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ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

## GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

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Treasurer/Membership: Peter Garnham



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Dear Members,

First, my best wishes to all members for a happy and rewarding 1996.

I think I'll call my 'editorial' this month 'Time for some changes?' As the Study Group continues to grow (which must reflect its relevance), I wonder whether its structure is now too centralized to achieve as much as we'd like to. A relatively small number of members contribute to the Newsletters. Fewer are able to attend meetings, which to date occur only in Melbourne and Sydney. It's great that members enjoy the Newsletters and find them useful, but I think there must be a lot more information and ideas 'out there' which are not getting aired. Editing four Newsletters a year keeps me busy and we're restricted to four chances a year to communicate widely throughout the SG by this method. (Articles on disc (for a Mac) help reduce my workload.)

It's good if SG members in the same locality can get to know each other, though this may be more difficult for country members. It's tricky publishing a complete list of members' names, addresses, etc, especially with the lag in renewals. We'll try to send a State list to all members with the February Newsletter each year to help in this regard.

One possibility to decentralize and create more of a network structure would be to have special interest groups (sigs) within the Study Group. Sigs could focus their attention on the aspect which is their main interest in garden design and communicate more frequently and more directly with others sharing that particular interest, by phone, fax, mail or whatever. We'd need a member to volunteer to be the sig coordinator; a vital part of their role would be input to the main SG and the NL. People might feel more confident about contributing collectively. Areas of interest could be any of the usual (small gardens; formal gardens; colour; etc) or whatever new ones arise. They could also be geographical areas (smaller than states), where gardeners may be influenced in their design by particular soil types, climates, plant palettes and problems. Areas of interest overlap, of course. ...

Another definite need we have is for members who belong to other study groups (osgs) to keep the GDSG in touch with any material from that Study Group's research or Newsletters relevant to garden design. This is *not* a huge job if you're already reading the Newsletters. I'd really welcome an osg liaison volunteer (or two) from each of the other Study Groups, who will let us know when something of interest appears.

*Please volunteer to coordinate asig or liaise with g&s. Also send in any suggestions you have for the GDSG to run more effectively and productively, preferably making use of the experience and skills of more members.*

I included the whole of Jane Shepherd's substantial paper in this Newsletter, rather than dividing it, because I found it helpful to read such an excellent synopsis of our gardening history in one sitting. A theme which seems to have emerged in this NL is trying to identify the difference(s) in designing gardens with Australian plants compared with exotic plants. Do you have some ideas on this subject? Over the summer holidays, have you seen any good gardens or read any good books - on garden design, of course? How about a(nother) New Year resolution, to write us a letter to share your design experiences with fellow members?

## TREASURER'S REPORT

FINANCES - Bank balance at 4/2/96: \$2168.36 (includes deposits for Warrnambool weekend)

MEMBERSHIP - 1995/6 Subscriptions paid: Vic 94; NSW 54; SA 10; Qld 9; WA 9; ACT 6; Tas 5; USA 1; Groups 14

Total: 202 subscriptions

(Note - two members at the same address pay only one subscription, to cover the cost of one set of Newsletters; membership is now approximately 225, including group membership.)

Thanks to Linda Floyd for producing a computerised database. Please advise me of any errors or omissions in the complete list of members of your State, including any new or altered phone numbers.

**Peter Garnham**

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### Warrnambool weekend

*It's **not** too late to register, but please do it straight away. There's a form in the last NL, or just send your name, address, phone number and \$20 to Peter or Diana by return mail.*

The following is an outline of the program for the weekend, in case you're still hesitating about coming. It will be a great weekend. Full details including a map will be sent soon to members who are attending.

#### Program for GDSG weekend at Warrnambool

Friday 15th March

- 6 pm Macey's Pub "Courtyard Room", Raglan Pde (*soup, pasta & salad/vegetables, sweets at \$10*)
- 8 pm GDSG members will join Warrnambool & District SGAP for their meeting in the Mozart Hall in Gillies St. Peter Brennan is speaking on 'Plant and Space'.

Saturday 16th March

- 8.45 am Meet at CWA Hall, 30 Kepler St (for pooling cars and help in navigating)
- 9 am Visit the 'Japanese' Garden site with Peter Brennan
- 9.45 am Tourist Information Centre (Raglan St /Princes H'way, corner of Kepler St)
- 10.30 am Morning tea at CWA Hall
- 11 am Visit South West Water Authority (Fairy St, corner of Koroit St): Warrnambool & District SGAP and GDSG major Project for this afternoon's Workshop (a 'water - wise' garden)
- 11.45 am Kellie & Peter Blyth's garden, (*a small new garden and a GDSG project*)
- 12.05 pm Claire & John Vaughan's garden, I (*a garden to be created on sand*)
- 12.30 pm Rolls/sandwiches lunch at CWA Hall (catered)
- 1.30 pm A quick visit to Thunder Point to see coastal vegetation
- 1.45 pm Peter Garnham outlines 'Friends of Gardiners Creek' Project for Workshop
- 2 pm Workshop at CWA Hall from 2 - 5 pm
- 3.30 pm (or any time you like) Afternoon tea
- 5 pm Presentations 5 - 5.30 pm
- 6pm Macey's Pub "Courtyard Room"
- 8 pm GDSG meeting begins at CWA Hall. Members of Warrnambool & District SGAP invited and welcome. John Fenton is speaking on 'Garden Design with Landcare'.

Sunday 17th March

- 9 am Meet at Tourist Information Centre
- 9.30 am Joan Henderson's garden "Carrakoorte", I
- 10.45 am (or so) Morning tea
- 11.15 am Cherree & Ian Densley's garden "Denbly",
- 12.30 pm Barbecue lunch at Cherree's (catered)
- 2 pm Official farewells, thanks, etc, but discussions on projects (particularly the SW Water

Authority project), gardens, etc, may continue after 2 pm. Other possible visits, activities.  
4 pm Final farewells to Cherree and Warrnambool & District SGAP members.

### Accommodation at Warrnambool

26 motels are listed for Warrnambool: two 4-star, eighteen 3.5 or 3-star and 6 budget, so costs are competitive. However there are Field Days for farm machinery from Wednesday to Friday and one or two weddings in town that weekend, so some of the small motels are booked out already. Two large motels conveniently located are Mid City (4\*) with 53 units and Centre Court (3.5\*)(38 units). People have different ideas about what a good motel should have, so check your RACV Accommodation Guide - if you don't have one I could send you a copy of the relevant bit. There are also caravan parks, holiday units, etc.

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### Extracts from correspondence

*"There seems to be continuing discussion as to whether plants we have known for many years as being native (indigenous) in Australia should still be recognised under that category. Here are some further comments.*

*Phyla nodiflora is a widespread tropical/subtropical species which has become naturalised in Australia and is now found in Qld, NSW, Vic, SA, WA and NT. In the recently published (1992) Flora of NSW, Volume 3 page 615 it is cited as being introduced as it is in other publications such as Queensland Vascular Plants, The Flora of South Australia, Census of the Vascular Plants of Victoria and Census of the Vascular Plants of Western Australia.*

*Swamp Foxtail or Fountain Grass, Pennisetum alopecuroides is undoubtedly a very lovely species with many endearing horticultural and landscape qualities. It too has become naturalised in some areas as have many other members of the same genus. Over the years there have been varied thoughts and comments in the botanical world on its 'claim to being indigenous'. Its distribution ranges through Asia, Qld, NSW, Vic, SA, WA and NT. In most areas it is regarded as introduced but in Flora of NSW, Volume 4 page 500 it is entered as a native species. Even if this species does in time earn an indigenous title, care should be undertaken in its landscape use because it has very overtaking ways!"* Rodger Elliot Vic

*"I am interested in joining the Garden Design Study Group and participating in its activities. My specific interest in joining now is that I have the opportunity to create a garden from scratch on a vacant residential block, which I would like to be a positive 'advertisement' for Australian plants, especially smaller shrubs and wildflowers from the Melbourne region."* James Lenard, Vic

*"I am replanting spots & plants lost to the drought. I have removed a couple of non-natives, and our garden is constantly improving. I am struggling to keep the grass down with all this rain; rabbits are back in plague proportions. Hoping this 'Calicivinis' will come soon and wipe the blighters out for good."* Ron Munro, Vic

*"On the subject of indigenous plants, I did like the comment of Ian Percy - 'all he has to do now is learn how to propagate them' - because this has been a great limiting factor here and still is, although improving all the time. The Melbourne area is pretty well served now and I must confess to bringing up a few species from Melbourne that are indigenous here, but I have not been able to propagate the local form myself. And as Colleen Keena points out so well, where do you draw the line? My first response was, where the soil type changes, but then we have at least three soil types on the farm, so I give up. I want to anyway, because I don't want to be restricted in my garden although I hope I can be responsible in what I plant. . . ."* Barbara Buchanan Vic

*"We have just purchased a small holiday property on a river bank on the NSW South Coast. Like most of the area it was cleared for dairy farming and all that remains are a few casuarinas and eucalypts on the river bank. We are about to embark on the delights of returning this plot to enriched bushland. We have been keen city gardeners but are complete novices when it comes to Australian plants."* Robyn Dryen & Kaye Schofield NSW

