GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

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Theme for this Newsletter: ‘Naturalistic & Ecological Design’

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ANPSA Garden Design Study Group Newsletter
Published quarterly in February, May, August and November.
Copy Deadline: first day of the publication month, although earlier submissions will be welcomed by the Editor.
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Receiving the Newsletter – are your contact details current?
Membership of GDSG covers a period of twelve months from July 1 to June 30

Please advise me if you wish to change your contact details, or how you wish to receive the Newsletter or to discontinue membership. Remember that membership and emailed Newsletters are FREE!
However, if you require a posted copy there is an annual fee of $20 to cover printing and postage.

Newsletter timing & Themes
These are the 2019 Newsletter dates and themes:

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Please ensure that your submissions reach the editor at least two weeks before the publication month.
The Editor Comments
Hello everyone!
Hopefully everyone has enjoyed a pleasant summer break over Christmas and New Year and have been able to sustain your gardens through the climatic extremes that swept across the continent from destructive cyclones, to bushfires and searing heat to flooding rains. Throughout all of these impacts our flora has shown its resilience to climate change, illustrating to all of those who care to observe, that the Australian flora has stood the test of time both in the natural environment and when used in amenity horticulture in gardens. In this issue there are several articles that allude to this subject and it is always interesting and informative to read some of the articles in past Newsletters which illustrate that there is very little difference between garden design then and now.

Newsletter #106 theme: 'Naturalistic & Ecological Design'
This theme subject was chosen at the ANPSA Conference in Hobart after our GDSG members had been inspired by a number of Tasmanian landscapes and gardens that demonstrated many of the principles of naturalistic and ecological design. It was felt that members would like to share through the Newsletter specific observations and comments about their approach in establishing gardens in the differing local conditions across the continent. This subject did not trigger the hoped for influx of responses, but in delving back through past Newsletter issues 17 – 20, there was a wealth of information on ‘natural garden design’ to inspire us today. Take the opportunity to scroll back though these past issues on the ANPSA website GDSG pages. Diana’s article on this subject in NL issue #105 is worth re-reading too.

‘Sunshine & Shadow as a Design Tool’ – theme for issue #107
As you maintain your garden though the hot summer months take time to consider the theme for the May Newsletter issue “Sunshine and Shadow as a Design Tool”. I'm sure you will want to escape from the heat and rush to the keyboard to share how you positively manage the values of sunshine and shadow in your garden – even a paragraph comment and a related photo would be appreciated by other members!! We will be away overseas so the May NL issue #107 will be assembled and distributed later in the month on our return.

Extracts from Past Newsletters (Issues 17 to 20)
Please note that the most recent issues up to # 105 - 2018 have been added to the index by Glenda Browne our Web-index specialist. The GDSG Newsletter index on the ANPSA website is a great way to search out specific ideas and recommendations offered by members in relation to garden design over the years since the first Newsletter in May 1993. There are many gems of inspiration similar to the following excerpts below that are worth repeating as they are still as relevant today as they were when first published. Make sure you read the full article of these references and other articles on the GDSG Newsletter archives section of the ANPSA website.

Newsletter #17 – May 1997
Natural Gardens – Some thoughts from George Seddon  opening lecture 1996 Landscape Australia Conference reported by Diana Snape Vic
We gardeners manage more than 50% of all urban land in Australia and land management requires detail objectives. Your list of objectives will surely include meeting a number of specific functional, economic & aesthetic requirements. In addition, our management should be ecologically or environmentally responsible. The art of gardening consists of making good compromises between functional, visual, economic and environmental criteria, which include an understanding of the natural cycles of our own environment

As Others See Us - Barbara Buchanan Vic
I recently read an old Country Life article titled 'Going Native' by their regular garden writer Christopher Lloyd, about a flying visit he had just paid to Australia. He cannot understand any serious garden maker restricting themselves to their native flora and has a low opinion of the results, although he does admit it is possible, as evidenced by Alvina and George Smith at Tynong North, to make such a garden 'successful'. His opinion seems based on a drive around the streets of Canberra and the “tail, scrawny tree-shrubs, totally uncared for” that he saw and assumes are characteristic of Australian native gardens . . . .
'Natural gardens' - another hobby horse - Geoff Simmons Qld
It seems that writers on gardening are always looking for new themes and we are now witnessing the spin doctors selling a new term for garden design. Bush, cottage and meadow have had their turn and now "natural" is the word favoured. Dear, oh dear! What a sad commentary - neglect your own ideas but keep up with the trendy. . . .

Ten favourite plants for designing - Grahame Durbidge NSW
This article lists Grahame's favourite Australian plants to use in designing, with a comment as to its value.

ED: Share with our GDSG members your list of the top species you find most useful in designing your garden.

Newsletter #18 – August 1997
Design philosophy behind "The Sorn" - Lindsay Campbell Tas
My garden "The Sorn" seems to be attracting some interest from garden enthusiasts. I find this perplexing (& pleasing) as it has little of what seems to be popular in modern gardening (strong colour, contrast and prominent features). It is a simple, relaxed garden that is very easy to live in. While this is our day to day experience it is surprising to have visitors relate to it on this level. Perhaps I can attempt to explain this by detailing the motivation behind the design . . . .

Plants in pots - Geoff Simmons Qld
From the smallest to the largest garden, there is a place for pots of plants. Considered in the context of Australian gardens they present another challenge to create something expressing unique design. Container grown plants as part of a garden depends on the garden layout, so this point will be avoided although it should be interesting to hear how they are blended into a garden scene.

