NEWSLETTER THEME: ‘Incorporating Artistic Elements – Serious & Whimsical’

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ANPSA Garden Design Study Group Newsletter
Published quarterly in February, May, August and November.
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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 2019/20 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!
Firstly let me apologise to Jane Fountain for overlooking the inclusion of some illustrative photos in her article on ‘Playground Design’ page 7 of the NL Issue #107 May. I have included them on the last pages of this issue.

Mystery Members
We have three deposits paid electronically but without sufficient detail for me to know who you are! So if this was for printed/posted Newsletter membership it could not be done. If you recognise one of these entries below as yours please let me know and your membership will be confirmed and the missing Newsletters forwarded to you.
For those of you paying by EFT could I please urge you to ensure your name is very clear on the transmission?

Blooming Diversity
Next month the ANPSA Conference will be held in Albany WA and all Study Groups have the opportunity to report on progress and for GDSG members to meet together to discuss matters of interest and ideas for our study group. These meetings at every Biennial conference are always very interesting and important as many of us are able to discuss face to face how to improve our Study Group. So please drop me a quick email about anything that is on your mind that we can discuss together and make GDSG more useful. Your comments will be put together and included in the agenda for discussion at the meeting. Remember this is your group and as leader I want to ensure that whatever we do, whatever we publish, reflects the reasons why you joined GDSG in the first place.

Unfortunately I have had to cancel my registration and bookings for the conference on medical advice, no extreme problems just potential for difficulties. However I have asked one of our local members Carol Guard if she would deputise for me in chairing the biennial meeting of GDSG members at the conference. She readily agreed so together we will prepare the meeting agenda, and a display table. Carol will also deliver my SG Leaders report to the Conference presenting it as a PowerPoint to share our activities with everyone.

GDSG Biannual Report 2019 to ANPSA Meeting in Albany
Membership: The Garden Design Study Group continues to attract a trickle of new members and the number stands now at 139. However I can’t help wondering if just having a quarterly newsletter is sufficient to assist members to communicate and share the application of design principles in their gardens. Looking back to early issues of the newsletter there are always numerous descriptions and design reviews by members of their own gardens and for others visited, which offer excellent advice. The GDSG pages of the ANPSA website has a complete indexed archive of past newsletters since May 1993. When reading these early submissions it is obvious that good garden design principles know no time periods and are equally applicable today. To encourage members to refer back through these archives, several teasing snippets from interesting articles in early issues are the first items in each Newsletter. This archive is an invaluable resource!

Financial details: Membership of GDSG is free for electronic Newsletters but $20 if printed and posted. Production and postage costs for each issue averages at $300 or $1,800 for the biannual period for which subscriptions amount to $570, giving an average cost overrun of $1,300 for the two years. Obviously this is progressively reducing the general account, currently $5,500, which will cover these costs for approx the next five years. Twelve complimentary paper Newsletters are distributed and it is hoped that some of these (libraries etc) may agree to accept an electronic version which could reduce the related costs by about half. Fortunately the proceeds from the GDSG book “The Australian Garden” published some years ago, is invested in a term deposit $27,000 which generates $600 interest per annum. This resource is there to be used if necessary and to fund specific GDSG projects as identified – any ideas welcome. (All figures above have been rounded for simplicity)

Newsletters: In the last biannual period we have published and distributed six issues of the Newsletter each with one of the themes suggested at the GDSG meeting at ANPSA Hobart. We have had some excellent articles written by members, but could I encourage more members to share your thoughts and questions about these subjects? Even just a paragraph or two and an illustrative photograph would be a wonderful way to be an active member!!
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Suggested themes for the next biannual period
108   Artistic elements – serious & whimsical
109   Framework trees and shrubs
110   Courtyard and patio gardens
111   Planning a garden for colour
112   Garden design and FIRE!

GDSGQ activities: In south east Queensland we have formed a very successful ‘chapter’ of GDSG which meets bimonthly rotating N, S, E and W around the region at members gardens or other larger planned landscapes to identify and discuss together the garden design principles observed. Some of the most valuable and beneficial excursions have taken the form of design workshops where together we take out pencils and paper to plan sections of a members garden, by applying the first principles of garden design. It is amazing to see the wonderful innovative concepts and ideas GDSGQ members suggest. Participation averages about 12 – 15 at each meeting and we can thoroughly recommend that members in other states follow this example, it is so beneficial!

GDSG Critique
So before the ANPSA meeting let’s have a members critique to see whether the changes made in the two years since the Hobart conference are working or not. Your input and suggestions for changes or additions will be greatly appreciated by myself and by all members. Items to discuss at the Albany GDSG meeting include:
1. Do you find that the extracts from previous Newsletters encourage you to read more of past articles?
2. Are the NL articles providing sufficient useful information or direction about garden design issues?
3. Would more or larger photographs increase understanding and information exchange?
4. Is the theme for each NL working for you? I was hoping for more one paragraph observations from members.
5. Would including more detail information for hard landscape construction and planting design be helpful?