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### An editor's questions

**Brian Walters NSW**

*NSW members will have already seen the January issue of 'Native Plants for NSW (Vol.31 No. 1), in which the editor Brian Walters writes about design and the work of the GDSG. He raises some very discerning questions. The following are extracts from Brian's editorial:*

*"While agreeing for the need for the Society to encourage more gardens to be part of the Open Garden Scheme, I wonder whether design, at least in the "traditional" sense, is the way to go. And, if it's not, what constitutes 'design' in native gardens? Most of us grow native plants because we learned our love of Australian flora from the natural bushland. If we strive for any "design" at all, it's probably an effort to recreate the bushland "atmosphere" in our backyards. Few of us succeed but it's fun trying! But is the "bushland effect" what visitors (to the Open Garden Scheme) will want to see? Or will they expect to see a traditional garden comprised of native species rather than exotics? If they do, then most native gardens are likely to disappoint."*

*Brian quotes comments of people complaining about eucalypts dropping their leaves in the street (eg "The street looks shocking", "the grass just can't grow" and "It's disgusting.").*

*"What is it that makes people reach for a rake ... when they see leaves on the ground? Why is leaf litter regarded as inherently untidy? This illustrates what we are up against in converting people to appreciate native garden design. ... After all, a native garden without at least one or two gum trees is a fraud, don't you think?"*

*So how do we encourage people to appreciate the differences between traditional and native gardens? The work of the Garden Design Study Group is a step in the right direction.... Perhaps members of the GDSG have the answer to changing the average person's fixed conception of what constitutes an attractive garden. Let's hope so."*

## UNNATURAL ACTS : THE DESIGNED LANDSCAPE AND AUSTRALIAN FLORA Jane Shepherd Vic

Reprinted from the Conference Papers of the ASGAP 18th Biennial Conference Ballarat 1995.

*Jane Shepherd is a Lecturer in Landscape Architecture at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. Jane is passionately interested in the continued development of an Australian Landscape Architectural practice using Australian flora. Her own research and teaching is directed at uncovering the existing design traditions with Australian flora and encouraging students to forge new directions through their design studio explorations.*

This paper is a discussion of various design movements which have influenced the form and nature of gardens designed for Australian flora. Reference is made to the influential British movements, briefly referring to the legacy of the 'Picturesque', 'Gardenesque' and 'Arts and Crafts' gardens, the rise of interest in natural history, and the development of the 'Wild Garden'. The local design movement, 'Bush Gardens', and the influence of modernism, particularly American practice post World War II, precedes a conclusion centred on recent practice.

### The history of the designed landscape - Influential British movements

The history of the designed landscape is a history of a continuous play between nature and culture, between the architectural and the mimetic, that is between the highly ordered formal landscape and the landscape in imitation of nature. Across the centuries, various forms of garden design styles were forged, championed by wealthy and influential supporters. Formal and informal design styles were played off against each other in a cause and effect relationship based on popularity. For instance, there was a peak in 17th century France of grand formal gardens, and then across the following centuries there emerged a range of neo-classical revivals. Playing off against these, there has been the appearance of a variety of informal garden design styles. In the twentieth century, modernist and post modernist design styles have reinvestigated and created new twists on concepts of formality. Simultaneously, informal garden designs, particularly the "Bush Garden", offered a refined informal style for the design with Australian plants.

#### 'Picturesque' design

In the 18th century, there was a preoccupation to discuss aesthetic theory, focussed around categories of the beautiful, the sublime and the picturesque. The categorising of forms of beauty sprang from Enlightenment interest in the creation of an ordered understanding of the universe through the application of taxonomies. The British developed a landscape design style based on the idea of the picturesque as applied from literature. 'Picturesque' landscape design was strongly influenced by the impulse to make landscapes in the image of paintings by Claude Lorraine and Gaspar Poussin. Designs were founded on the notion that they should be a series of framed views. Relationships were created between the neo-classical mansion and its landscape with outward views across the ha ha wall into a composition akin to a picture. Tightly wooded clumps of trees in the foreground led the eye to the architectural follies, often located at lake edges, and imitation ruins created in the picturesque mode. There was much use of allegory expressed as artefacts and ornaments. Concurrently, the 'English Landscape School' created an idealised landscape which is now recognised as the landscape of England; of smooth green rolling fields, gentle lakes and streams with groupings of trees on the edge of meadows.

#### 'Gardenesque' design

Virulent battles were waged in the popular and garden press by exponents championing their view of appropriate landscape design responses to the aesthetic debates. By the 19th century elements from 18th century gardens were partly retained and requoted, and merged in with new elements of the mid-19th century development of the 'Gardenesque'. 'Gardenesque' design was developed during the reign of Queen Victoria and the style was fuelled by innovations in the technology of iron, steel and glass, and decorated by the importation and hybridisation of massive numbers of exotic species. The Botanic gardens of the British Empire were expanded and enhanced and became the major collection and dispersal points for the rapidly developing economy of cropping and ornamental plants. Tender tropical plants were grown in hot houses behind the scenes, and bedded out in bright displays for the summer months. Single exotic tree specimens were located on spacious lawns and the shrubs were arranged at ample distances apart in beds of turned earth, where each species could be admired for its individual qualities and separate characteristics. There was a fascination with technology in the garden; it was an extraordinary period for fountain design, rustic ornamentation and rockeries. The plant palette had been so greatly expanded by plant importation that many gardens developed specialist collections. Rock gardens housing alpine plants, for instance, were a common addition to large private and public gardens.

In a number of ways the 19th century 'Gardenesque' design style has maintained a powerful and pervasive influence on garden design in 20th century Australia. It continues to be popular for domestic landscapes of neat lawns and beds of petunias. Elements of this and the earlier 18th century 'Picturesque' are still used as spatial planning devices in the layout of public and large private gardens, including those devoted to Australian plants. Curved paths encircling broad lawns dotted with specimen trees, groupings of plants to open and close the view, shrub beds to display individual species, as well as the specialist collection gardens are key remnant features of the British tradition in garden design. The Maranoa Garden in Melbourne is a superb example of a 20th century public garden utilising the schemas of this design style.

### 'Arts and Crafts' design

While the 'Gardenesque' style and the vast plant palette associated with it set the scene for the 20th century, it was the design style which reacted against the high Victorian landscape that has provided one of the most enduring frameworks for the design of gardens using Australian plants. By the mid-19th century in Britain, the 'Arts and Crafts' movement had developed in protest against poorly designed, cheaply made, factory produced objects. William Morris and other Pre-Raphaelites, particularly the painters and architects influenced by the writings of John Ruskin, proposed a return to an idealised medievalism of guilds. The designers established workshop environments where skilled craftspeople could produce hand-made traditional objects, such as furniture, soft furnishings, wall papers and tapestries. Fabrics and wall paper patterns were often inspired by nature and were deliberately flat and two dimensional in appearance, so as to remain honest to the materials.

Paralleling the Arts and Crafts movement abhorrence of the mass production of goods and buildings, garden designers expressed loathing for the 'Gardenesque'. They came to detest the artificiality of hot house reared, labour intensive temporary displays of amassed and clashing coloured plants, which worked against nature. Many leading garden designers advocated a return to the use of hardy field plants, which did not require protection in glass houses during the English winters. The study of Botany was on the increase at both amateur and professional levels. Amateurs authored many regional British wild flower and field guide books. This British interest in natural history was an important part of Australian 19th century life, particularly the preparation of images depicting the Australian topography and illustrations and specimens of flora and fauna to send back to Britain. Artistic and botanical expressions of interest in natural history influenced notions of taste for British garden designers. Advocacy of the use of hardy imported and native plants did not, however, provide a design style.

### 'Wild Garden' design

The most influential writer and publicist advocating a move away from Victorian gardens was William Robinson (b.1838 d.1935). In 1870, he published *The Wild Garden: On Our Groves and Shrubberies made beautiful by the Naturalisation of Hardy Exotic Plants*, and in 1883 he published *The English Flower Garden*, which included a description of a glorified and somewhat mythical image of an English Cottage garden with its roses, honeysuckle, Madonna lilies, foxgloves, hollyhocks, marigolds and primroses. The transportation of this idea to Australia can be observed in John Glover's c. 1834 painting of the front garden at his Tasmanian home.

The 'Wild Garden' design philosophy was based on observation of growing plants as free forms in herbaceous borders and through recordings and collection of plants in the wild. The idea was not unique to Robinson. Across Britain, particularly in Scotland and Ireland, private estate owners were experimenting with the less formal use of plants particularly in tough terrain. On tour, Robinson visited a great many gardens, and his writings reflect this wider cultural change in garden design. By this time, the British were enthusiastically creating bog and stream gardens, fern gullies, forest and meadow gardens. The planting design philosophies were based on observation and ideas of the scenic. Garden makers were advised to create artificial landscape scenes as the gardens for their own estates.

*The Wild Garden* advocated the naturalisation of plant material from abroad to create woodlands, mountain forests, meadow lands, etc. Five thousand bulbs might be taken from a Swiss hill slope for example, and transported and planted in a copse on a British estate to recreate a particular scene. Robinson extended the 19th century botanical interest in the new exotic species and in local wild flowers into the domain of garden design if they meet the selection criteria. The key words in selecting plants are 'prettiness', 'loveliness', 'grace', and 'beauty' of the individual species. The book has a large section on exotics and a smaller section on British wildflowers. However, the inclusion of British plants is highly significant. Hardiness and the ability to naturalise provide the framework for plant selection and inclusion in the 'Wild Garden'.