Newsletter #19 – November 1997
ED: This issue provides a wealth of information from the papers presented at the SGAP Victoria Garden Design Seminar
Plants as Form - Paul Thompson - reported by Barbara Buchanan Vic
The perceived form of plants in the garden depends on various interactive factors - perspective, light, season and foliage texture, itself dependent on leaf colour, shape and size. In one sense design is all about manipulating light. The placement of plants with varying leaf sizes and colours can affect the perspective, large leaves in the foreground grading to fine leaves in the rear will extend the distance, as will grading from dark leaves to light.

The role of maintenance - Jeff Howes NSW
I have been talking to a Sydney freelance writer about how you resolve the problem of using Australian plants to create a garden that is (to use his words) "not all leggy and unkempt". He inferred that most gardens that use native plants end up that way. . . .

Straight lines or curves? - Geoff Simmons Qld
"Straight lines are forbidden here" (see NL 18 - 4) Once again we see inferred that curved paths are good and straight lines are bad. It is interesting that we read comments on the importance of serenity in garden design by several contributors, in this respect, the simplicity of straight lines belies the myth that curved lines are the be-all of garden design. Most persons are more at peace with orderliness than the anarchy of chaos. . . .

Newsletter #20 – February 1998
Use of rocks in the garden - Bev Hanson Vic
It is not necessary to use rocks when designing a garden but they certainly add interest if positioned in a natural way. The best way to learn the art of placing rocks is to take the time to study nature. Of course we cannot hope to reproduce the magnificent huge outcrops we see in wilderness areas but, on a smaller scale and with care selecting and placing, a pleasing result can be achieved. Just a few very large rocks of different shapes placed to look as though they had always been there can help to create much interest irrespective of the season. . . .

Ornamental small eucalypts - Dean Nicolle S.A.
Here is a list of what I think are the 12 best and most ornamental small eucalypts for the average Australian garden. Some are well known but others may be difficult to obtain. They are listed with the best at top. Mature height and rainfall region in which they grow best are included. . . .
"Mission Statement", our Aims, and a new Logo?

Newsletter # 20 recorded discussion at the November 1997 Melbourne meeting about the GDSG Aims defined when the group was started in 1992. Geoff Short asked if we had a current "Mission Statement". If we don't at the moment - should we have? And if so, what should it be? The original GDSG aims had not really been re-examined in the last five years (to 1997) so it is probably time they were. Members aspirations may not have changed very much but please send in your ideas, either as individuals, from groups of members or branches.

Main Aims of the GDSG:
1. Carry out theoretical & practical investigation of garden design using Australian plants. This includes reading books and articles on garden design (with exotic plants as well as Australian plants) and having experienced speakers talk to us. We have tried to define styles of gardens to provide a reference framework for discussion and comparison. A vital aspect of practical investigation is the keeping of plans and written and photographic records of examples of good garden design. A number of garden design projects are underway.
2. Develop resources for people who are interested in garden design with Australian plants. The resources would include the outcomes of our first aim. Cataloguing of records of gardens and photographs, using a computer database, has already started and is a big job. In time we'd also like to establish a database of Australian plants with a focus on garden design.
3. Encourage more & better use of Australian plants in gardens which the public can visit. This refers to both public and private gardens. We need a wide variety of good examples of different styles of garden, ideally in such schemes as the Australia's Open Garden Scheme, to overcome many people's negative view of straggly native gardens.
4. Produce four Newsletters a year & publish articles on garden design. As you know our Newsletters are about 20 A4 pages in length and they are our main means of communication, so we rely on 'feedback'. Some members also write articles for magazines and newspapers and give talks to SGAP and other groups.

At the time (1997) editor Diana posed the following questions:
• Should we have a "Mission Statement" and if so what should it be?
• Should we alter or add to any of these aims?
  And while you're thinking about such things –
• How can we achieve better communication between members? Is this necessary?
• Is it time for a new logo (the current one was not intended to last for ever)?
  Ideally the logo would suggest the 3 elements - Australian, garden & design (with ASGAP &/or GDSG).

ED: Now this provides some food for thought for today's members to generate ideas to share in the next Newsletter!

The question is (some twenty years later - in 2019) do we want to modify or add anything to make the study group more relevant to you as a member of the GDSG??

Please share with all of us your thoughts and suggestions.

GARDEN TIPS - Gardeners World, February 2018

Forget expensive gym memberships. Get stuck into your garden for great health benefits – for FREE!

Whether you spend five minutes or a whole day gardening, all the stretching, pulling, pushing and lifting will help YOU and YOUR GARDEN stay in shape.

Not only can gardening lower stress levels and reduce mental health issues such as depression, it also boosts confidence and provides a SENSE OF PRIDE!

The more time spent in the garden the more you will boost your overall mental and physical well-being, leading to a HEALTHIER and HAPPIER LIFE for you and those around you.
What we can learn from ‘City Gardens’?  

Colleen Keena Q

ED: hopefully this article will stimulate members to pen a few of their thoughts on the Courtyard & Patio garden design theme subject for inclusion in next year’s February 2020 issue of the GDSG Newsletter.

The Bosco Verticale or Vertical Forest, in Milan is described in the August 2018 issue of ‘Gardeners’ World, with the title ‘City Gardens’ at the following link. https://www.stefanoboeriarchitetti.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/GW0818_PlantsSaveLives_FINAL.pdf

The 21,000 plants around two tower blocks are estimated to transform 20,000 kg of CO2 into oxygen annually. They are fertilised only by CO2 in the air and irrigated by water run-off from Milan’s streets.