Please add your own observations and suggestions as well as commenting on the list above.

Extracts from Past Newsletters (Issues 25 to 28)
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 #25 – May 1999

Doug & Margaret McIver's garden
Reactions of members attending the inspection varied from agreement on certain points to almost total disagreement on others . . . . . . . Overall, there was consensus on the concept of . . . . . . ED: some very interesting comments and discussions

Overview of the Hanson garden for the Open Garden Scheme Bev Hanson Vic
Bev and John Hanson's garden was in the Open Garden Scheme in 1998. With Bev's permission I used their 'handout' to obtain extracts for a brief overview of the design of their garden. DS
Getting it right!  
Geoff Simmons Old
This interesting phrase now used frequently by politicians presents difficulties when applied to garden design and maybe even more so with Australian plants. Gardens are dynamic systems and ever-changing so what is right one day may be less than 100% right the next day or next year. Why is this particularly relevant for designers of Australian gardens?

Danie Ondinea’s garden  
Danie Ondinea, NSW
My property at Scarborough (between Royal National Park and Wollongong) is nestled at the base of the Illawarra Escarpment where the mountains meet the sea and where rainforest and eucalypt forest meet.

PLANTS in DESIGN - Small trees  
Shirley Pipitone ACT
Geoff Simmons’ comments in NL 24-3 have set me thinking again about the huge differences between Australian plants in different regions. In Queensland, it may be possible to create a treed look using trees up to 4 metres high. However, in the Canberra region, where the indigenous vegetation is grasslands and dry sclerophyll forest, very small trees would look quite out of place.

Garden design for a village in a desert area  
Lynne Boladeras WA
Enclosing a couple of examples of the work I do at the village that accommodates 250 - 300 people who work at a Gold Mine. So we have a lot of garden to cover the whole village, as well as Administration buildings, etc.

Naturalistic gardens  
Lyn Reilly Qld
I am intrigued by the item 'Naturalistic gardens' in the August edition. The statement that "We would expect all our gardens to be naturalistic" got me thinking. I agree, if they meant "to use natural (Australian) plants". But if they also mean "to look natural" I feel that excludes formal gardens as well as traditional gardens.

Winter colour  
Chris Larkin Vic
Any time between April and November is good in the garden, but if I had to pick a favourite season it would definitely be winter. I like the softer light of winter, not the grey days which can come at any time of the year but the more watery winter sun as it lights up the different foliage and flowers.

Serendipity in Australian garden design  
Diana Snape, Vic
Garden design is a complicated business! It’s difficult enough deciding where to place plants at any given time, but trying to foresee their future growth and configuration and the resulting evolution of the garden is amazingly challenging.

Garden ideals  
Barbara Buchanan Vic
I don’t remember much about 5th Grade at school but one incident sticks in my mind. We often began the day with 10 minutes of composition on a given topic and selected essays would be read to the class. One day the topic was something like 'My Ideal Garden'.

A 'secret' garden  
Cherree Densiey, Vic
There have been delightful novels and at least one film made about the discovery, usually within the boundaries of a huge neglected country garden, of a secret area hidden behind walls and impenetrable thickets of vegetation. A 'secret garden' has been discovered by accidentally stumbling across a well-hidden, overgrown entrance, and once inside, the explorer has had the most marvellous experience of wandering through what was, usually from a previous generation, the creative realm of an inspired gardener. The concept has always intrigued me.

How to degrade the landscape without really trying  
Gordon Rowland NSW
This article is reprinted from 'Native Plants for NSW July 1999 Last month I visited clients who would like their garden re-designed in harmony with the adjacent riverside bushland, a typical sandstone community of Sydney red gum, eucalypt, banksia, she-oak, grevillea and numerous other species. Like so many bushland
**Newsletter #108 theme: ‘Artistic Elements - Serious & Whimsical**

Focal points are very useful elements in planning and designing a garden to attract attention, to encourage exploration or to contribute a special character. There are endless elements that can be used to contribute visual interest - a unique plant form, sound of moving water, a sculpture, mosaic paving, almost anything of visual interest will give a garden special added character. The following thoughts and images are some of the many, many design principles, elements or initiatives that may inspire a designer to select, locate and integrate artistic element/s in order to add character, vitality and interest in the garden. The process is really all about personal preferences, choices and abilities.

**Artistic Elements in the Garden?**

Your garden is your creation. It expresses your personality, interests, experience, expertise, approach to life and to nature - it often, but not always, takes second place to your home and family. Whatever your artistic abilities you subconsciously apply those talents in many ways – your garden effectively tells the world so much about you! As I considered this NL theme the following statements came to mind, in no specific order, however they outline some of the artistic strategies that might be considered as a garden is planned, designed and established.