Robinson was deeply influenced by his travels abroad and he developed a very visual and scenic sense of garden design. It was not an ecological sense, it was purely aesthetic, but it does appear to have influenced the 20th century designers whose practice has been based on either ecological or aesthetic principles. The influences can be observed in the design of many contemporary Australian 'Bush Gardens'. During the latter part of the 19th century in Britain there were great debates between protagonists who favoured a return to formality and those proposing so-called natural gardens. Collaborations between architects and landscape designers led to the creation of gardens using strong architectural frameworks to connect buildings to landscapes and to simultaneously provide the settings for the informal use of hardy exotic and native plants. The plants were displayed individually for compositional qualities.

### Influence of Gertrude Jekyll

Gertrude Jekyll (b.1843 d.1932) is considered the outstanding designer of 'Arts and Crafts' gardens. Jekyll was extremely conversant with colour theory, and the relationships between colour, line and form, theories she had been exposed to as a student of the South Kensington School of Art in the early 1860s. Artistic sensibility combined with sound horticultural knowledge applied to 'Arts and Crafts' or 'Wild Garden' principles, led to a refinement of planting design practice. Jekyll was a prolific author and her books were highly influential in Australia and used as the basis for teaching garden design early this century in Australia. Emily Gibson and her better known contemporary Edna Walling were exponents of 'Jekyllian' planting design principles. Emily Gibson taught horticulture and garden design at Burnley Horticultural College between 1918-22 and from 1947-53. Grace Fraser was a colleague of Gibson in the late 1940s and

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the influence of Jekyll can be observed in her design work. Fraser's mid 1970s design for the Native Garden at Royal Park, Melbourne and Paul Thompson's ongoing development of the Gardens at the Glaxo Factory, Melbourne, both exhibit a superb arrangement of the plant palette drawing from Jekyll's principles of colour, line and form.

### Australian 'Bush Garden' design

The 20th century Australian 'Bush Garden' tradition is possibly one of the best developed expressions of mimetic design in the western world. In the finest of these gardens, it is hard to recognise that they are designed landscapes, so much do they manage to replicate nature. The design aesthetic is underpinned by a deep respect and love for the bush. These gardens are designed in direct imitation or heavily influenced by planting relationships, materials and forms which occur in nature, and also draw on a range of intellectual sources. Late 19th and early 20th century writings on the wild or natural garden, conservation movement campaigns, the Society for Growing Australian Plants, the integrated architectural and landscape design approach from the mud brick heartland of Eltham and the ecological writings of American landscape architects in the 1960s have all played a part in varying degrees in influencing the development and refinement of the 'Bush Garden'. Gordon Ford's garden, 'Fulling' at Eltham, as described by Diana Snape, is a prime example of a highly refined bush garden: *"From a modern Melbourne suburban street, massive stone steps lead to the solid timber entrance gate which looks as though it belongs in an ancient fable.... the gate opens to a wide pathway through a natural bush landscape you would think had always been there. Large mossy basalt rocks and a variety of trunks are strong features among an expanse of middle and lower storey shrubs. From the main pathway inconspicuous tracks lead you away into the 'bush' and another path takes you up stone steps..."*

At the level of the general gardening public, the Maloney and Walker 'Bush Garden' books of the 1960s helped to introduce and popularise the idea of the 'Bush Garden' to home makers who may have been further lured to the style by the authors' promise of a future free from endless garden maintenance. The 'Bush Garden' is the most easily recognised design form using Australian Flora and is an extremely important ongoing local design practice. 'Arts and Crafts Gardens', 'Wild Gardens' and 'Bush Gardens' had the common starting point from a basis of observation of the landscape and its composition and of individual plants growing in nature. The 'Arts and Crafts Gardens' were the most stylised as their aesthetic was partly informed by colour theory from art practice, and many of the garden layouts determined by strong architectural forms of terraces, walls and steps. A complex relationship between architecture, landscape and garden underpins 20th century modernism which is the other major style to have influenced both the design of gardens with Australian flora and the general condition of the Australian built landscape.

### ooooo 20th century modernism ooooo

From the 1870s until the 1980s, modernity in architecture has dominated the thinking and the design of the constructed environment. Modern architecture sought to express through design the conditions of contemporary life. Buildings were to be created with the qualities of a machine and an acknowledgment of the idea of travel; of movement through time and space. Technological developments enabled prefabrication and the use of repetitive elements to create rhythm, order and pattern. Buildings were stripped of ornamentation and an emphasis was placed on the expression of pure form. Technological improvements freed building facades from the necessity to be load-bearing walls and allowed for the creation of glass facades as 'skins' coating the building frame.

It is in the domain of domestic architecture that the influence of modernism, particularly American modernism post World War II, freed garden designers from the traditional separation of house and garden. Modernist houses were designed to merge interior and exterior space by the use of large plate glass windows and doors, and through the development of indoor gardens and outdoor rooms. Bruce Mackenzie captures this integration between spaces when describing his own house and garden in Sydney:

*"My problem is that I am unable to talk just about my garden. The typical house has a garden which belongs to the house but which is a distinctly separate thing. My garden is my house - my house is my garden... I enjoy sitting in my garden while working in my small study protected from the wind by the glass wall that insists I am inside my house. I enjoy sitting in my garden feeling the wind and the sun while still enjoying my house which is separated from me and my garden space by the same glass wall, or perhaps another one."*

### 'Lifestyle gardens'

Modern design facilitated a new informality in lifestyle and home based recreation. The popular gardening press, such as Home Beautiful and American 'Sunset' Design series, encouraged design practice which catered for 'lunch on the patio', 'barbeques by the pool' and 'low maintenance' gardens. Precast modular materials such as concrete pavers were considered an expression of modern design. Influences taken from contemporary artists such as Jean Arp led to the inclusion of organic curvilinear forms into the design of swimming pools and planting beds. These often 'kidney shaped' forms would intersect with the rectilinear geometries of surrounding paving and walls creating new spatial relationships. Plants with strong architectural forms were valued more highly than plants with 'pretty' flowers. The Californian designer, Thomas Church, was a key exponent of modernist style from the mid 1940s onward. His built projects were widely published & enormously influential. In the mid 1960s, the Australian designer Mervyn Davis designed a courtyard for the Perth Airport with a curvilinear pool surrounded by Xanthorrhoeas and other Australian flora. The project can be read as a direct splicing of a scene from the Western Australian landscape placed into the form of a Thomas Church design.

### 'Japanese design'

Oriental, particularly Japanese, design influenced modern architecture. Design elements include the careful framing of landscape views, the use of beautiful wooden decking, artistic placement of individual and small groupings of rocks, and small pools of water built in naturalistic forms. Architects and garden designers were attracted to the aesthetic created by the miniaturisation of the natural environment and the system of order and harmony informing Japanese design. The Californian buildings by the architect Richard Neutra are inspirational examples of Japanese influenced modern architecture. The same influence can be seen in many Bush Gardens especially gardens with ponds, stepping stones and careful placement of dense low growing plants. Paul Thompson amongst others has designed several gardens which are overtly influenced by the idea of the Japanese garden.

### Nationalism

At certain times during this century, waves of nationalism have provided impetus for an increased interest in local flora and fauna in Australia. Federation, at the turn of the century, is an obvious example where flora and fauna were stylised as decorative motifs by the local 'Arts and Craft' movement and used as ornamentation in interior, furniture and fabric design and on building facades. In the 1970s the renewed nationalism of the 'Whitlam years' saw the crowding of tall forests of Eucalypts into the front and back gardens of inner city terrace homes and the 'sbrubbing-up' of small municipal reserves, by enclosing borders of tough 'natives'. It was a time of significant public projects entirely planted with Australian flora. In Tasmania, Phyllis Simons designed the campus landscape for the Tasmanian College of Advanced Education in Hobart. With students, Phyllis collected local seed, raised the plant stock and planted the grounds. It quickly became a magnificent landscape, with buildings framed by substantial Eucalypts and small glades of sunny spaces for students, enclosed by shrubs and trees and ringed with massive local rocks retained from the building excavation works. In Sydney, Bruce Mackenzie reclaimed the desolated sand dunes to create Sir Joseph Banks Park in the industrial fringe of Botany Bay. Walking paths encircle a connecting sequence of small lakes edged by wetland plants and gently rolling duned forms. At the entrance there is a formal terraced lake edge planted in a grid of Casuarinas. At Peacock Point, Mackenzie planted Casuarina, in a formal line on the harbour's edge, to manifest a park of a very different quality to its highly urban surroundings. As previously mentioned, the City of Melbourne commissioned and built the Native Garden at Royal Park designed by Grace Fraser.