Colleen writes: We have long had an interest in modifying the climate and conditions around our house. In the 1970s, we grew Melia azedarach to the north of our house at that time, enjoying the protection of the foliage in summer and the bare trunks that allowed sun into the house to warm floors in winter.

I found a lot of scientifically based information in this article. It was noted that a team at Sheffield University in UK is working on identifying those plant groups that can give us specific benefits beyond purely visual, in the light of our changing climate. Dr Ross Cameron says that this research is in its infancy but that they are beginning to identify the environmental, psychological and social benefits of key plants. He notes that there are plants to help counter flood risk: ‘Species such as pine, spruce, fir, cedar and privet have lots of small leaves which increase their surface area and this gives them the ability to capture, store and reduce the force of rainwater, thereby avoiding flash flooding’. He continues that lawns, left a little longer, can also help in this and filter what’s entering our water courses.’ . . . . .

We have found Melaleuca, particularly M. viminalis and M. linariifolia, with an under planting of Lomandra, are particularly useful in this role.

Dr Cameron notes that his team has been identifying plants that are most effective at keeping a building cool in summer. ‘We have shown on thermal cameras that fuchsia, jasmine, ivy Virginia creeper, Russian vine and viburnum are able to cool a building by between 7C and 14C. . . . . .

While we don’t have plants on walls, we have continued the use of deciduous species to the north with the planting of Melia and the addition of Brachychiton, particularly B. bidwillii (shown left).

The article mentions recent work by The Centre for Ecology and Hydrology. There has been a focus on how plants on pollution showing that what we plant in a city, and where, is key. Certain large, broad-leaved trees along a road can trap pollution, for instance, while large trees planted in parklands can be better at absorbing the pollution. Conifers have been found to be better at trapping particulate matter, due to their smaller leaf size and shape’. . . . . . We liked this statement as we have used large-leaved plants such as Hibiscus tiliacus and Thespesia populnea (shown left) adjacent to the road and native conifers, especially Callitris baileyii to edge the top of our long drive.

Both scientists noted that wide or dense hedges can significantly reduce particulate matter pollution, when used as a barrier along roadsides, indicating that with careful placing of the right plant combinations, the pollution entering our homes could be reduced by 30 to 50 per cent. . . . . .

. We have a family member who is extremely sensitive to environmental pollutants so dug up the whole acre
when we moved here in 2000 and planted a thick hedge of plants around the perimeter, e.g. the back fence has a dense planting of *Syzygium australe* and *Backhousia citriodora*, As well as providing a dense hedge, both have culinary uses.

I think my favourite part of the article is the notion that ‘while we’re building ecological resilience into our cities, we’re also improving our mental well-being’. The research from Dr Cameron indicates that to relax more and reduce stress, you should use predominantly blue-green hues in your planting – he includes lavender and rosemary – and include water features and create a sense of enclosure, or garden rooms, with hedging such as beech and horn beam. He indicates that calculating the mental benefits of horticulture is a burgeoning area of study. . . . . Other hedging plants for us include *Hibiscus insularis* and varieties of *Westringia* and *Alyogyne*.

The author of the article, Arit Anderson, suggests: firstly, assess your garden. Where are the hot spots? Is there a risk of flooding? How near are you to heavy pollution sites, such as a main road? Then explore the benefits that a plant has to offer. She concludes ‘there’s no better way to find your newest planting partners – plants that could not only be with you for life, but also improve it’.

**A Salt Lashed Garden**

*Reproduced from GDSG Newsletter November 1998*

“HELP” called Gillian Morris, a NSW coastal gardener. It sounded pretty desperate with the howling salt-laden winds covering every surface of the plants with a greasy coating and all the house's windows copping it too of course. The burning that becomes apparent a few weeks later is an indicator of the severity of those unforgiving onshore winds. Plants that the eons have failed to select in the evolutionary shakeout will shed their leaves or eventually wither and croak, so for many plants that are planted with the best of design reasons they are simply not suitable where airborne salt is a problem. Despair not, there are plenty of things that the good old Aussie gardener can do - plant the whole joint with buffalo grass or kykuyu and put your feet up on the verandah rail and sip another sherry. "Not a good suggestion" did I hear you say? OK, then let's try and grow something a little taller, the ubiquitous Aggie (Agapanthus) or Coprosma (Shiny-leaf) - they'll surely do the trick. Still no deal? - fussy person! Why did you move from that lovely garden in Lane Cove to the salt lashed south coast? It looks as though we had better delve further into this coastal salt business, but before I do I must relate a little story. Some years ago a group of us bought a parcel of land adjoining the coast which was lashed from two directions by salt laden winds. We camped on this block, 5 acres of which was natural vegetation and the other 5 was cleared farmland. The farmland of course was the only place suitable for camping.

We experienced and witnessed over the years tents being literally blown inside out; horizontal rain; rabbit devastation of anything we planted; our nearby neighbour's liquid cow poop flowing copiously across the block; the water-table rising 10cm above ground level; and our massive plantings disappearing under the most luxuriant growth of phalaris and fog grass. On our second planting attempt, after the rabbit invasion and a decent fencng of the 5 acres, our dear neighbour who had begun to take quite an interest in these quaint city folk, leaned on our gate one morning and kindly informed us that the only plants we would be able to grow would be "Shinyleaves" - hence my eagerness to pass on this gem of information. We overcame all of these problems and planted 8,500 native plants (mostly indigenous) in our enclosure. Today, some 20 years later, we camp in total shelter in a paradise of birds and other wildlife. If there is a problem of airborne salt then it is very useful to know just how strong that exposure really is. A site that is several streets back has some protection from the full frontal blast that accompanies a churning sea and driving onshore wind. So too does the site that is in the lee of a headland or behind some screening trees or hedge, even though it is right on the beachfront. Good measures to gauge this exposure are to ascertain whether you are in direct line with the destructive wind that whips up fine spray which drifts like clouds over the coast, or look at your house or car windows. If they are heavily coated with a greasy film directly after a storm, then you are probably in what I regard as a front line site and your selection of plants will be a little restricted until you create some shelter.