**Artistic characteristics:**
- **Permanent** – robust dramatic elements are likely there for the long term; are they suitable?
- **Ephemeral** – items that are there for a short time or highlighted by shafts of sunshine!
- **Functional and useful** – like garden sheds and letter boxes can be positive artistic elements;
- **Static** – the gnarled and twisted trunks of a majestic tree is hard to create;
- **Moving** – birds, lizards and other wildlife add immensely to the garden interest and character;
- **Restful** – surround yourself by a harmonious mix of colours and textures in materials and vegetation;
- **Dynamic** – using deep rich colours on garden elements can lift a garden above the ordinary.
- **Focus attention** – an item of arresting form or colour; or amazing contrast against the background;
- **Changing** - the magic of change through progressive growth and in character season by season;
- **Serious** – a traditional sculpture needs careful positioning and formal visual relationships;
- **Fun** – nothing wrong with a bit of trivia or humour to enliven a landscape!
- **Abstract** – could be a sculptural weathered tree trunk; or an arrangement of found items;
- **Rhythm** – lead garden exploration with a series of closely related artistic elements;
- **Symmetry** – provide visual balance and harmony by careful location of similar sculptural elements;
- **Asymmetry** – items with opposite unrelated visual attributes provides a sense of variety and diversity;
- **Directional** – linear structures or inline plants are visually useful to direct views and link garden sections;
- **Perspective** – use to advantage to increase or decrease apparent distances and spaces in a garden.

**Other artistic considerations**

- Choose a garden character you like or that is appropriate for the site conditions;
- Select the species that you find attractive and / or plants that are functional too;
- Exhibit your interest in wildlife preservation – plants for birds, butterflies etc;
- Modify the landform to provide additional topographic and visual interest;
- Use recycled materials innovatively; surprise visitors by unexpected discovery;
- Is water your tool to excite and focus attention?
- Intimate glimpses to entice exploration; long views to include ‘borrowed landscape’;
- Serial discovery of artistic items or floral elements encourage garden exploration;
- Strong contrasting even discordant colours will define and attract;
- Organic colours and materials will integrate and merge into the landscape;
- Concept of size – a major tree as a focus;
- Complexity or simplicity or minimalism – a personal decision;
- Contemporary, abstract, geometric – which character for you?
- Learning design from observing natural landscape detail – related and harmonious;
- Natural objects used as focal points generally create a unified garden landscape;
- A collectors garden where the result is visually unrelated but surprisingly interesting;
- Mosaics and murals can make paths, floors and walls integral garden elements;
• Gates, grilles and screens are functional but potentially works of art in the garden;
• Sculptural pergola and fences can make a major artistic contribution to a garden;
• Green Walls offer great garden opportunities of foliage pattern and innovative sculpture;
• Flower colour is dramatic but transient – a focus for only a short period then only green;
• Perfume from flowers or aroma from foliage can provide a special ephemeral garden focus.

Obviously there are so many differing artistic elements that have the potential to define our gardens. Whatever our abilities in design, these artistic elements often subconsciously contribute surprising garden components that focus attention and complement the botanic elements. These artistic design attributes could apply across the whole of a garden, or perhaps to just a single ‘room’ within the landscape. Whatever the scale, artistic elements contribute visual interest to ensure a diverse, dynamic and dramatic garden of excellence.

This is a subject that will continue to inspire garden design. So as you discover an interesting application please send in your comments, ideas, and illustrations to share with GDSG members in future newsletters.

The following photos from my collection may help to interpret some thoughts from my rambling comments!
ED: The following article caught my attention when ‘web surfing’ recently. The principles can be applied across most garden types whether they be in temperate or tropical areas, and are certainly appropriate in designing gardens with Australian native plants. A garden really evolves from a blank canvas on which you create an ‘artwork’ using a selected palette of interrelated hard and soft landscape elements placed carefully together guided by appropriate rules and laws that result in an artistic and meaningful expression in landscape design.

**Gardens as Art: Principles and Elements for Better Designs**

*Amanda Patton is a Registered Member of the Society of Garden Designers*

We can analyse the composition of a garden’s design like we study a painting. This allows us to understand how a garden is put together, and from that comes the ability to make educated design decisions in our own gardens.

I recently heard a well-respected garden writer comment on Dan Pearson’s naturalistic garden at Chelsea 2015, saying that “Real works of art are not something that can be analysed or copied.” While I understand the sentiment that is referring to this specific garden as art, the concept that ‘art’ is so high that only the creator has access to how and why a particular piece came about is misguided in the extreme.