In the 1980s, the winning entry by Brian Stafford and Ron Jones for the design of Royal Park, Melbourne gave further impetus to large scale public design with Australian flora. The park design exploits the essential qualities of the site. The framework of vegetation is intended to highlight the expansive dome of the hill crest, to expose the vastness of the sky and create a place which is not literally, but abstractly and lyrically, about the Australian landscape. Later in the 1980s, 'Post Modern' design has offered a new freedom to designers through quotation and hybridisation of preceding styles. In Australia, designers have been able to question the long standing British traditions of park design and select and combine elements from a wide variety of design styles. Bicentennial Park, Sydney, designed by the landscape architect Lorna Harrison and the architect Lionel Glendenning, completed in 1988, is the largest of the Australian 'Post Modern' parks. A series of viewing towers reminiscent of the architectural follies of the Parisian 'Post Modern' Parc De La Villette create a central ordering structure of orientation points and lookout locations for park users. Board walks traverse the mangrove swamp and enormous block plantings of Casuarinas divide the vast open spaces. The roadway systems are lined with long avenues of figs and the formal terrace edge of the lake gives way to a tangle of wetland plants. The Eucalypts march in a grid up the hill slope from the lake heralding the advent of barbecue follies located in the landscape as a reference to the 'Picturesque' tradition. There is a direct legacy between this grand contemporary park and the work of designers using Australian flora. The wetland and watercourse treatments and the use of amassed Casuarinas can be connected to Bruce Mackenzie's park design in the 1970s.

### 'Designers dedicated to Australian flora'

Designers in the 1990s are beginning to incorporate Australian plants more widely in their design practice. Pressure from the conservation movement has led to a substantial increase in the use of indigenous plants in the designed urban landscapes. Designers previously disinterested in Australian flora are now being required by governments and private clients to work with plant palettes of indigenous and national flora. If the experience of Federation or the 'Whitlam Years' is anything to go by, it can be anticipated that as the Republican debate increases, a potential new wave of nationalism will lead to further popular interest in Australian plants.

As Australians in general continue to assess the possibilities and responsibilities offered by the 'post colonial' potential for the future, contemporary designers will find it increasingly more difficult to support a culture that maintains a long held hostility to Australian plants. It can be observed already that designers lacking substantial Australian plant knowledge are forming project collaborations with professional and amateur botanists and horticulturalists and engaging directly with experienced landscape designers who are dedicated to Australian flora. In essence, the amateur movement motivated by conservation and supported by individual designers and organisations like the Society for Growing Australian Plants have created and nurtured a fine tradition in garden design with Australian plants. Hopefully, new generations of designers will be able to connect to this heritage and build a future grounded in the already rich history and traditions of the movement loosely known as the 'Bush Garden'.

*Jane included a list of 26 footnotes, available to GDSG members who request it.*

## 8

**"Designing the local landscape"** - a brief summary of a paper presented by **Paul Thompson** Vic at a *Greening Australia Victoria Seminar* in December 1995 on 'Indigenous Landscape Design'.

reported by **Peter Garnham** Vic

Paul introduced his topic by stating that he was an enthusiastic advocate for the greater use of Australian plants, particularly local ones, in landscape design. He believes that "landscapes need to continue to attract attention from the public in order to be sustained".

His presentation consisted of three components which aimed to outline:

- (i) some historical background leading to today's total landscape movement
- (ii) the attitudes of the industry and public to the presentation and extension of the local identity
- (iii) considerations for improvements of the current approaches

### (i) Historical background

Interest in planting local plants and extending local landscapes is not new, but little has been written on the history of the idea. Since the Second World War, enthusiasts and authors like Thistle Harris and Edna Walling advocated the planting of local vegetation and the preservation of local identity. The formation of SGAP in 1957 focussed attention on "conservation through cultivation", and some members became actively involved in conservation issues such as Western Port Bay, the Mornington Peninsula and the Little Desert campaigns. The momentum continued with the Patterson lakes project, where Glen Wilson established a range of Australian trees within a frame of the indigenous vegetation. In 1973, Paul himself designed the first park in Victoria specifically to present local flora at Yarran Deheran in Nunawading.

A ground swell towards indigenous plants had begun. Many other developments occurred - Royal Park, the Metropolitan Park System, formation of local conservation groups and indigenous plant nurseries. Exciting developments were also evident interstate in Hobart and Sydney.

### (ii) Attitudes

People appreciate local indigenous landscapes as peaceful, neutral spaces when compared to formal municipal gardens, but have been reluctant to accept the same in their own gardens. Private indigenous gardens will develop as people become more self-assured in creating their own ideas based on greater knowledge and understanding of our local flora and the need for on-going maintenance.

Local government is where the strength of indigenous landscapes belongs. However, maintenance of the maturing landscape is as important here as it is for private indigenous gardens.

### (iii) Considerations for improvement

Landscape designers, both professional and amateur, must be able to visualize the resultant plantings at all stages of maturity. New urban landscapes benefit from strong structures such as earth forms or large rocks within the landscape. All developing landscapes benefit from having features which allow them to tacitly sell themselves. The aim of all designers should be to produce interesting, self-sustaining and long-lived "pictures" which present a favourable impression of the indigenous landscape.

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### **Your editor responds (see page 3)**

Below is the letter/article I sent to Brian Walters in answer to some of the points he raised; other GDSG members might also like to write to him (and to me) with their ideas.

### **A spectrum of Australian gardens**

**Diana Snape**

Brian's January editorial raised some challenging questions, centred on "what constitutes 'design' in native gardens?". I'd like to make a few comments on some of the issues he raised; my views do not necessarily represent those of all members of the Garden Design Study Group.

Our blocks of land used to be "natural bushland" of one sort or another. How realistic is it to try to recreate the "bushland" atmosphere in a backyard of 0.1 ha (or less), especially if the neighbours are afraid of trees and snakes? Rather than "copying" a patch of bushland, we may try to capture its essence or atmosphere, but this isn't quite the same and it doesn't just happen by luck either; to be well done, it needs design. For a thoroughly naturalistic garden, we should be growing the plants indigenous to the local area - a challenge that many are now taking up. So this is one end of the spectrum, as natural as it can be. When we introduce plants from other areas in Australia (as most of us do), on what basis do we introduce them? Probably so both they and the garden look good (design again).

At the other end of the spectrum could be the traditional style of garden referred to by Brian, "formal" but now composed of Australian plants. This may be the point on the spectrum where some gardeners will start, especially those who originally had exotic gardens - much better here than not at all! Consideration of factors such as massing and space, proportions, vistas, framing, combinations and visibility of plants will benefit not just these, but any gardens. I'd like to see the creation of many "formal" gardens like this, applying more traditional approaches, because the use of Australian plants in them would produce wonderful new effects. (They are unlikely to ever "replace" gardens full of the bold colours of annuals.)

I think there's no simple answer to changing the average person's fixed conception of what constitutes an attractive garden. Maybe we also need to soften any fixed attitudes we may have. I think many styles of Australian garden are possible along the spectrum between the two extremes outlined above. No one style is "right". "Bush garden"

plants could be pruned and kept "neater" (kangaroos, etc., do it in the bush); more formal gardens of Australian plants could allow leaf litter in some areas. I doubt we can change addicted leaf-rakers, but these are the extremes rather than the average. (I also remember Max Hewett's excellent advice on how you can always make an Australian garden look good to impress visitors - just sweep the paths.)

It doesn't matter so much what visitors to the Open Garden Scheme expect to see; what matters is the beauty of whatever style of garden of Australian plants they do see. Haphazard collections of Australian plants with no thought of design, although interesting, might represent a wasted opportunity to display our flora in a really attractive garden. Isn't it possible for both plants and the garden as a whole to shine?

I hope the Garden Design Study Group can cause a gradual shift in the right direction, i.e. towards the use of Australian plants and also an empathetic style. There are many little things that have a subtle influence too. Naming is important. I now always use the general term 'Australian plant' instead of 'native plant' because I think the latter on its own is meaningless and, if you have to say 'Australian native', why not just 'Australian'? (Native to or for somewhere is different.) To many people there is a hint of something inferior about 'native', while 'Australian' should reflect rising nationalism as the year 2001 approaches. Let's hope its influence is felt in gardens.

## FORMAL GARDENS

### A formal design for a small garden

Margarete Lee Vic

At our December 3rd meeting in Melbourne to discuss indigenous gardens, some discussion on the use of Australian plants in a formal way took place. I believe there is much scope for the use of Australian plants in this way for the following reasons:

1. Subdivisions are getting smaller and therefore available garden space needs to be maximized aesthetically.
2. As space reduces it becomes harder to achieve a naturalistic effect without the result looking contrived.
3. I believe many people who are totally committed to exotics would consider Australian plants if they saw them being used differently. The perception of the straggly Australian garden still exists strongly in the minds of many people. The possibilities for using Australian plants in different ways are endless and it is up to us to trial plants and discover which are best suited to the following situations:

Arbors - use of our climbers in different ways.

Topiary - some people like it.

Hedging - the butterflies will still visit even if you have trimmed your *Bursaria spinosa* into a hedge.

Espalier - plants with long internodes are particularly attractive. It could be interesting to try *Correa lawrenciana*.

Containers - by placing different size containers at different heights, interesting effects could be achieved in either a fully paved city courtyard garden or even on a balcony or penthouse garden (lifestyles and housing are changing). Gwen Elliot's book '*Australian Plants for Small Gardens and Containers*' (Hyland House) would be most helpful here.

As part of her student work, Margarete designed the formal small garden shown in the plan on pages 10 & 11.

### Formal plants or plants to use in formal situations

Barbara Buchanan Vic

I don't think anyone who was at the ASGAP Conference at Ballarat could have failed to be impressed by *Homoranthus flavescens*. I am sure it is one the Japanese garden maker will be using. Even when not drawing especial attention in flower its foliage and form are always satisfying.

