was created where there was a strong 'desire line' in a reasonable position. People can walk their dogs through the grounds, which are open to the public.

A grant was obtained for the development of fire safety areas, where garden beds are now separated by open areas covered with Lilydale gravel. The children have designed and painted a number of colourful bollards, grouped in strategic positions around the school. There are also colourful murals of lively artwork including one with spectacular 'trompe l'oeil' effect, its painted strap-leaved plants almost impossible to separate from the garden in front.

The children have a sense of ownership, especially the 'Green Team' from years 5 and 6 who regularly work in the garden. They have grown plants from both cuttings and seeds to plant in the garden. There are three special
areas that have been developed and the 'Green Team' did a pamphlet telling new pupils about them. One is the 'Fairy Ring', protected by a curved westringia hedge (still being established). Nearby a dinosaur skeleton in concrete is hidden in a sandpit for children to discover when digging. Children play 'shops' with toy cash registers and elements from the garden such as pebbles or yellow flowers.

A large rectangular Butterfly Garden is filled with many colourful daisies of different types, plus grasses, dianellas, scaevolas and Correa 'Dusky Bells'. Nearby, an information sign tells about the local butterflies. Similarly a series of signs tells about birds and their habitats and also local plants. Another large area near the front gate and the created 'corridor' provides a 'Bird Habitat Garden' with indigenous plants and two birdbaths. These are filled daily by the preps, who also fill hollows in rocks in the butterfly garden.

Other areas of the gardens have pleasant curves and shapes. Some have the usual problem of dry shade, associated with having such a number of trees. Not surprisingly in a large garden, pruning of plantings is a constant job. Near the building, westringias and correas form a lightly pruned hedge about a metre high. On the other side of the building, big old grevilleas in front of windows were replaced by Austromyrtus dulcis (Midgen Berry) to form a low hedge.

The volunteers have a five-year plan for the garden and each year they put forward a proposed annual program. They do a really valuable job not only for the school children but also for the parents, the general community and for conservation in the area. It was a real pleasure to visit this garden.

**Comment from Nicky Zanen, Vic**

The ANPSA Garden Design Study Group came to visit Knox Park Primary School in May. We were led around the school gardens by Ron and Shirley Smith and were most impressed with what has been done there.

A question was asked as to why 'Garden Design' would be relevant to the GDSG, and the response was that these gardens epitomise all the criteria of good garden design - including being lovely to look at, useful, educational, attractive to fauna, etc.

**Canberra GDSG**

**Visit to Ian Tranter’s Garden**

29 Kinsella St., Queanbeyan, 7 May 2013

On a cool and sunny autumn day eight members of Canberra Region ANPS/GDSG gathered to see Ian’s 10 year old garden. The garden is 60m long and steeply sloped, maybe dropping 10m from front to back. Ian has terraced and continues to terrace his garden to make beds for his wide variety of plants. He has two really huge Allocasuarina nana, nothing ‘nana’ about them. Below is Ian’s story of the development of his garden.

**GDSG Canberra Garden Visit**

Ian Tranter, Canberra

The block is about half an acre (30mx 60m) with its long axis sloping up west towards a low hill that is part of a local nature reserve. I moved in about ten years ago. The garden was relatively undeveloped but the upper fifth still had some remaining bush, including (*Eucalyptus polyanthemos, E. macrorychna, Acacia pycnantha, Kunzea ericoides, Acacia genistifolia, Leptospermum multicaule, Cassinia quinquefaria, Brachyloma daphnoides, Dillwynia phyllicoides, Dianella revoluta, Leucopogon microphyllus, Cassytha pubescens, Stylidium graminifolium, Goodenia hederacea, Lomandra filiformis, Chrysocephalum semipapposum, Thysanotus patersonii, Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia, Caladenia carnea and Diuris sulphurea*).

The natural soil contains few nutrients or organic matter, consisting of about 30cm of stones mixed with a hydrophobic powder derived from bands of shale uphill, overlying about 15cm of pure powder, covering many metres of rock hard clay. As the block has a drop of about 8m along its length, it sheds water like a duck’s back.