Dan Pearson’s naturalistic garden at Chelsea 2015, inspired by the wilder side of Chatsworth. *(Photo: Amanda Patton)*

As a garden designer from an art background, the concept that you cannot analyse art is just plain wrong. Worse than that, it implies that those who are not experts have no hope of elevating their own art, or gardens, because the creativity required is ‘God-given’ rather than coming about as a result of study and learning. In fact, it is only by studying, and analysing, specific works of art that we are able to understand how they were put together, and from that comes the ability to make educated design decisions. All art students learn by studying historic works of art, in order to understand both the composition and the techniques used. Modern technology allows us to analyse paintings in great detail, from viewing infrared images which show earlier marks beneath the finished painting, i.e. changes in composition as the painting progresses, to knowing exactly which pigments have been used in the creation of the ground and base layers.

Detail of Van Gogh’s *Road with Cypress and Star* (link to full image). *(Photo: Amanda Patton)*

Relating this to gardens, we too can analyse both the composition and the techniques used and we can study specific plants and their colour, textural and seasonal combinations as we can study how a painter uses their palette. In creating a work of art, the artist begins the process by making decisions relating to composition and the mood that they wish to create.

The principles of art determine the composition, while the elements of art allow us to make deliberate choices as to how it will feel – all these decisions are taken before any marks are made on a canvas. While some gardens have been designed from scratch, many gardens are inherited or have evolved with different owners and needs, and design integrity is either non-existent or has been diluted. Analysing such spaces using the principles and elements of art allows garden owners to understand why their garden may not work as they wish and to have an insight into how to remedy this, while new garden creators can use the knowledge to create more successful and beautiful gardens by intent, rather than by happy accident.
A show garden I created for the RHS Hampton Court Flower Show, exploring ideas of mood creation using the principles and elements of art. (Photo: Gary Rogers)
The principles of art, covering compositional themes, include ideas of proportion, focus, balance, rhythm and unity. Added to this in garden terms are symbolism (or conceptualism) and – most importantly – context. All gardens should bear some relationship with their immediate environment, whether this is landscape, architecture or both, in order to achieve a sense of place. While proportion, focus and unity are often talked about in garden terms, less so are ideas of balance and rhythm. The question of balance is interesting as it determines how dynamic the garden space is. A symmetrical balance will create a space which is very calming, but if not handled well can be boring and lacking in engagement, so extra thought needs to be given to other elements of composition to create a successful space.

At Villa Medici Fiesole symmetry with line to create a near-perfect composition that is restful but interesting. (Photo: Amanda Patton)
The Villa Medici, in Fiesole, uses symmetrical balance to create a calming space with a central pool and steps leading to a pergola planted with Rosa banksii. While the space is completely symmetrical, the shape of the pool and the strongly directional lines of pergola and steps ensure that the eye doesn’t leave the garden, but instead directs the composition to draw the eye to the pool.

Symmetry needs to be handled with care to avoid creating dull spaces. (Garden at Rockcliffe in the Cotswolds (UK), Photo: Amanda Patton)
This second garden, at Rockcliffe in the Cotswolds (UK), uses many of the same compositional principles as the Villa Medici, but here the elements of line together with the shape of the pool, take you out of the garden and, despite the seat, the engagement is lost.

A dynamic space in a small garden created by using an asymmetrical balance at Luciano Giubbilei’s 2009 Chelsea Garden. (Photo: Amanda Patton)
An asymmetrical balance, on the other hand, creates something much more dynamic. The multiple hedges in Luciano Giubbilei’s 2009 Chelsea garden create an exciting space despite a very limited palette of plant and hard materials. It is much easier to engage with this garden, and to want to explore, even in such a small space, than had a static, symmetrical design been used. Rhythm can be used to direct the eye around or out of the garden, or to create harmony within certain garden areas. Broadly speaking, a regular rhythm of a single element repeated, such as this line of box balls leading to a gate in a private Dan Pearson garden, will draw the eye gently into the next space. A random rhythm uses the same elements repeated but without an obvious order; this will create harmony and unity and can be used to link otherwise disparate garden elements.

The regular rhythm of Dan Pearson’s box balls at Armscote Manor is a direct pointer to the gate and the prospect of further delights beyond. (Photo: Amanda Patton)
Perhaps the most interesting of the rhythms though is a progressive rhythm – a bit like a theme and variations in music –
where a subtly evolving rhythm can be used to enhance the context of a garden. One of the best examples of this is at La Louve in Provence, created by designer Nicole de Vesian when she retired from the fashion house Hermes and moved to the south of France.

**Progressive rhythm provides a link between the garden and the wider landscape at La Louve in Provence. (Photo: Amanda Patton)**

Widely regarded as one of the most successful gardens in capturing a sense of place, the garden of La Louvre uses a progressive rhythm in the repetition of varyingly spherical shapes. Naturally moulded shrubs, such as the *Euphorbia charachias*, are set against clipped forms of plants found in the landscape beyond, creating a direct link between the garden and its setting, while distracting from what is a dizzyingly steep drop beyond. Using line, the three clipped cypress create the link between the two.