*Grevillea iaspicula* - flowers insignificant but it appeals to me because of its shape and growth habit and soft green new leaves. Seems very tough too.

*Melaleuca cuticularis* (Saltwater Paperbark) - I am not too sure if it reproduces its lovely shapes in cultivation but the gleaming white and the twists and turns of the trunks are quite special. I rather envy Cherree her problem of how to get the best reflections. How about a group right in a shallow area of water, or an island - then you could see them all round. I've put a number in but have very few surviving the drought years (and the slasher).

*M. micromera* (Wattle Honey-myrtle) - although it can spread and tumble with age, this could probably be dealt with by judicious pruning. I am trying a row of them between the drive and a row of Burgan (*Kunzea ericoides*).

Do you remember I bought *M. armillaris* 'Green Globe' and *M. bracteata* 'Golden Gem' to try for shape and foliage? Both proved very frost susceptible, although they have come back now and the 'Green Globe' is a good sphere. I doubt I shall persevere with them because, unlike the White Cedars which were cut to the ground but given a frost free year will rise above it, the melaleucas will always get hit.

Jane Shepherd helped crystallise ideas I had floating around. She treated it historically but as I see it I am still caught between the payoff of seeing the individual shapes of shrubs (not necessarily as quite separate specimens in a lawn) and the cottage garden / heathland effect of mutual support and hiding the untidy bases of older plants. For instance I have a plant of *Glycine clandestina* at present running up and through a set of twigs I put in the pot with it, but I really think it will do best scrambling through other plants and it probably never has enough flowers at once to stand alone. So I guess it boils down to the character of the particular plant how widely you space it - I do hate to lose the form of many plants which is happening here now. In contrast others such as boronias which should be massed are standing alone because of gaps from deaths. Maybe in another 10 or 20 years I'll get it right, simply by trial and error. In my case I have the complication of hoping for a gradual change from more contrived (gardened) areas near the house to a woodland beyond.

SPECIES	QTY	SIZE	SUPPLY
<u>TREES</u>			
1. MELIA AZEDARACH	1	5"	5" TUBE
<u>SHRUBS</u>			
2. ASTARTEA 'WINTER PINK'	4	300MM	15CM POT
3. CRYPTANDRA SCORTECHINII	2	300MM	15CM POT
4. ERIOSTEMON BUXIFOLIUS	8	300MM	15CM POT
5. GREVILLEA SERICEA	9	300MM	15CM POT
6. HARDENBERGIA COMPTONIANA	4	300MM	15CM POT
7. HOMORANTHUS FLAVESCENS	9	300MM	15CM POT
8. HOMORANTHUS PAPILLATUS	1	300MM	15CM POT
9. KUNZEA RECURVA	7	300MM	15CM POT
10. LEPTOSPERMUM PETERSONII	5	300MM	15CM POT
11. LOMANDRA LONGIFOLIA	2	300MM	15CM POT
12. PHEBALIUM LAMPROPHYLLUM	5	300MM	15CM POT
13. SPYRIDIUM PARVIFOLIUM	2	300MM	15CM POT
14. THOMASIA MACROCARPA	2	300MM	15CM POT
15. THOMASIA QUERCIFOLIA	6	300MM	15CM POT
<u>GROUNDCOVERS</u>			
16. BRACHYSCOME MULTIFIDA	4	100MM	75ML TUBE
17. DICHONDRA REPENS	14	20MM	75ML TUBE
18. SCAEVOLA AEMULA	5	300MM	15CM POT
19. VIOLA HEDERACEA	14	20MM	75ML TUBE
<u>HERBS</u>			
20. ROSMARINUS OFFICINALIS	1	20MM	75ML TUBE
21. CORIANDRUM SATIVUM	1	20MM	75ML TUBE
22. MELISSA OFFICINALIS	1	20MM	75ML TUBE
23. MENTHA ROTUNDIFOLIA	1	20MM	75ML TUBE
24. MENTHA CORDIFOLIA	1	20MM	75ML TUBE
25. THYMUS VULGARIS	1	20MM	75ML TUBE
(C1) CONCRETE PAVERS - 450 X 450MM. LAID HARD UP.			
(C2) CONCRETE PAVERS - 450 X 450MM IN 1/2" GRAY GRAVEL.			
(C3) CONCRETE PAVERS - 450 X 450MM IN GROUNDCOVERS.			
(B) HOUSE BRICK EDGING			
(T1) TIMBER TABLE & CHAIRS - JARRAH.			
(T2) TIMBER BENCH SEAT - JARRAH.			
(L) LATTICE - TREATED PINE.			
(P1) POTS. TERRACOTTA. SIZES 3 X 40CM, 2 X 30CM.			
(P2) POTS. TERRACOTTA. SIZE - 70CM. X2			
(P3) POT. TERRACOTTA. SIZE 50CM.			
(W1) WATER FEATURE - 45CM DEEP REFLECTIVE POND			
(W2) WATER FEATURE - GRAY GRANITE			
(G1) GROUND COVERS - V. HEDERACEA & D. REPENS.			
(G2) GROUND COVER - B. MULTIFIDA			
(G3) GROUND COVER - S. AEMULA.			

PLANTING PLAN  
 BURNLEY GARDENS  
 CLIENT: G. OLIVE.  
 DESIGNER: M. LEE.  
 SCALE: 1:50



*/ had written this article before the January Native Plants for NSW arrived and I read Brian Walter's editorial. There is a slight overlap between this and my response on page 8.*

When we walk through a natural area - a natural garden - we create a path, leaving footprints or other traces to show where we've moved. As more people pass along it, the path becomes more defined. We begin to give the landscape structure in human eyes, to appropriate or 'own' the landscape. (There are exceptions of course - outcropping rock resists the effect of traffic; sand is washed clean by seawater - but these are few.) In our culture we do not live as an integral part of nature, in a sustainable equilibrium with it. Our entry into a natural area is something of an intrusion.

In his article on page 14, Jeff Howes raises the conundrum of owning a 'bush block'. Here I'm thinking more of the natural - formal spectrum when we create a garden on a cleared/mostly cleared/previously cleared block of land. We may aim for different positions on this natural - formal spectrum, but I've begun to wonder just how 'naturalistic' any created garden can be, and whether there is a formalistic element inherent in almost any designed garden. I'll consider briefly three aspects - paths, open areas and (very briefly) plants.

One priority is to determine our main pathways through the area; these then begin to define separate areas of the garden. A really formal garden will have paths which are symmetrical, in straight lines or regular curves. Most growers of Australian plants don't like them, but many people obviously find some satisfaction in that sense of order and control. In formalistic gardens, lines or curves are more freehand (more OK, or more politically correct?). What sort of paths then are appropriate for a naturalistic garden? A completely naturalistic garden probably should have no pathways - you find your way each time - hmm. Paths may wander but they usually lead somewhere, moderately direct in the routes they follow. So paths are created and the garden is closer to the 'formal' end of the spectrum, less able to be 'natural', though some materials and treatment are more naturalistic than others. The smaller the garden's area, the greater the impact any use (even walking through it) must have on it - a raised board walk appeals to me in this regard.

Most people don't want to be too enclosed by their garden, so another usual priority is for areas of open space. (Paths also come under this heading.) What natural areas of open space can we follow as examples? Outcropping rock; alpine meadows; grasslands; coastal heath; desert areas of sand or stone; wetlands or lakes - how possible is it for *our* areas of open space to be very naturalistic? Then there may be changes in ground level within the garden, which can be treated quite formally (walls, steps, terraces, ramps or sloping banks, raised beds) or less formally (with use of rocks, logs or sleepers, irregular terracing, sloping banks stabilised by groundcovers or creepers). Nowadays the *source* of rocks and logs may present serious problems, as intact natural areas become even more precious. Again on the naturalistic - formal spectrum, where do the various treatments of open space lie?

As I study our garden, which I used to think was 'naturalistic', I see more and more 'formalistic' components. When I come to think about plants and planting in relation to the natural - formal spectrum I find many questions. I'll look at a few of them here, under 4 headings:

1. Informal/naturalistic layout and informal naturalistic planting

For a truly naturalistic, planted garden in any area are we restricted to using only that area's indigenous plants? For layout then do we use 'survival of the fittest' of a mix of seeds; more or less haphazard planting; or planting in a deliberate fashion to aim for a natural look? Shorter plants may be hidden or overgrown by taller ones in a garden. Do we want all plants to be visible to the appropriate extent, as Barbara Buchanan suggests, sometimes standing alone or sometimes blending with others? Do we need formality of placement to 'show off' plants as Margarete Lee suggests, or to frame vistas, etc? if we aim for any 'special effects' (eg colour schemes), or introduce plants from other areas of Australia, how naturalistic / formalistic is our planting? Does it belong more to:

2. Informal/naturalistic layout, more formalistic treatment of planting

I think many of our gardens may lie in this category. 'Maintenance' procedures which have been rather neglected in the past are necessary if we want plants to look good, or just be as they are 'naturally' (discussed in more detail in the separate article on 'maintenance as design'). Plants treated in a rather more formal way may still look 'naturalistic' (especially to the non-SGAP eye). On the other hand, there are Australian plants with a more formal shape; one also sees rows of trees or groupings of shrubs in nature which have a certain formal look. We are sensitive to massing and space, proportion, vistas, framing, combination and visibility of plants in natural bushland too, as we are in the garden.

