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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,

I came home from Lawn Hill to Melbourne in winter, so shorts & T-shirts gave way to slacks & jumpers/pullovers. Apart from the magnificent gorges, fringed with rainforest and some monumental cliffs, my "garden design" impressions from Lawn Hill were of great simplicity. We were camped under the local bloodwoods which were in full flower, laden with blossoms, nectar, honeyeaters and lorikeets. An equivalent combination here in Melbourne could be the local *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* with our honeyeaters (and nowadays lorikeets too); in Sydney, maybe *haemastoma*. With a group of small to medium, long-flowering eucalypts, not much else is needed to create a very simple, satisfying landscape. For groundcover under the trees there are many different possibilities - grass / low plants / leaf litter / paving. At Lawn Hill, the ranger was diligent in watering and maintaining lawns in the camping area - strangely green compared with the arid country nearby and further inland, "green and pleasant" but looking vulnerable. For paths throughout the Park, a variety of materials were used well - sand, rocks, timber, concrete - as appropriate to each area.

Another picture stored in my memory is of acres of spinifex in flower, beautifully backlit, so millions of silver strands moved in harmony with the breeze (or wind!). Occasional rocks on the hillside or a few scattered slim tree trunks provided just that element of contrast and solidity. Spinifex might not suit a garden too well but many of our local grasses can give similarly wonderful effects when mass planted - one example, described well by its name, is *Stipa elegantissima*. If only I could keep areas in my garden so simple.

Thank you to all members who have renewed their membership and a reminder to others that renewal subscriptions were due by July 1st. If you overlooked this and do not renew promptly now, this is the last GDSG Newsletter you will receive. Please don't let this happen - we don't want to lose you. Check that your name is in the list on the last page. Another renewal form is included for those who haven't yet renewed.

INDEX

- 2 Treasurer's report - Peter Garnham
- 2 CORRESPONDENCE extracts
- 4 A move from Brisbane to Sydney - Susi Barber
- 4 "Australian-like" plants - Jeff Howes
- 5 GDSG Newsletter Index
- 5 GARDEN DESIGNS
- 5 Establishing a picture garden at Karwarra Garden - Marilyn Gray
- 6 A temperate Australasian fern gully - Mark James
- 7 Integraton of Australian plants in a large, formal garden: plan - Louise Gore
- 8 Awkward plants: Plants for protection - protection for plants - Geoff Simmons
- 8 Slide and print library
- 9 BOOKS (etc)
- 9 "Your Garden Design Book" by John Brookes - Matthew Collins
- 9 "Colour Garden" by Malcolm Hillier- Colleen Keena
- 9 *The Complete Gardener*" by John Brookes - Colleen Keena
- 10 "Great Planting" by Lucy Gent - Barbara Buchanan
- 11 *The Secret Gardens of France*'by Mirabel Osier - Barbara Buchanan

2

- 12 Review of the garden design software package 'Landscape' - Maxine Armitage
12 Newsletters and new books
13 DESIGN IDEAS
13 Border plants - Margarete Lee
13 In search of the Australian petunia; practical tips
14 The pleasing garden - Grahame Durbidge
14 Sculpture in the garden - Diana Snape
15 GARDEN DESIGN PROJECTS
15 "Touchstone" - Wendy Geale
15 News from the Ormond East Primary School indigenous planting group - the children & Helen Morphet
15 Dunlop Street Reserve - Peter Garnham
15 Evergreen - a factor differentiating the Australian landscape - Geoff Simmons
16 AROUND AUSTRALIA
16 Australia's Open Garden Scheme
17 W.A. news; Victorian news & meetings
17 North-East Vic sub-group - Kay Dempsey
17 Melbourne meetings
18 Conferences in Melbourne
18 "Australian Plants in the Rural and Urban Environment" - Marilyn Gray
18 Landscape Australia Garden Design Conference: "The Natural Garden"
18 GDSG Garden Design Seminar in 1997
18 Sydney news & meetings
19 Sydney survey
19 "Native Plants (and why I don't use them) in Garden Design" by Peter Lawson - Jo Hambrett
20 New members & membership renewal

TREASURER'S REPORT

Peter Garnham Vic

Financial Statement - Quarter ending 30/6/96

<u>Receipts:</u>	Membership subscriptions	605.00
	Past newsletters	10.00
	Artificial rock-making activity	250.00
	Donations	15.00
	Bank interest (28/6/96)	<u>5.97</u>
		<u>\$885.97</u>
<u>Expenditure:</u>	Printing & photocopying	288.50
	Postage & stationery	118.50
	Artificial rock-making activity	295.20
	Miscellaneous	<u>36.65</u>
		<u>\$738.85</u>
<u>Balance in bank 30/6/96</u>		<u>\$1634.52</u>

CORRESPONDENCE extracts

(In future this section will include comments or correspondence extracts from your editor too. Without these I'm afraid it might sometimes have sounded to readers as though letters just disappeared into oblivion. I do try to answer all letters but please make allowances for me - sometimes one slips through. I hope comments here may help widen debate. DS)