This leads me to the elements of art, which are the ingredients that bring the chosen composition to life, through providing the mood and atmosphere. These elements include line and form (shape), and also colour, value and texture. As seen above, line is a useful tool to move the eye around the garden, and horizontals and verticals can be used to create a strong rhythm within the garden space. However, in planting design, form is the most important consideration. Many plants have very little distinct shape, and many leaf shapes are similar, as we ‘read’ a border from left to right, with nothing to hold our gaze along the way, we quickly lose interest.

**Pretty flowers are not enough. (Photo: Amanda Patton)**

The effect of some pretty flowers is not enough to create a successful border, as seen in the photograph above; it just becomes messy. The aim should rather be to create a beautiful tapestry of form and foliage, viewing the flowers as a seasonal bonus. This will keep the emphasis on the long term design, rather than the fleeting nature of flowers, and is shown to great effect early in the season at the Lurie garden, where the patterns of the emerging perennial plants are just as engaging as later in the season when their other attributes come to the fore. The creator of these wonderful plantings is Dutchman Piet Oudolf, who’s work has often been described as painterly, and for good reason. His planting designs use all of the elements of art in a deliberate and insightful way to create living paintings that change with the seasons.

**Line, form, colour and value are all used to create a painterly feel in Piet Oudolf’s planting schemes. (Vlinderhof, photo: Amanda Patton)**

While some art, and some gardens, might be created intuitively, creating a consistent quality of work is never an accident. Instead, it is the result of intelligent decisions based on sound knowledge, and understanding the principles and elements of art in the context of creating a garden is the first step to gaining that knowledge. Deciding on what ‘to say’ before you begin is key, then use the principles to form the composition, and the elements to express it with emotion.

As an artist, one of the issues I find frustrating within the garden design business is that we don’t critique, we simply say it is all ‘lovely’. Without critique, and with comments such as from our esteemed journalist, how are we to learn to understand how a garden space is created, so that we can make our own small spaces more beautiful, more relevant and above all, more rewarding? “A man paints with his brains, and not with his hands.” (Michelangelo)

Amanda Patton is a Registered Member of the Society of Garden Designers, with a practice that was set up at the beginning of 2000.
Pete’s Hobby Nursery & Lowood Rail Trail  Lowood, South East Queensland

Our GDSGQ meeting for June was held at two very different gardens. For most of us it was a drive of more than an hour west along the Brisbane River valley first to Lowood and then Tallegalla. Long time NPQ member Peter Bevan hosted our group of twenty four members and for us all it was a toss-up which to do first - morning tea or a browse through Pete’s Hobby Nursery to select from his amazing range of species most only available here. It was great to meet Colleen and Geoff Keena too, they live locally and are unable to travel to join in with our activities, but we appreciate their regular contributions for the Newsletter.

Pete explained how he began in a small way to transform the disused railway corridor at the end of the street, from an overgrown, weed infested barrier between the town and golf course. He used excess plants from the nursery and trialled lots of others successfully, progressively extending the collection of local species and others from the drier regions of the continent, which all now thrive in this comparatively dry exposed valley. As the plantings developed and flowered other local people became involved and a benefactor gave generous financial assistance. The local council and the railways department finally saw the community value of Pete’s work and provided formal approval and assistance as well as promoting the Lowood Rail Trail as a tourist destination. Pete’s long term and continuing efforts were the catalyst and now the entire length of the old railway corridor is being progressively transformed into a regional recreation trail extending some 60 kilometres north west from Lowood, through Esk and Toogoolawah.

Amazingly watered once only at time of planting, the plants thrive on natural rainfall which is not regular or excessive. We all wanted to know his successful planting technique. The trick is to remove the grass and weed layer, then deep rip the garden areas to a minimum depth of 500mm to open up the hard clayey and rocky soils to allow deep penetration of water. Then a blanket of mulch up to 100mm deep is spread before planting to reduce water loss by evaporation. No water holding crystals are added as Pete finds the existing soils sufficiently fertile and moisture retentive without additives for excellent plant growth. Pete told us he has a simple pruning strategy for most of the plants to encourage the twiggy growth, dense massed foliage and seasonal maximum flowering. Pruning time is once a year in March and April and most specimens receive a good formative ‘haircut’ then, so that there is time for the plants to regenerate foliage and develop through the cooler months to produce optimum spring floral display. We were all busy making notes of species from the identification labels as we slowly moved along the corridor from plant to plant remarking at the health and vigour of the specimens. Although we visited in mid-winter, strolling along this remarkable linear garden several hundred metres long we saw many specimens already flowering and others showing promise from the developing buds.
Pete’s garden is one of those progressive discovery gardens where every metre or so there is a surprise species you had long forgotten or one that you had always wanted to grow yourself. The annual pruning ensures that there is always varied form and texture that gives lots of visual diversity and interest. Here and there were taller shrubs or specimen trees that display their natural, sculptural form to draw your attention from a distance. We did not have time to explore the next couple of hundred metres where the natural landscape changed and offered opportunities for an even more diverse plant collection – but Pete, we will be back. Thank you for sharing your extended garden with us.