3. More formal structure/layout, informal naturalistic planting

Here I think there are endless possibilities for the appealing use of Australian plants in gardens which have a more formal (formalistic) layout. Recently we stopped in a roadside 'layby' with tables, benches and a toilet block (a not very garden-like scene), where there was a simple pattern of concrete pathways with formalistic lines. The indigenous ironbark eucalypts and sparse groundflora had been left in the pleasant shapes outlined by the concrete paths and they looked good. Perhaps it's a case of enjoying the abandon of nature - but 'framed', still keeping it 'under control'. Our pathways 'contain' our groupings of plants.

4. More formal structure, more formal planting

I know of very few examples where those more 'formal'-looking Australian plants are used and treated in a more formal way. I'd really like to see it done, because it would be fascinating to see how our different flora would make such gardens different.

**An Australian Tree Garden**

Geoff Simmons Qld

Many members occupying or buying large areas of land have the opportunity to plant a tree garden. By large area is meant a quarter of a hectare or so. A corner or central area that fits into the whole garden can be not only an attractive feature but also a functional shade, windbreak or screen effect. A tree garden is just that - not a tree and shrub or undercover garden but one where the ground is mulched initially with bark or similar material but is eventually naturally mulched with leaves, prunings and other debris from the trees as well as excreta from birds that will come to investigate the plants.

But what other characteristics are pluses for a tree garden? With some exceptions trees have long lives so their development can be watched with interest, and maintenance is low. If they grow large they can be cut down to size, although choice of species and location should minimise this action. Before considering species, the point should be made that a tree garden is not an arboretum which is a collection of trees where variety rather than design has priority. However arboreta may be a good way to gain appreciation of potential trees for your garden.

It is an unfortunate fact that retail nurseries do not usually have a wide variety of trees so, if your selections are not available, resort to growing from seeds may be required. SGAP seed banks and commercial suppliers of seeds of Australian plants will satisfy most requirements. Several trees of the same species planted in a line or clump seem to give a better coherence than a large number of different species and there is the additional advantage that, if one should die, a smaller replant of another species that blends with the remaining trees does not look out of place.

As with any garden, selection of varieties is very important although the criteria for selection may be different. Because one is looking 5, 10 years or decades ahead, survival, climate, soil type and size should be given more than usual consideration. Also adequate protection of the young tree should be thought about before planting - wind, rabbits, weed growth and native animals may all be hazards.

It is feasible to make a tree garden of subjects selected from cultivars of one species, or species from one genus, but this would require great skill to be effective. It is more likely that the garden would include plants from several genera as this increases the scope for imaginative planning. Not many Australian trees are deciduous although some rainforest trees may tend to shed leaves when grown under cooler or other more adverse conditions.

Selection of theme

There are basically two types of tree - those that have branches and leaves that start at or near ground level and those that have clearly visible trunks because the lower branches drop off early in growth. To me trunks offer beauty, so choosing trees with attractive trunks is desirable. Although many trees soar to the heavens, the shape and number of leaves that eventually form the canopy over the tree garden is another point to consider. Trees such as casuarinas produce leaf drop that inhibits growth of other plants so this is an advantage if minimum care is desired but will also require attention to removing the needles that fall around other plants to enable them to survive.

There are many themes that have possibilities:

1. trees with broad leaves
2. trees with fern-like leaves
3. trees characterized by bright flowers or unusual flowers
4. trees with scented flowers or foliage
5. trees that attract birds - basically these rely on nectar or berry production. One point that needs watching is that excreted seeds may result in unwanted distribution - weed trees.

Many other categories could be suggested, especially in shape or size, but it is the blending of species within the concept of a tree garden that really expresses the skill and art of designing a garden that contains only Australian trees.

**A GARDEN DESIGN PROJECT**

Wendy Geale Tas

The following guidelines were written partly in response to a letter from Wendy Geale in Tasmania, asking for some (amateur) help in planning and designing her large new garden. She had done all the necessary preparation including drawing a plan, analysing the site, taking photographs, identifying her (and her family's) requirements and wishes, and establishing lists of plants she liked and/or knew did well in her area.

Five Melbourne GDSG members enjoyed working together on Wendy's project. They suggested a general method of approach and organized her plant lists into various groupings. The final design was still up to Wendy, and then the next exciting stage - a lot of work but also (I'm sure) much pleasure. I hope it all goes well, Wendy!

A number of such garden design projects have been commenced and we hope these members will keep records of their garden's progress, especially as it begins to mature. Options in answer to "HELP", other than participating in a project, include using professional help and just talking to local GDSG (& other SGAP) members for their suggestions.

**GENERAL PLANNING & DESIGN GUIDELINES**

Nicole Lenffer &amp; Diana Snape Vic

Reprinted from NL 6, for the interest of recent members. The guidelines are applicable to both large and small gardens.

**PLAN** Draw a plan to scale, showing the existing boundaries of the site; location of any fixed structures e.g. house, garage, shed, fence; location of services e.g. electricity, gas, etc.

Mark in aspect, slope, high & low points, sun direction (areas of sun & shade), prevailing winds, drainage lines (wet areas), frost prone areas, existing vegetation to be retained, soil types, wildlife habitats, significant features, views -

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desirable & undesirable, panoramic & enclosed. Note climate & temperature ranges.

**SKETCH DESIGN** This involves observation, assessment & judgement of the site & its features.

Points to consider at this stage:

### Areas of open space

Have you thought about the final proportion of open space to planted areas that you want? e.g. you might want two large, separate north-south open areas, so eventually one planted area between them also running N-S.

Wide paths provide open space too, and possibly vistas.

Will large open areas be grass (which is relatively high maintenance)? Is a water area an option for you?

### Boundaries

Do you have any views ('borrowed landscape') you want to retain?

What boundary lengths do you want to screen?

How dense do you want your boundary plantings to be?

Do you need windbreaks along any boundaries?

### Land use

Do you want paved areas, or any areas required for specific uses or activities (e.g. play area, swimming pool, barbecue, clothes drying)

### Existing or desired character of the site

What style of garden would you like to achieve? e.g. a slightly formal style or a more natural one?

Do you want to follow a theme e.g. foliage colour or form, flower colour, landscaping to attract birds?

Are there significant features or plants you want to retain e.g. rock outcrops or large trees?

Observe carefully the form, line, colour, textures and scale of the existing vegetation and landscape.

If your block is flat, are you considering any earthmoving to give interesting, natural-looking changes in level? Raised areas or beds improve drainage too; low areas can collect and conserve water. A sloping block can be contoured.

Are there any problem areas that need to be changed?

### Trees and shrubs

Firstly where do you want trees, and in what combinations - scattered groves, rows, large clumps, small groups of 3 or 4, individual "specimen" trees? (Tree areas are relatively low maintenance, but consider the areas they will shade.)

Next, where do you want areas of large shrubs? Identify the priority order of developing/planting out areas (which can be varied according to availability of plants).

Are you thinking of using indigenous trees and shrubs to help establish a framework? They are likely to be hardy and reliable.

Are you happy using repetition of trees & shrubs which you find are successful? It's a good idea from an aesthetic point of view as well as a practical one.

Include favourites you think are likely to grow in your conditions.

"Collecting" can be useful in the early stages to help identify successful plants.

## **FINAL DESIGN STAGE**

# This stage involves incorporating the above features on to the plan. Try to show how the location and type of activity areas, the circulation (pathways) around the garden, the vegetation and the existing or desired character of the garden all relate to one another.

# The next step is to choose carefully the appropriate plants based upon the conditions of the individual areas of the garden and the style/theme selected. Start with the large trees and shrubs to establish a framework for the garden. Make sure the size (mature height and width) and the growth habit of the plant will fit into the area. Then choose the smaller plants and groundcovers that will fit in between and under the larger plants, or fill their own areas.

# Mark the selected plants in on the plan, showing the mature width of the plant (say 2/3 the maximum diameter given in references). Ensure that all plants are appropriately spaced so each plant has room to grow. (When you're planting, resist the temptation to move them closer together - plant small 'filler' plants such as daisies instead.)

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## **Indigenous gardens - a dilemma**

**Jeff Howes NSW**

I am one that would love to have a garden consisting of local indigenous species even though my block has been urbanised for over 100 years. I am sure that research would reveal what plants were originally there; however the soil and microclimate have seen far too many changes, ensuring that I can never do it. So in my case I just use whatever Australian plants suit my landscaping style.

However if I was landscaping an area that was predominantly unspoilt "bush" or adjacent to "bush" then one should have a responsibility to try to use the local plants as much as possible. That is assuming they can be propagated and can also be maintained in a "garden" situation. By using local plants it stops the "natives as weeds" problems highlighted by Neil Marriott (NL 11) and overcomes the fauna problems highlighted by Danie Ondinea (NL 11).

Perhaps we should change our attitudes as to what is a good or A1 garden design and award top marks to an indigenous garden and highly commend anyone who retains unspoilt "bush" areas on their block. This way (hopefully) more local plants could/will become available as well as highlighting the diversity of our local flora.