Once this is achieved the whole scene changes and the choice is much wider. It is interesting to note that rain accompanying these storms can lessen the damage by washing off the salt. Let's consider this a little further. If,
for instance, eucalyptus species are found right down near the water’s edge, these trees would be getting some kind of shelter as I have never known or observed any species of euc. that is able to withstand the ‘full frontal’ for prolonged periods, even species that originate from coastal areas. Plants in this situation usually show burning of the leaves and eventually die back and finally succumb. Observe the frontal dune situation for a moment. The species that are close to the sea and growing on this dune are limited, stunted in growth and are often washed by waves or even destroyed by them. Behind this primary dune grow a greater range of plants and their height is significantly increased, particularly in the swales (less salt-air exposure). Headlands are frequently very exposed sites, plants are stunted, dense and form a closed canopy, restricting wind damage, and the range of species again is relatively small. Quite often one side of the site is more protected than the other; this then reflects the direction of the damaging winds.

I have noticed an interesting situation develop on the Victorian south-west coast where a garden 50 metres from the shore, facing the damaging easterlies on that coast, suddenly becomes fully exposed due to the removal of a line of giant Monterey Cypress. This line of dense trees, totally out of place in the area, was demolished in one enlightened move, deflecting the salt winds up and over the overlooking gardens. The coastal form of *Eucalyptus viminalis* which becomes dwarfed, stunted and regularly burnt had grown into much taller handsome trees in the protection and now it will be interesting to see how they fare. The rest of the garden has been able to grow quite a wide range of plants, still originating from coastal provenances however. Some years ago several more of these environmental abominations were removed from a nearby block causing a number of plant deaths as the garden adjusted to the new level of exposure.

Assuming that the salt exposure is the severest kind and a rich and varied garden is desired, it is now important to observe the local plants and find out the names of the species that are growing in similar situations. Sure, if you have reference books on your area, consult them, or collect a small specimen and ask SGAP members for some help. If you are lucky enough to have an indigenous nursery in the area, consult them. I would regard a nursery that is growing plants from coastal provenances to be of great value as I would feel assured of sound knowledge and plants that originate from areas that experience the sorts of conditions with which you have to contend. The reason I say this is that some species that grow naturally by the coast can also be widespread and so may not be able to withstand the rigours you require of them. There are now a wide range of publications that list species and discuss the coastal situation. Use them, but do not rely on them altogether on the degree of windborne salt hardness, to see in one publication a list that includes *Acacia longifolia*, *Banksia marginata* and several species of *Eucalyptus*. These I regard as highly doubtful front liners.

You will have noted that I have placed the emphasis on indigenous plants. I regard it as essential that the quality of an area is preserved at all costs. This means then that a percentage of local plants should be replanted or, if the area has been totally changed, it is even more critical and some of these too should be of tree stature. One of our aims in creating a native or mixed garden should be to improve the natural balance of the area, thus reaping the benefits of the local wildlife.

Perhaps at this stage a few books could be mentioned - add to the list so we can build up a good reference. 'Coastal Gardening in Australia' Elliot (Lothian); 'Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants' Vol. 1 Elliot Jones (Lothian); 'Beach Plants of S. E Australia' Carolin & Clarke (Sainty & Assoc.); 'Grow What Where' Aust. Plant Study Group (Nelson); Creating a dense hedge for protection will certainly allow most plants to be grown successfully but, if a view is to be preserved as a high priority, then looking through trunks is usually more attractive than the broad open vista - debatable of course. This will mean a subsequent reduction in your choice of species. The second line group of plants will be ones that are universally regarded as airborne salt tolerant with the usual preferences for soil types etc. A friend in South Australia had a combination of salt exposure and heavy limestone. The combination of shallow calcareous soils and the salt air limited his choice to a dozen or so plants, so he turned it into a grey garden with *Atriplex, Poa, Rhagodia, Leucophyta, Correa, Spinifex* and *Swainsona* the effect was pretty dramatic.
Queensland Conservation Collection Garden

Lawrie Smith Q

The Curator of the Brisbane Botanic Gardens, Mt Coot-tha, Dale Arvidsson escorted members of NPQ and GDSGQ in December 2017, around the new Queensland Conservation Collection Garden (QCC) where he introduced us to many of the less known and rare species now establishing so well within this section of the Botanic Gardens. This garden was opened in June 2015, established as a result of the construction of the Legacy Way motorway twin tunnel which sweeps deep under the north-east corner of the Gardens. The site was excavated to ‘bury’ the tunnel entrance roadways then covered by extensive fill and landform designed to create the diverse built landscape in which to establish the carefully selected collection of rare and threatened Queensland species. Central to the new garden is the four hectare, 18 mega litre lake and waterway system which, as well as being an attractive visual feature, is the main water storage element to make the Botanic Gardens self-sufficient.

The motorway landscape architects engaged Lawrie to advise them on the botanic strategy and associated species to define the initial garden planning and design. Dale outlined how the collection displays both individual threatened species and interprets their place in the ecological communities of the majority of Queensland’s 13 ‘bioregions’. This QCC garden will display and educate the public about as many species as can be collected and grown in ex-situ display and conservation — with a target of 75% of threatened species in the living collections and in seed bank storage by 2020.