**Chris Nikolic Garden  Tallegalla, South East Queensland**

Lunch in Pete’s nursery allowed time for more plant purchases then it was off to Tallegalla a surprising area just off the Brisbane Toowoomba highway that most of us had never previously ventured into – how wrong we have been!! This area around Marburg is an attractive composition of dramatic landform and fertile valleys with enticing views to the Scenic Rim to the south and Great Divide to the west.

Chris and Martin were at the gate of their property to greet us and it really was a case of ‘Lords of all we survey’ as our members marvelled at the extent of their 50 hectare valley. The visual magic of their garden is the way it is enveloped and enhanced by the horseshoe shaped landform of their property to the south, west and east but opening out expansively to the north. The house and garden is nestled into the centre of the horseshoe taking advantage of the gentle slopes down to the north but it is the steeper background ridge line, punctuated against the sky by emergent Gum Trees, Hoop Pines and forest patches, that provides such an idyllic all-encompassing landscape vision.

We found it amazing that everything we could see of this ‘walkabout’ garden was only just over two years old! Originally the site was a piggery and Chris and Martin firstly had to literally slave over the removal of many years of neglect and resultant massive invasion of weeds - trees, shrubs and grasses. But this was a labour of love – that is obvious! Everything has been well planned, the house is located across the slope at about forty five degrees to the view from the front gate to maximise the benefits of northern exposure for both house and garden. They both know precisely how to take advantage of the opportunities and constraints offered by the sites natural environment to suit their personal lifestyle.

 Appropriately, their garden relates to the theme for the August GDSG Newsletter in that they have recycled interesting items of farmland equipment and other objects as integrated works of art. Although, it is hard for these sculptural items to outclass the amazing selection of flowering native species that are all around you as you meander through the garden pathways. Taking advantage of the site attributes is an important aspect of the design of this garden; the site has offered a variety of soil types, available rocks are used to great effect, and tree trunks, branches and logs are not only decorative but functional. Chris has very green fingers that is obvious, as he has produced most of the extensive botanic collection from seed, cutting or grafting.
The extensive collection of species established in the garden are growing so well here, despite being from so many differing Australian regions. Chris says he takes it as a challenge to grow any plant he likes despite its origin. He will always persevere until he finds the secret and it could be by trialling the species in a variety of site soils or perhaps if necessary resorting to grafting. His philosophy obviously works. I'm not going to even try to name some of the species we saw, sufficient to say that this garden is a very special place that intrigues and surprises. One can only look forward to seeing this wonderful garden mature and best of all we know that Chris and Martin still have the whole valley that I have no doubt will progressively enjoy the touch of their green fingers. Congratulations to you both for establishing your wonderful Australian garden and landscape.

Elaeocarpus bancroftii

Memories from the May 2017 GDSGQ meeting to three member’s gardens in Brisbane

Brenda & Michael Meehan – Brenda said her garden design philosophy is ‘more is more’ and this is very true! She has expertly massed a wide range of species in her 800 sqm block. Her new garden has evolved following the complete removal of many exotic plants and palms from the original garden, leaving a legacy of steep boulder banks and meandering pathways to embellish. Brenda has used almost every single square metre for the smallest native to the taller screens and trees. The view to the south over the suburbs from the expansive terrace is attractively framed by the garden plants which have been carefully chosen to block out the close views to neighbours. Brenda will write a detail report on her garden for the GDSG Newsletter.

George & Helen Smith – George is an expert gardener with a sound knowledge of construction techniques that compliment his ‘green fingers’. Every garden element he builds in the 1.5 acre site is there to stay and his attention to detail maintenance ensures a very beautiful and inviting series of garden rooms. The expansive gardens around the house offer a wide range of tree and shrub species invite a meandering inspection. Perhaps the most interesting ‘room’ is the southern gully where in his inimitable style, George has adorned rocks, trees and unusual discarded containers with orchids and ferns to create a very quirky rainforest garden.