On the positive side, the drainage is very good, it gets slightly fewer frosts (generally only down to minus 5) than in the valley, has great views across to the bush covered escarpment on the other side of
the valley, backs onto bush reserve on two sides at the rear, and is protected from the worst of the bitter winter south westerlies and the searing summer north westerlies. The unusual S shaped house that slithers down the front half of the property breaks up the space with its meanders. The nature strip is cut right back into the solid clay, and after a range of trials, the plants that cope best are melaleucas so there are now an informal row that soften the retaining walls behind and, from the house, obscures the view of the neighbouring houses while borrowing the view across the top to the

range beyond. *Eucalyptus gregsoniana* and *Hymenosporum flavum* (Native Frangipani) arch over the driveway, providing texture and scent and are underplanted with eremophilas for colour and nectar, together with a dense thicket of *Callistemon pinifolius* for the honeyeaters and wrens to hide in. The northern side of the house is largely glass and the planting is kept low but topped with deciduous trees (maple, wisteria, crab apple, chinese pistachio) above to provide summer shade, to let in lots of winter sunlight, and to frame the view out east across the valley. The rainwater runs off through a dry shallow creek bed that winds its way past grey leafed eremophilas, *Melaleuca thymifolia*, Albany wax, strawberries and Dianella, under a low sleeper bridge into a dry pond edged with Leptospermums and Indigofera and then at the feet of a row of small casuarinas and *Acacia boormanii* that screen the fence, with native violets and vanilla lilies in the foreground.

Eventually it flows into a perpetual pond half filled with purple irises and frogs. There is a shallow edge for the wrens, finches and thornbills to bathe in and an adjacent *Grevillea longistyly* in which they can hide, and for the honeyeaters to do their platform dives from. This northern area also has small areas of lawn and paving edged with *Eremophila maculata*, *E. glabra*, Daphne, Banksia and Philotheca. Immediately to the west of the house a series of curving retaining walls soften the straight lines of the house and provide beds for correas and croweas with various forms of prostrate *Eremophila glabra*, *E. biserrata* and *E. subteretifolia* spilling over the walls. The top most wall is crowned with a range of bushy *Eremophila maculata* forms, *E. glabras*, *E. niveas* and *E. calorhabdos*, much to the joy of the spinebills.

On the southwest side of the house a curving path leads up to patch of grass for the clothes line, and is surrounded by beds of raspberries, vegetables and a couple of scented roses, and with a shadehouse behind.

While the overall design is informal, the back part is even less formal. The native vegetation has been kept and the paths are narrower and wind more. The two sides that back the reserve are mesh fence allowing the view of the bush behind to be borrowed. Planting along the fence lightly screens the fire trail immediately behind the block. These are largely *Eremophila nivea*, *E. oppositifolia*, *E. santalina*, *E.
calorhabdos, E. serrulata, E. ‘Big Poly’, and E. ‘Summertime Blue’ which all seem to relish the airflow and the westerly summer sun.

Garden Vignettes

Please send in your photos of a particularly pleasing moment in your garden for others to share.

Jeff Howes’ favourite plant

*Banksia spinulosa*

Treasurer’s Report:

As of 18 July:

Cheque account: $9,416.67
Term deposit: $23,373.99
Total: $32,790.66

Note that the significant balances in the Term Deposit and cheque account are due to the generosity of Diana Snape, Jo Hambrett, Chris Larkin, Barbara Buchanan and Danie Ondinea who donated all their royalties from their book *The Australian Garden, Designing with Australian Plants* to the Garden Design Study Group.
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ANPSA Garden Design Study Group dues for 2013-2014 are:

- $20 Printed newsletter for overseas members
- $15 This covers up to two members at the same address to receive a printed newsletter
- $6 This covers up to two members at the same address to receive newsletter by email
- $10 Concession only for pensioners or full-time students to receive printed Newsletter