Not every plant on display in the QCC Garden is threatened, but the most significant specimens are complimented by selected species from the relevant regional ecosystems to add depth to the story of each sub-collection and/or to demonstrate their use in amenity landscape planting. As we zig-zagged around the extensive site it was interesting to appreciate the key juvenile specimens of the various collections and to imagine how botanically significant this extensive garden will be as it matures.

The principal Collections of the QCC Garden include:

- Southern montane heaths and shrublands
  *Binna Burra, Mt Barney, peaks of Fassifern Valley, Mt Walsh*
- Central montane heaths and shrublands
  *Toowoomba, Springsure, Blackdown Tableland, Carnarvon*
- Northern montane heaths and shrublands
  *Mackay highlands to Wet Tropics*
- North Queensland Rainforest
  *Wet Tropics from Townsville to Cape York*
- Central Queensland Rainforest
  *Whitsundays south to Gladstone*
- South-east Queensland Rainforest
  *Many Peaks, Fraser Island, Cooloola, SEQ hinterlands*
- Cycad Grove Collection
  *Around Queensland*
- Coastal Collection & Coastal Montane
  *Glasshouse Mountains and Mt Coolum*
- Proteaceae Collection
  *Around Queensland*
- Inland Waterways
- Brigalow
  *Inland and coastal Queensland, Townsville to NSW border*
- Semi-evergreen Vine Thicket
  *Steep hills and rocky ridges*
- Dry Rainforest
  *Throughout eastern Queensland*
- Bottle Tree Grove

Obviously this QCC garden will provide a comprehensive glimpse into the diversity of the Queensland flora, but it is a work very much in progress. Dale requested that any assistance NPQ members can provide to progressively augment the collection with difficult to obtain specimens will be very much appreciated.
Joan Zande Garden, Sutherland, Sydney NSW

ED: While attending the APS NSW November Gathering I had the pleasure of visiting Joan’s garden and was very impressed at the application of so many design principles in this relatively small residential garden reconstructed after 40 years as a collaborative effort between Joan and an obviously very talented landscape contractor.

The first part of this garden description is reproduced from an article in Garden Drum website 2016.

A blended garden built on harmony and trust

Heather Miles, NSW

Every garden tells a story, and this one in southern Sydney tells one of trust and collaboration that has created magic. When Joan Zande retired, her dream was to redesign her 40-year old garden. Yet finding a designer who embraced the site proved challenging. Against a rocky sandstone escarpment, a 10º slope, drainage problems and nowhere to sit, the site just seemed too hard.

And then she met Greg Hopcroft – artist, designer and structural landscaper. For Greg, the challenges of the site were its essence, its magic. The sandstone escarpment was the garden frame and defined the materials and colour palette. The slope was an opportunity to create levels and space. The nearby Joseph Banks Native Plants Reserve was the inspiration for planting. Drainage issues were an opportunity to capture water to feed the garden. With just a sketch, the close collaboration of landscaper and owner began in late 2012 to create this garden. Joan gave Greg free rein. His design principles are deceptively simple yet elegant.

Originating in the Japanese philosophy of design, he believes in:
- Designing some areas in detail and allowing the rest to flow
- Recycling materials on site, with large stones moved around to create the bones of the garden and unique spaces blending into a whole
- Creating harmony and balance through repetition – sandstone paving and walls complementing the sandstone rock escarpment, plants in 3s, 5s and 7s, and triangles allowing the eye to follow a line
- Using Australian native plants as hedges and under planting to blend into the landscape, attract fauna and improve sustainability
- Introducing exotic deciduous (grafted) trees such as for structure, shade in summer and sun in winter, and Mondo Grass (*Ophiopogon* sp) as a carpet and weed reduction.

Joan’s trust in Greg has been fully rewarded. The outcome is a calming garden, with multiple flat spaces to relax or entertain – spaces big enough to use without feeling crowded. The garden can be viewed from all standpoints rather than just one or two, and each creates an interesting vista. The garden has unique blend of natives and exotics bringing out the best in both. The colour palette harmonises with the sandstone escarpment and rock walls – yellows, reds and white/grey – and contrasting textures create year round interest.

Joan maintains the garden herself, including mowing the lawn. While low maintenance, she admits to pottering in the garden at least 3 to 4 times a week. On Greg’s advice, she cares for the soil, mulching endlessly and applying wetting agents to stop the water beading, given the high sand content. Joan chooses small plants – which take time for impact, but gives the plants the best chance of success.

Joan’s special pastime now is sitting on the veranda, watching the birds and admiring the garden. For her, the garden tells a story – a 40 year history, transformation, collaboration and new beginnings. For Greg, it’s a story of trust – trusted to express his vision, trusted to make it happen.
Joan’s Garden - Designed with Nature

Lawrie Smith Q

First Impressions

Walking up from the front gate along the stepped pathway within the narrow space between two adjoining houses you sense that there is something different about to happen – then suddenly you are sure, as straight ahead a Japanese style downpipe is the first sculptural focus to attract your attention. You turn right and can’t help but exclaim Wow!! .... as you see for the first time the surprisingly expansive garden that draws your eye up to and around the rugged enclosing sandstone cliff.

An informal flagstone pathway invites immediate entry to the ‘amphitheatre’ garden – however the main access is further along where the surrounding garden diversity can be fully appreciated.

Sandstone Escarpment

The almost vertical crescent of sandstone rock face more than nine metres high, sweeps diagonally across the site. The rock is irregular enough to support a range of small shrubs, orchids and covers to conceal and reveal just the right amount of sandstone as the dominant physical and visual element.