Bob & Beris Bannon – Bob’s smaller suburban garden is a great example of creating an oasis in the middle of dense residential blocks. As you traverse the shady gravel path from the road footpath under the umbrella like canopy of the Mallotus claoxyloides the ‘smell of the bush’ aroma greets you and you know you are entering a special native garden. This is heightened by the sound of the water feature. On the south side of the house he has successfully screened out the neighbours with well-chosen tall shrubs and small trees which now provide shade for a collection of native understorey plants and a selection of sun lovers flowering in the sunny central area.
Plants in Design

While looking through the GDSG Newsletter archives I noted that in the issues of the late 1990’s and early 2000’s much use was made of a regular section to discuss individual plants that were an integral component of garden design when used in various innovative ways. Therefore I want to reintroduce this in every issue as I feel that many members will be able to write just a small paragraph, hopefully with a photograph to share with us all. The following ‘Plants in Design’ excerpts are copied from past newsletters to give you an idea of what you could do.

Colour scheme garden with a flurry of white - Jan Hall Vic
This suggestion is to use the colour scheme of yellow-gold and white, including shades of cream, green and some silver-leaved plants. Green-foliaged plants which have whitish stems pick up others with silver leaves. Other new growth, stems, leaves and flowers display a touch of red. Leptospermum 'Copper Glow' uses foliage colour to pick up this detail. I can also picture a piece of garden art set in a drift of tufting and mat plants with several dark low shrubs 15 against the clinker brick wall. Out on the nature strip this theme could be continued with group plantings using the same and related shrubs.

Grevillea endlicheriana a special plant - Caroline Gunter NSW
Grevillea endlicheriana is a plant I love to use. It has fine grey foliage, discrete pink/grey blossoms on nodding stems right through winter followed by purple seed capsules. It grows into a rounded shrub of about 1.5m. The plant doesn't look unsightly when picked for vases or when pruned if necessary to shape. Its softness makes it a useful contrast in an all 'Bush Garden' and teams well with G. arenaria and G. longifolia. It also is a very happy inclusion in a 'Cottage Garden', where it grows well with Lavenders, Roses, Nasturtiums, Salvias and bulbs. To hear it classified as tough/drought resistant simply adds to its charms.

ED: So I will commence by introducing two species that for me have been significant as garden design ‘elements’.

Doryanthes palmeri and D. excelsa – Lawrie Smith, Qld
More than forty years ago on an SGAP excursion, and as a newly qualified landscape architect, I ‘discovered’ the formal geometric qualities of Doryanthes palmeri - the Spear Lily - massed over the upper slopes of Mt Cordeaux on the northern side of Cunningham’s Gap which crosses the Great Divide south of Toowoomba. Literally hundreds of this dramatic plant were in full flower blazing across the mountain, giving a unique botanic and visual character that was not typical. The hemispherical array of broad leaves of both D. palmeri & excelsa offer a sculptural focal feature that I have since used as a ‘signature’ in many landscape projects over the years – sometimes one, sometimes hundreds!

Xanthostemon Expo Gold
World Expo 88 was the premier event to celebrate the Bicentenary of Australia and as landscape architect it was my task to select a floral emblem for this international exposition. Selection parameters were strict - the plant had to be an Australian native, but endemic to Queensland; it must show Australia’s colours of green and gold and must flower during the Expo period April – October; it should be easy to grow and tolerate a wide range of soils and climatic conditions. The most suitable plant was Xanthostemon chrysanthus, Golden Penda which was renamed as Expo Gold - a very attractive evergreen tree found in the rainforests of far north Queensland. While relatively unknown in 1988, its suitability for so many uses in landscape and horticulture soon saw it becoming widely used as shade trees, avenues, and hedges throughout Brisbane, along the east coast of Australia and overseas as well. Consequently, the general community now recognise that this attractive and useful species is an Australian native plant and this leads them to discover many other Aussie specimens that they may not have otherwise considered for use in their gardens.
So members why not share with us in a few words, something about your favourite plant and how you have used it in the landscape design for your garden to provide that special character or personal meaning. “Plants in Design” will now be a continuing feature in each issue of the Newsletter.

Notes from Members

Ingrid Adler, Kambah, Canberra
I enjoy very much reading the newsletter. Different regions, different gardens. Here in Canberra Jack Frost has arrived – 5C last Wednesday (June 26) but hardly any rain. We were blessed with 10mm last week. My garden is doing alright, use all the grey water. Cheers Ingrid

Jill Mitchell, Croydon, Victoria
I always look forward to the newsletter and can now share the ideas and pictures in it with my daughter. She has a garden abutting a flora reserve and needs to plant with a view to fire risk (from it, not her!). I remember Neil Marriott said that the 2006 fire his Grevilleas exploded - so we will look to put non-resinous and non-volatile-oil plants amongst the exotics. If they have fleshy type leaves or rainforest heritage it might help. Planting less fire prone plants might be a future subject for a newsletter. She is also conscious of not planting anything, native or exotic, which is potentially feral and has dug out all the existing Agapanthus! Her garden is a small quarter acre site but I imagine larger country gardens still need to be carefully planted to manage fire risk around the house. Clive Blazey (an appropriate name) of the Diggers Club is rather anti certain native plants and prefers rainforest species for both shade and their lesser fire prone qualities. Well time to stop rambling! Regards Jill Mitchell

Playground design

Jane Fountain, Brisbane
I have been very excited lately to see the amazing makeover of the playground in the school where I am a Teacher Aide. The area is optimistically called the ‘Rainforest’ and has gums, figs, Harpullia, Buckinghamia and other trees. Children are very hard on a play area, and for years I watched the roots of trees being exposed more and more, by the constant running of hundreds of children with hard –soled joggers.