We went to Castlemaine to see a 'cottage - as adapted in Australia - garden' made by Barbara Mound, who has achieved a degree of fame in the conventional gardening world. I took the opportunity to take 8 or 9 small plants (eg a special prostrate *Calotis*) and asked her to trial them under her conditions. She felt Australian plants would find her regime too rich. Her garden is currently very open and sunny and must take quite a bit of water, has a good fall and thus drainage. It is old creek bed silt and thus reasonably good soil with a topping of whitish gravel as mulch and paths. (This gives plenty of self sown seedlings.) Brick edgings making terraces have been used in places. Just at the back door is a series of overlapping circles of various radii, which is visually very satisfying.



series of terraces of overlapping circles

I tried to get a feel for what we are up against in getting Australian plants accepted in such gardens. One thing is the solidity of the mass of flowers. Mind you I am not sure how long it lasts into our summer. The other thing that especially struck me was the deep purple foliage as in copper beech, berberis and cotinus. I have been chasing purple/plum foliage leptospermums after seeing the *L. polygalifolium* at Glaxo, and got a *L. obovatum* at Kuranga. I have a *L. 'Copper Glow'* with permanent plummy leaf colour and white flowers; I think *L. 'Copper Sheen'* has yellowish flowers. *L. brevipes* and one form of *Baeckea linifolia* has bronze new foliage but the leaves are very fine. None of them have the impact of the best exotics.

Lots of our plants have colourful growth flushes, especially the rainforest ones, but I can't think of any others that persist. *Crowea exalata* from Mt. Howitt has coloured undersides to the leaves. I guess we have to wait for suitable mutations to occur and hope that they are seen by someone who appreciates their potential. I have a *Correa glabra* from the Mitre (near Mt. Arapiles in Victoria) which has bright gold new leaves and a pretty pink flower. It has been slowish growing and the leaves gradually green. It is just about big enough to propagate from now and I'll be interested to see what it does.

A good alternative, and reasonably long-lived if moist enough - are the rusty bronzes of the banksia tips. 6. *baxteri* is finishing but *B. integrifolia* is just starting. *B. grandis* usually good and *B. solandri* can be superb. They do depend on water and probably even with constant watering are fairly variable - the old problem how much to water and how much to put up with the unexciting years. *Hakea crassifolia* and *H. undulata* were very good this year too.

(Some of the prostrate banksias from W.A. also have wonderfully coloured new foliage. DS)

## DESIGN IDEAS for fun

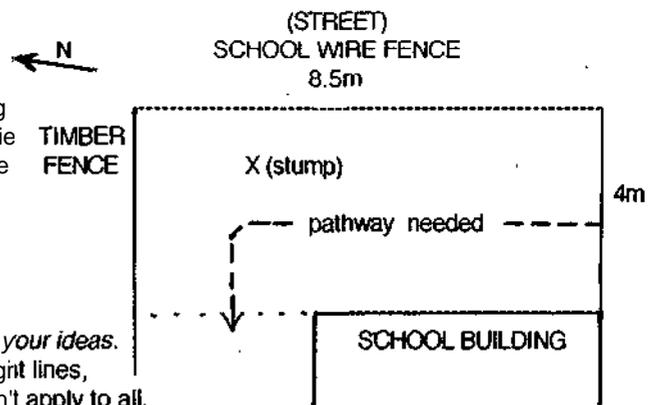
### Design for a Primary School

The diagram shows the area set aside in the Primary School mentioned in the last Newsletter, for the creation of a garden consisting of indigenous plants. The students are propagating and growing the plants with the help of GDSG member Stefanie Rennick. Below is a list of the plants they are propagating (the children know them by their common names):

Wallaby Grass; Everlasting; Chocolate Lily;  
Bluebell; Running Postman; Greenhood Orchid;  
(one) UV tree (*Bursaha spinosa*)

How would you design this rectangular area? Please send us your ideas.

Many of the children's designs were rather 'formal', with straight lines, circular beds and separation of colours, but this certainly didn't apply to all.



### Design ideas for fun

Diana Sn'ape Vic

I like Grahame Durbidge's idea of a *Myoporum parvifolium* (Creeping Boobialla) bed. We have several different forms of *Myoporum parvifolium* planted in one area of our garden. One form has light green, fine foliage; another has darker green, broader leaves; a third is in between these two and the last is like the second but with a more purple leaf. At the moment they are liberally sprinkled with showy little white flowers. I can picture quite a large attractive 'lawn' area which is just a mosaic of these different foliage forms - not a lawn to walk on but an open, green area. I think it's generally a hardy plant - any comments on this?

In the Grampians in Victoria I've seen another beautiful mosaic of different forms of *Pultenaea pedunculata* (Matted Bush-pea), with flowers in different shades of yellow and orange, it's now commercially available in several flower colours including a pale peach. We've found it to be slow growing and reasonably reliable. For most of the year the *Pultenaea pedunculata* mosaic will just be a very tow, dense green mat but it would be wonderful when it flowered in spring.

### Australians Images

Grahame Durbidge NSW

Lending the garden the feel that it is Australian. How do you do it?

Putting a little lantern near some rocks may give everyone a Japanese experience. A bird bath or sun dial cues us to a traditional romantic heritage. A covered wagon is definitely American.

Features in an Australian garden might include rocks and stumps with post and rail fencing. Milk cans and wooden farm gates might be OK. Old bones bleached white with time and weather?

Colonial furniture that resembles the original tree it was made from is Australian. So much of what is, is English, even an old wheelbarrow or cottage gate doesn't seem uniquely Australian.

There's no doubt that the Australian flora is unique enough to emanate its own Australian image in a garden design. It's complementing this garden design that is fun.

*(Thinking of possible animal sculptures, I saw an appealing cow mailbox on Kangaroo Island last year, made of two drums and assorted metal objects. I've noticed interesting sheep, lizards, frogs and birds, mostly metal - some work, some don't. I've not seen a good kangaroo yet. DS)*

## Maintenance as design

Diana Snape Vic

People often talk of garden maintenance as though it were quite separate from design, but it really is a process of ongoing design. The initial design sets the course for the garden, its overall structure and palette of long-lived plants - landforms, levels, open areas, trees, screens, large shrubs, hard landscape and all those other aspects - but no garden of living plants is designed once and for all time. It's impossible to predict precisely (in terms of size and form) how most plants will grow in their first year, or their first ten. If there are several hundred species of plants in the garden the number of possible variations within the initial design concept is endless. Factors such as soil and climate variations, different growth rates, different provenances, new forms of plants becoming available, new weeds arriving (Gust when you thought you had conquered the lot), sudden death of plants - all contribute to the ever-changing gardenscape.

So at any stage, large or small decisions are made (or not made - inertia is a popular option). The implementation of these decisions comes under the general headings of garden maintenance or management. Management probably suggests overall strategy and major changes, such as the removal of a large shrub or tree, or a lawn, and re-planting. Maintenance is more the tactics, such as weeding, pruning and propagating. Each is obviously related to design. We design (on a large or small scale) every time we prune back a branch, decide what method we'll use to eliminate a patch of weeds, recognize this plant has had its day, or note how well that plant is doing and collect seeds or cuttings to grow more.

I think some growers of Australian plants have, in the past, thought it was disrespectful to their plants to clip, prune, lop or divide them. In this regard I was interested to read a paper presented recently at a 'Greening Australia' Seminar by Mark Coffey, Manager for their Urban Program in Victoria. The following is an extract from Mark Coffey's paper.

### "Management and manipulation (of planted indigenous plants)

Occasionally it is stated that indigenous plants require no maintenance. This is a myth. Whilst it is reasonable to say they require less maintenance than say an exotic herbaceous border, there are a number of management or maintenance tasks which are demonstrably beneficial for indigenous plants.

It is useful to compare what may be termed natural ecological events, to maintenance actions which are common to human influenced plant cultivation.

<u>Ecological Equivalent</u>	<u>Human Action</u>
Tip frost damage or insect damage	Clipping
Animal grazing	Light pruning
Storm or snow damage	Lopping or pollarding
Fire	Heavy pruning
Animal disturbance	Division or root pruning

Applying maintenance to plants may be necessary *where special design outcomes are needed* (my italics).

Some examples of actions and outcomes are:

- pruning to *create denser or lower forms of plants*
- pollarding/coppicing vegetation to *create colourful & diverse juvenile growth or multiple stemmed specimens*
- the removal of tower limbs to *accentuate the height and form of specific plants*
- the mowing of grass verges to *create textural and height variations in the landscape*
- the removal of plants to *create vistas.*"

So nowadays aspects of design are being recognized in revegetation projects using indigenous plants, as well as in gardens; we gardeners may learn from work being done in such projects. I suspect that many people think of "design" in terms of a new garden, but do not realize that they can start "designing" at any point in the life of any garden. This is of course a different challenge. Almost all gardens will have beautiful areas or features which a new owner (or the old one) will want to retain, but other areas which are less appealing. So 'maintenance' (or management) of the garden as a whole may (will) require rejuvenation of areas within it. 'Maintenance' cannot mean trying to keep a garden exactly as it was for ever. (A mature garden of trees is probably the most enduring.) In an established garden, an overall concept for change can be planned, then it's often more feasible for just one area of the garden at a time to be re-designed and worked on. However change can be as gradual or sudden as the gardener wants or can manage.

So I think it's important to see design in maintenance, even if the initial design was excellent. What do you think?