This has defined the garden design strategy through its dramatic sculptural forms, textures and colours. The strong horizontal lines of the rock strata are repeated in the rock walls, in the scree rockery, in the hedges and in the plant massing.

The ‘borrowed landscape’ of the bushland above the rock face also enhances the garden and is reflected in the subtle diversity of the selected planting below inspired by the nearby Joseph Banks Native Plants Reserve.

The Circular Lawn

As you approach the garden along the upward sloping side entry path, a wide horizontal band of green seems to underline the garden view to be progressively revealed as a dramatic circular manicured grass terrace.

The regular shape of this unexpected formal lawn is defined by the crescent sandstone rock face, with the existing sloping landform reshaped by cut and fill, to complete this strongly geometric garden terrace. Although the circular lawn and perimeter low hedge is visually dominant it is a carefully integrated element within the garden. The contrast between the level lawn and the vertical face of the escarpment provides visual drama, everything is carefully tied together by the strong horizontal lines of rock strata, stone walls and the surrounding hedge.

Hedge and Gardens

The circular hedge of Syzygium ‘Allyn Magic’ effectively enhances the strength of the formal geometric design and also provides a safe edge where the garden terrace falls away to lower levels.

In views from the several main viewpoints, the circular hedge effectively sweeps the eye into the garden to focus on a number of differing sculptural or botanic elements. Interestingly, the hedge attracts the eye into a group of formal Sannantha virgata spheres or balls, which seem to ‘bounce’ up into the sloping scree garden below the sandstone cliff.

The contrast in form between the dramatic circular lawn & hedge with the irregularity and informality of the rockery garden merging with the sandstone cliff, provides controlled visual interest & diversity. Carefully selected and managed shrubs provide an ever-changing living mosaic of colour, form and texture complementing the sculptural sandstone.
Access & Circulation

The garden geometry is primarily derived from the natural curved form of the sandstone escarpment and as it diverges away from the base of the cliff the ‘scree’ slope rockery garden becomes wider offering a ‘natural’ rock stairway through clusters of small plants, accessing the various levels of terraced garden. Sandstone slab step treads continue the sympathetic choice of ‘hard landscape’ materials to ensure that the garden colour palette is complimentary and integrated. Skilful use of dry laid sandstone block walls again repeat the circular form and horizontal expression of the lawn and hedge, extending the visual significance of the geometry.

Upper Terraces

High up on the rock escarpment, views down into the garden from this naturally dramatic location, reveal how effectively this steep sloping site has been utilised and planned to provide two major and distinctive garden ‘places’ each with differing uses and attributes but all surrounded and integrated with gardens of appropriate native plants. The upper terrace, complete with timber deck, seating, and fire pit offers an attractive place for both winter and summer activities. The circular lawn is visually dominant but still an integral component of the garden with many uses.

Linking Gardens

The gardens meander throughout the various levels, effectively linking the main spaces generally in irregular or ‘natural’ character but sometimes in more formal geometry. The plant material is carefully chosen for its suitability, function and aesthetic qualities, particularly to variously compliment or contrast with the character of the sandstone. Considered use has been made to integrate a few well-chosen exotic tree species to provide focal points of seasonal interest and added diversity. Collectively all of the garden materials and plants create a very interesting and unified garden in which you are enticed to progressively explore the various differing spaces and environments.

SUMMARY

This garden strongly exhibits what I like to call ‘Design with Nature’ – where the natural geology, form and aspect of the site is a strong influence on the detail design, in close association with the functional parameters and aesthetic values set by the garden user/designer. The result is that this garden belongs just right where it is and could probably not be successfully established anywhere else. It exhibits that interesting juxtaposition of natural vegetation forms with appropriately modified specimens for visual contrast and other aesthetic reasons. Overall this garden offers a huge opportunity for a dedicated native plant enthusiast to successfully establish an amazing canvas on which to display a range of species suited to numerous ecological niches – what more could you ask?
Australian Native Plants Nursery in USA – Ojai Valley, California

Words by Misty Hall

ED: I thought you might be interested in this account from a US publication to see what one of our members is doing so successfully to promote Australian native plants near Santa Barbara, north of Los Angeles. Jo has taken me for a tour through several of ‘her emigrant Aussie gardens’ and they are simply amazing!

Many of us drive by a plant paradise every single day and don’t even know it. But the Australian Native Plants Nursery has been quietly cultivating hundreds of species from Down Under in Casitas Springs since the early 1990s.

Jo O’Connell found her way to the Ojai Valley when she took a job with Taft Gardens about 30 years ago. A native Australian herself, she spent time traveling before getting a degree in horticulture from the Western Sydney University at Hawkesbury. Her fascination with plants stemmed from wanting to know what things were called. “I just wanted to know what I was looking at,” she said.

She spent a year working on Taft Garden, went home to the outback Mt Isa, and then came back to California again for a visit. “Then I found a husband and got stuck here,” she said with a hearty chuckle. She and her husband, Byron Cox, decided to settle down in Casitas Springs and open a nursery featuring the native Australian plants Jo loved so well.

The delightful things growing in Jo’s expansive collection include things we’ve all seen before, such as the red bottle brush that’s become popular in this area for its hardiness and big brush-like flowers. Cut flower lovers and farmers market frequenters might also be familiar with the proteas and banksias. But have you ever heard of Grevillea? Leucadendra? Xanthorrhoea?

See, this is why you need to get yourself down to Jo’s place. It’s not just their names that are unusual and exotic; the plants themselves are, too. Some of the species are downright prehistoric looking, like the Xanthorrhoea or grass tree. Its base is a massive ball of long grass-like blades with dramatic spears of bright white flowers reaching out several feet into the sky. When the flowers die, the stalks turn brown but still stand tall, presenting a whole different kind of drama.