Over summer there was a total makeover with the idea of ‘nature play’ as the focus. Large rocks infilled with gravel, to keep out rodents, snakes and small feet, provide challenging walking and big logs, rescued from a nearby subdivision, are used for sitting, walking on or jumping to or from! Rocks have also been placed in circles for group chatting or performing. A great deal of mulch has been added, with coir logs being used to try to stop the slip. We are very lucky to have this area and that the P&C is prepared to invest in its enhancement and protection, as well as giving the kids some great fun. I also feel that there are some elements of this that could be translated to suburban gardens – wouldn’t it be great to have a handy huge rock and log or two, and a machine to put it all in place! Above are two pics to inspire you.
GARDEN TIPS

- An avid native gardener recently told me that one of the best ways to bring good healthy green foliage back to Banksia species is to bury a handful of rusty nails in the root zone. The iron leeches out progressively into the soil and apparently the plants respond quite quickly. I decided to try it on a couple of Banksia spinulosa and now several weeks later they are just a little greener (I think). Does anyone else use this method?

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

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: refer to ANPSA website
Tasmania: refer to ANPSA website
Western Australia: Sept 29 – Oct 4, 2019  ANPSA ‘Blooming Diversity’ - refer to ANPSA website
Queensland: August 30, 31  GDSGQ Weekend of gardens on the Sunshine Coast & Gympie

As you probably recall, membership of GDSG covers a period of twelve months from July 1 to June 30 so this August Newsletter # 108 will be the first one for the 2019/2020 year. UNLESS you want to change your Membership status there is no need for you to do anything to keep receiving the Newsletter electronically.

- If you wish to terminate your Membership & Newsletter by email, then please advise me;  OR
- If you wish to resume your Membership & Newsletter by post, then forward the annual subscription $20.

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

Jackie Poetzscher  Brookfield, Brisbane Q
Rhonda Daniels  APS NSW eNewsletter editor
Jenny Diezmann  Brisbane Q
Bronwyn Carey  Bondi Beach, NSW

Current Membership: 138 - including 17 posted Newsletters & 113 email Newsletters

Treasurer’s Report – June 30, 2019

General account: $ 5,248.23
Term Deposit: $27,320.83 (incl interest of $614.25 - reinvested for 12 months to Jan 25, 2020)
TOTAL: $32,807.37

Membership year July 1 – June 30

Membership dues payable annually as follows:

Email Newsletter  FREE  Posted Paper Newsletter $20.00 per annum
Concession Posted Paper Newsletter $15.00 (for pensioners and full-time students only)

Payment by cheque or EFT to: ANPSA Garden Design Study Group  BSB 032-729, Account 285 385

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ANPSA Garden Design Study Group Newsletter

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

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STOP THE PRESS

ED: These are last minute entries for the Newsletter and they ensure the final page of the Newsletter is not blank!

Ros Walcott has shared these photos of some interesting sculptural items that she has seen in various gardens to add to the theme discussions about ‘Incorporating Artistic Elements–Serious & Whimsical’. If any member has photos or details of similar elements just send them in for adding to the next Newsletter.

![Unusual and comfortable bench, Hawaii. Created from a tropical tree.](image1)

![Tortoise sculpture, Horse Island, Tuross Heads, NSW](image2)

![Kangaroo sculpture, Horse Island, Tuross Heads, NSW](image3)

![Pool with sculpture, Peter Woodbury’s garden, Googong, NSW](image4)

GDSG Membership records - updated

At the end of the financial year it is necessary to ensure that new, current and discontinuing membership records are correct so that members receive the Newsletter in their preferred method either by print/post or by email. It is quite a task to correlate this detail and I hope that everything is now correct. In analysing the records, it seemed likely that about 15 of our email members may no longer wish to continue as GDSG members, so they will no longer receive the Newsletter by email. Similarly some of those previously paying for the paper copy of the Newsletter have been contacted to ascertain if they intend to subscribe for the 2019/2020 year – we don’t want to waste our funds in printing unnecessary Newsletters.

It is always possible that in this process someone may have been inadvertently removed from the current membership records, so if you are discussing receiving the August GDSG Newsletter with other members, if there is a problem just ask them to contact me to rectify the situation. With email membership being free it is so easy to forget to advise that you want to discontinue or change your membership. Similarly if you change your email address do not forget to let me know.