## PROBLEMS

### Siting of Australians images?

Jeff Howes NSW

On a light note, I am puzzled as to why no landscaping books (that I have read) mention where to site gnomes, concrete kangaroos, pelicans et al because in reality a lot of gardens have them. Does anyone have guidelines for selecting and placement of these seemingly vital landscaping items?

### Frost hardiness

Barbara Buchanan Vic

There is an article in the latest RHS journal on frost hardiness and how there are some plants which are safe, some definitely not, but a large range of maybes. Frost hardiness zones as in the U.S. are not too helpful as it all depends on so many other variables. Makes me feel not quite so silly being caught by our recent frosts.

### Plants for dry, shady areas

Grahame Durbidge NSW

Finding reliable plants for a dry, mostly shady garden can be difficult as Jennifer Borrell recognises.

The small, fine-leaved shrub *Austromyrtus dulcis* (Midyim Berry) is good.

*Pandorea jasminoides* or *P. Panforana* will cover the ground well under trees. While generally seen as climbers these plants will layer upon themselves in the vertical or horizontal plane.

*Bulbine bulbosa* (Native Leek) looks like a little bunch of chives with yellow flowers. It's very hardy.

*Dianella revoluta* (Native Rax) - a clump of strap leaves with the most brilliant small blue flowers and blue seeds.

*Lomandra longifolia* (Native Rush) - a clump of strap leaves that will grow and look good all year, particularly if planted in quantity.

These are a few I've found reliable for the dry, shady location.

## A Garden Portfolio: keeping track of your plants and ideas

Geoff Simmons Qld

An often used manner of describing a garden as a series of rooms, decorated in different styles, has a ring of rigidity that may not be suitable for an Australian garden design. The use of words such as sub-garden or section may more accurately describe the lay-out and at the same time enable a degree of flexibility of design. Different design aspects can be blended and a continuity be achieved by using the same or similar species in several sections.

The sub-garden can be an area of a few square metres with only one or two species, or a large area with multiple species or varieties. Moreover the small area may be located within a large area sub-garden. The concept of rooms is to me a defined space with barriers to merging or variety either from living plants or inanimate structures.

This type of thinking has led me to devising a garden portfolio. As can be seen from the list these are variable in concept and nomenclature. Sometimes their basis is a desire to plant certain species, for example the Dr. Who sub-garden came about because I had made three pyramidal structures about 1.5 m high using pipe and plastic trellis mesh for the support of three species of Australian *Aristolochia* - the host plant for the Richmond birdwing butterfly. These structures had some resemblance to the Daleks of the TV program and placing a pot planted with a Bunya Pine in between these gave me a slow growing tree of character to represent Dr. Who.

Some system of recording has been achieved by using "Albox" 3-ring binders. With these a written description can be filed and, as the makers sell plastic leaves to hold either photographs or transparencies, these can be stored for each section. The loose leaf system means that additional information and visual records can be added as desired.

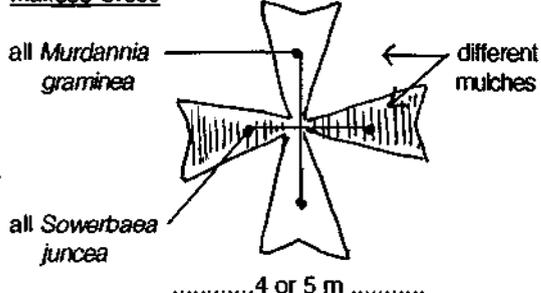
While the question may be raised regarding the relevance of the above to Australian garden design, the totality of gardening for some people includes concise record keeping - to others it is an anathema. To a certain extent, this depends on the types of plants grown - long lived trees are more likely to have historical data than short lived annuals. There is no doubt that making records clarifies the mind and brings the aim of the design into focus but it is up to the participant whether the work involved is worthwhile. After all, gardening is a leisure activity.

### GARDEN PORTFOLIO Designated Sub-sections:

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1. Malvaceous - Hibiscus                  | 2. Dr. Who                   |
| 3. Boomerang (see NL8, p19)               | 4. Conifers & Casuarina      |
| 5. Southern Cross                         | 6. Bulb                      |
| 7. <i>Doryanthes</i> & <i>Flindersia</i>  | 8. Eucalypts                 |
| 9. Sundial - <i>Backhousia</i>            | 10. Ponds                    |
| 11. Tree garden                           | 12. Sound - Cordylines/Palms |
| 13. Nuts                                  | 14. Shadehouses              |
| 15. Ferns - pipe structures               | 16. Fruit trees              |
| 17. Kitchen plots                         | 18. Avenues                  |
| 19. North-east Slopes                     | 20. Glasshouse Mountains     |
| 21. Violet/blue - Maltese Cross/Butterfly |                              |

These two sketches are from photographs Geoff sent to show his initial plantings in Sub-section 21.

#### Maltese Cross



#### Butterfly

Eyespots in butterfly's wings:

top - native violet

middle - white *Calostemma* with *Thysanotus tuberosus* on each side

bottom - *Leucophyta (Calocephalus). brownii* surrounded by *Brachyscome multifida* 'Compacta'

**Profile of a Professional Member****Eva Flegman NSW**

*(The following was written partly in response to the request in the last NL for details about professional members of the GDSG and partly in response to a letter of mine to Eva. DS)*

Being a new member of the Garden Design Study Group, I was sorry to learn that so few of my fellow landscapers, who are members of the group, have made themselves known to you *(by writing a profile for the NL)*. I was in fact introduced to the Study Group by a landscaper acquaintance, who has been a dedicated promoter of the use of indigenous species for years.

As to my own achievements, I have designed several gardens where the main theme has been the use of indigenous species. I am often called on by local developers to advise on plantings in small townhouse developments. I give preference to cultivars and species which do well in the Sydney climate and on Sydney soils and, for the sake of my clients, species which are readily available and easy for them to grow. All of these gardens have been small urban or inner city gardens which, for reasons best known to my clients, have not been entered in the Open Garden Scheme. At present I am preparing a tender for garden and recreation areas at the Cattex Oil terminal at Banksmeadow which adjoins Port Botany and the Sir Joseph Banks Reserve. Needless to say most species used will be indigenous to the Botany Bay area, but must also be able to tolerate high levels of atmospheric pollution from the oil terminal & the nearby expressway.

I have been designing gardens for three years and work on my own. I am a qualified horticulturist and have had a lifelong love of Australian plants. I do not advertise and neither do my colleagues; rather we rely on our good reputation and results.

**Australia's Open Garden Scheme**

The trouble with saying that people should allow their Australian gardens to be opened to the public to show the use of Australian plants is that, when you're asked to do it yourself, you really can't refuse. So gardens of two SG members will be in the Australia's Open Garden Scheme for the first time in spring this year - one is Peter and Wilma Gamham's, the other Brian and Diana Snape's. We live nearby and the gardens will both be open for the same three days, Saturday 14th to Monday 16th September, as part of a "cluster opening" of several small suburban gardens. A busy year and an interesting experience lies ahead for us, as those of you who have participated before already know! I suppose every garden gives us an opportunity to influence family, friends, neighbours and passersby to appreciate the use of Australian plants in gardens. If we don't do it ourselves, and do it quite well, we'll find it difficult to persuade others.

**Melbourne Meetings** Usually 1.45 for 2 pm on the first Sunday afternoon in the month.

March 3: no regular meeting this month because of GDSG weekend March 15 - 17 (see page 2)

April 7 is Easter Sunday and there'll be no meeting, but instead on Monday April 8 we'll have a very special meeting.

**Geoff Stitch** will lead a 'hands on' artificial rock-making session, demonstrating how he obtains natural finishes.

Venue: Nicole Lenffer's,

Time: both morning & afternoon.

Numbers may have to be limited and there will be a modest cost (not yet determined, but approx. \$15).

Please phone Nicole Lenffer

or Diana Snape

promptly to register your interest.

May 5: Diana Snape's,

Please phone (late April) to confirm the venue.

Likely discussion topic: use of rocks in garden design.

**Sydney Meetings**

Sunday February 18: morning visits to two small gardens on the Northern Peninsula, both in the Australia's Open Garden Scheme - the gardens are those of Norah Elliott and Betty Maloney. Then lunch at Nadia Lalak's house at Pittwater to discuss the gardens seen on this and the last garden visit meeting. This is an opportunity to see two special gardens, with a reminder that partners and friends are also welcome.

For further information about February 18 - times and meeting places - please phone **Jo Hambrett**

**New members** A warm welcome to the following new members. ("Professional member")

Robyn Dryen

Jennie Lawrence

James Lenard

Rosemary Manion\*

Kaye Schofield

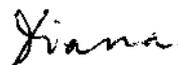
Merele Webb

You may have noted in this NL that the correspondence has dwindled markedly and there are a number of articles written by the editor. This is a bad sign and won't happen again. I know December and January are holiday months when we often feel like 'switching off', but if that's your excuse for not writing some small contribution to the Newsletter it has now gone. The other excuse that you're too busy won't do either - as we all know, the busiest people often contribute most! We're missing practical ideas, suggestions, plans, descriptions of gardens, plant combinations, notes about books, etc. I don't want you to feel too badgered, but how about it?

In the next NL, following on from the weekend in Warrnambool, we might focus on large gardens and coastal gardens.

However any topic is open to articles or comment. I'm looking forward very much to seeing some of you next month, and hearing from lots of you soon!

Best wishes



Diana Snape