Eremophila has tons of small leaves, bright trumpet-like flowers, and flourishes in the desert. “That one never gets watered,” Jo said, pointing to a bright pink variety.

Banksia have amazing showy green and yellow flowers, but it was the foliage that stopped me in my tracks, with deeply serrated leaves that almost look like pointy teeth.
As we walked around, Jo grabbed a leaf off a short tree and crushed it for me to sniff. It smells lemony. “That’s *Backhousia citriodora*,” she said. It’s used in tea and curries as a lemon substitute, and is becoming popular with Australian chefs in the U.S. “Australians are even putting it into gin now,” Jo said.

She’s got a few eucalyptus trees too of course; *Eucalyptus victrix*, or mini ghost gum, has lovely white bark, while the *E. kruseana* features fuzzy, butter-yellow flowers and only gets to be about 6 feet tall.

My favourite are probably the *Grevillea*, a long-flowering plant which seems to be made up of hundreds of insect antennae (and make photographers wish they’d brought a macro lens).

You’d think such unusual plants would be delicate and tricky to care for; not so with the things Jo grows. “They’re hardy in dry weather, hardy in wet weather,” said Jo, who also grows a few South Africans and the occasional New Zealander. The climate in these areas is similar enough to Ojai that they can be very successful here. They’re often even tolerant to some fire, too — which Jo and Byron learned first-hand during the Thomas Fire, which took their home and a good chunk of plants as well. But many that had burned have bounced back. “Fire is part of the Australian landscape, too.”

There sure is a lot to love about Australian natives. “A lot of these plants get big,” Jo said, “so if you have a small garden you don’t need too many. And if you have a large garden, they’ll fill up space quickly. They’re fast growing.” Plant a few smallish trees for shade, she suggests, and soon temperatures significantly lower in your yard as a whole. Attract hummingbirds, bees and other insects with *Grevillea* especially. Water deeply and infrequently to encourage the roots to dive deep and become drought hardy.

Jo is a passionate horticulturist who expertly blends useful information with dry comedy. “People sometimes come in and want plants that need no maintenance that flower all year long. Australian plants don’t need a lot, but all plants need some maintenance, some care . . . . .  they’re not like a ceramic pot!” Jo’s got another comedian to compete with, however — her Queensland blue heeler, ‘Wallaby’ who loves greeting customers with a well-loved soccer ball in hopes of a pat and maybe a quick game.

### Planned new dedicated Banksia Garden for ANBG

Planning is underway for an exciting new Banksia Garden. For those who like to plan ahead, a trip to the Australian National Botanic Gardens (ANBG) in Canberra may be in order in 2020, for the opening of the new Banksia Garden. The garden has evolved from the idea that it’s time for ANBG to celebrate and dedicate a memorable new garden to coincide with its 50th birthday in 2020 as well as to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the voyage of discovery along the east coast of Australia in 1770 by Captain James Cook and botanist Joseph Banks. What could be more memorable than Banksia?

The focus for the garden is to show a wide range of species originating from many areas across the country. It is planned to have the design, mix and combination of species, materials and interpretation captured in an engaging way celebrating the significant and memorable elements of all things Banksia. As there will be many bizarre and fascinating species
GARDEN TIPS
A good tip -- the closer plants are planted to large trees the less water they need, as the main feeder roots of the tree are out under the '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. – Jeff Howes
A Glimpse of my Habitat Garden
Sheila Simpson-Lee, Wahroonga, Sydney NSW

ED: This was my response to a recent letter from Sheila Simpson-Lee outlining her APS Membership details and the request to re-join the GDSG. “It is my very great pleasure to welcome you back and to award you the status of Garden Design Study Group - LIFE MEMBER. I suspect that in your ninth decade you may be our most elderly member and so it is a fitting way to recognise your long time interest in native gardens and the native plants Society. As you are housebound, I hope that as you read the Newsletters they will allow you to continue to keep in touch and experience descriptions and photographs of the very interesting gardens and the many snippets of information that our members provide. I wonder if you have a very special garden at Wahroonga, I’ll bet you do? It would be wonderful if you could write a paragraph or two to share it with us all.” This was Sheila’s reply . . . .

Although I was a member of GDSG for many years, I am by no means a veteran! It is more interesting to note that my father, who was a great conservationist in his retirement, was a foundation member of what was then SGAP in the mid-fifties, so the influence has been strong.

My husband and I built this house 60 years ago in what was beautiful but somewhat degraded forest of eucalyptus, angophora and turpentine. Establishing a garden under such a canopy has been a challenge. The result is a blended garden, not entirely inappropriate in this streetscape. The feeling was, and is more so now, of a woodland dominated by the wonderful trees: *Eucalyptus saligna* (Sydney Blue Gum); *E. paniculata* (Ironbark); *E. resinifera* (Mahogany); *Angophora costata* (Smooth Bark Apple) and *A. intermedia* (Rough Bark Apple); *Syncarpia glomulifera* (Turpentine).

Ground covering ferns *Doodia*, *Blechnum*, *Adiantum* (maidenhair & black-stem maidenhair) all of them local inhabitants; native *Dendrobium kingianum*, *D. speciosum* and *Lomandra* are surprisingly tough, and the lovely local *Hardenbergia violacea*.

*Introduced specimens include Westringia, Acacia cultriformis, A. podalyriifolia*, *Correa alba*, and *Philotheca*. I have far too many pots and many casualties.

The garden beyond the house at the back, continues down the slope into more forest of *eucalyptus*, *pittosporum* and introduced rainforest species such as Lilly Pilly, Illawarra Flame Tree, Black Bean, Cabbage Tree Palms and Birds Nest Ferns, to name a few. Many birds, a hive of stingless native bees, water bowls are all part of my habitat garden.

I have gardened here alone since 2001, adapting as the years pass to old age of both garden and gardener. My hands-on gardening is almost at a standstill (oxygen machine and walking frame necessary but limiting). The house was built 60 years ago is mid-century modern with lots of glass walls - the garden and house are one. Above all it is a place of serenity and quietness. I love the changing light – and the trees!

‘Terra Australis’ Garden formally opened in November

Ben Walcott, Canberra

This garden was proposed and supported by the Australian Native Plants Society (Australia) ANPSA, and designed by landscape architect Lawrie Smith a former President of the Society. The garden is planned as a stylised representation of the geography of Australia and the related diverse flora of this island continent. The intent is to show the variety and beauty of Australian native plants selected for use in a formal garden setting.

The central or inland path traverses the landform which sweeps through the garden from the tropical north to the temperate south to simulate the Great Dividing Range. On each side of the path the varied plant communities are displayed starting from the columnar basalt geology of Cape York and south along the Pacific east coast. The path continues rising beside the sandstone formation of the Blue Mountains to the lookout on top of the range. The path then traverses the western plains sloping down
beside the granite boulder uplands of the Snowy Mountains, Grampians and Tasmania. On the opposite side of the Great Divide, the inland slopes and western sand plains extend south and west to the coastal lowlands of the Indian Ocean.

The structure planting for the garden was done during the week of 19th November 2018 just before the opening on Sunday 25th November by Angus Stewart. It is a work in progress with some plants still to be sourced and planted progressively as the initial plants develop and the microclimate changes.

We are very grateful to the nurseries who donated plants for this garden and to the societies and individuals who supported its construction. The Arboretum now has over 1 million visitors per year and this garden will be seen by many people from all over the country and from overseas. We hope it will inspire Australians to select and use our native plants in their gardens.

The following photos by Lawrie show several more glimpses of this newly constructed garden.
From the Post Box

Regarding _Pennisetum purple fountain grass_ - Eleanor Handreck, SGLO, APS SA Region

Hi Lawrie,

I’ve just been looking at your November 2018 NL. On page 13, you say that _Pennisetum_ purple fountain grass species may not be native. It is definitely NOT a native. In native grass circles, it is considered to be a serious weed species which should NOT be planted near areas of native grassland or grassy woodland. (Kikuyu is a VERY invasive _Pennisetum_ species.)

ED: below is the reference Eleanor is referring to. I’m sure all members would agree that we need to be vigilant in minimising the potential of introducing weed species into the environment from our gardens.

Remember some natives can also be weedy and invasive out of their natural bioregion.

Effective use of a single species _Pennisetum “Purple” fountain grass_

*Practical Negatives:*
- For 3 months of the year it looks very ordinary as it is cut back to 12 “ high to invigorate the plant and allow some rain to penetrate the sandy and leaning to hydrophobic soil.
- It (or its parents) probably isn’t a native – an issue nagging me as there is so much of it.
- It is also meant to be invasive. I haven’t seen signs of it so far in this garden but it’s a grass and has runners and a healthy root system so it certainly looks as though it could be.
- Probably quite a fire hazard too.

Coming ‘Garden’ Events – check out the ANPSA Website for specific details and other events

*Please send information for ‘Garden events’ in your region to promote in the next Newsletter*

**New South Wales:** refer to ANPSA website

**Victoria:** refer to ANPSA website

**South Australia:** April 13, 14 Autumn Plant Sale (Small Plants & Covers) - refer to ANPSA website

**Tasmania:** refer to ANPSA website

**Western Australia:** Sept 29 – Oct 4, 2019  ANPSA ‘Blooming Diversity’ - refer to ANPSA website

**Queensland:** GDSGQ Meeting February 8, 9.30am - Reddick Garden 212 Ney Road, Capalaba Q

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Welcome to or first GDSG Life Member

Sheila Simpson-Lee – has renewed her membership after a few years. Sheila is in her ninth decade, most likely our most elderly member. She is housebound but loves to keep in touch and learning about native gardens, so we made an ‘executive decision’ to offer her Life Membership.

Welcome to new members – we look forward to your active participation in the study group

No new members since the November Newsletter

Current Membership: 138 - including 24 posted Newsletters & 108 email Newsletters

Treasurer’s Report – February 1, 2019

Cheque account: $ 5,778.96

Term Deposit: $ 26,706.58

TOTAL: $ 32,485.54

Membership year July 1 – June 30

Membership dues payable annually as follows:

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ANPSA Garden Design Study Group Newsletter

Published quarterly in February, May, August and November.

Copy Deadline: first day of the publication month, although earlier submissions will be warmly welcomed by the Editor.

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Phone: 0411 228 900  Email: lawries@live.com
This is a selection of photos taken recently while attending the APS NSW November Regional Gathering in Sydney which variously give some aspects of garden design in natural landscapes and gardens to inspire you!!

Botany Bay National Park, Kurnell – the landing place of Captain Cook in 1770 – from forest to heath to sea cliffs

Sylvan Grove Native Garden, Picnic Point – botanic horticulture design using endemic and other selected species

Peter Olde Garden, Oakdale – Collectors garden; interesting layout inviting ‘walkabout’ around a large garden

Barangaroo Reserve, Sydney CBD – reclaiming the natural harbour foreshore from wharves and industry