I'm sorry I was unable to attend the Warmambool weekend as it coincided with our South Australia Region Fbwer Show and Plant Sale. I think the workshops are a good idea and hope you will have another near the border one day. Margie Barnett and I hope to call a meeting of SA members during the winter." Margaret Lee SA

This was a bad oversight on our part, which was initiated by the kind invitation from Warmambool for that particular weekend. Next time we'll do more checking - members might be able to help us in that too. DS

"I always look forward to Geoff Simmons' contributions in our newsletters (even though he spells Geoff the wrong way). Perhaps Geoff would clarify, for the less imaginative members of the GDSG (like me), his statement in NL 13, p9 that "Doryanthes and Crinum species. . . .lend themselves to landscaping on a grand scale". I am one who would appreciate it." Jeff Howes NSW

All members are invited to comment or send their ideas about using these genera in the landscape. DS

3

CORRESPONDENCE extracts (continued)

"As you will see I am now qualified and have just got my business card (which I call a 'wild card'¹). Have done a few workshops for bushcare volunteers (Recognising, Protecting and Restoring Wildlife Habitat on your Bushland site) and have a few more garden talks & workshops coming up. Doing bits and pieces for local Councils - writing grant applications and now helping co-ordinate a community frog pond project, reporting on wildlife corridor potential in a beachside suburb, also writing strategies for indigenous vegetation protection along a small stretch of rail-line nearby for State Rail etc. All over the place but fun and feels worthwhile!

A big YES to my interest in a GDSG Garden Design Seminar - please with lots of warning so us in other States can organise ourselves. If members were interested, I could give a talk on 'Wildlife Habitat in Gardens' - not just how to design with wildlife in mind but how to consider wildlife during renovations - i.e. the importance of weeds, mature unwanted plants, old building materials, etc as habitat in the absence of natural components - and the need to pace changes, or work in a mosaic to maintain habitat during major hard and soft landscape alterations." **Danie Ondinea** NSW

Danie's 'wild card' (with animals, plants, etc) is delightful and I'm sure her talk at our proposed Garden Design Seminar (NL13 p3) would get us thinking. DS.

"Briefly, my interests are native birds (and designing gardens for them), bushwalking, cycling, etc. I am a town planner with Blacktown City Council (a rapidly growing outer Sydney area) doing my best to save what little bush remains. I have completed an introductory bush regeneration course with the National Trust of NSW.

The area where I live in Sydney is, thankfully, still fairly bushy. The main tree varieties are Anagaphora costata/Eucalyptus saligna/E. piperita/E. pilularis in the valleys and E haemastoma/Casuarina littoralis on the ridges. Undergrowth in the area is very varied but largely Banksia ericifolia, Grevillea sericea etc. I have a huge block of land on top of the ridge and to remove the need for mowing I am turning the entire garden into a native garden. Unfortunately all the sandstone is long gone (nearly 40 years ago) and it's mainly clay with a thin layer of topsoil." **Frances Rein** NSW

It could be tempting to use some artificial sandstone "rocks" to recapture or hint at the identity of the ridge - a very big job though! DS

"Ian and I have been busy spreading crushed Tower Hill volcanic grey tuff (scoria) on the paths of the new garden area. I vims very unsure as to how the grey colour would go, but as you can see from the photograph it looks great! Path covering is very tricky - I couldn't leave it natural soil - that very black organic soil is far too sticky after even a heavy dew. Plant growth has been lush after 12 months of very low rainfall - there are still 1.5 inch (40mm) cracks in our paddocks." **Cherree Densley** Vic

The pale path accentuated the pale foliage of a number of plants in Cherree's large beds. DS

I am sorry to have been a non-contributing member for the past year and am probably likely to remain so for a time. Until the end of the year, life is a combination of full time work and trips to our land near Rutherglen in the North East. We are preparing to plant Australian trees for agroforestry and also some olives, mainly for olive oil.

Our land is pretty bare and work on a garden won't start till autumn next year when the house is finished. I am interested in linking up with the N-E Victoria sub-group whose existence was notified in the May newsletter and would appreciate Margaret Garrett's contact details. I am somewhat daunted by the prospect of planning a garden in an area I don't yet know well - hot and dry in summer and many frosts in winter. The backdrop should be lovely regardless of the many expected failures - a bend of the Murray River and River Red Gum flats. The newsletter is wonderfully informative - many thanks." **Jennifer Davidson** Vic

Most members are busy people and contribute to our aims in many different ways. Jennifer is not a non-contributing member though, having written to let us know of her plans for the future. Margaret Garrett's phone number (which I forgot to include in the last NL) is included in the section near the end where group activities are listed. DS

"The heavy rain not long ago was very welcome with the worst result coming from saturated soil producing good conditions for trees to topple over in the slightest breeze. Most of the young brachychitons along the driveway were bent but I have staked them and hope that no losses will occur. Unfortunately since then virtually no rain, so the soil is rapidly drying once again." **Geoff Simmons** Qld

Our gardens and plants often have to cope with erratic and sometimes extreme weather conditions, particularly in respect to water abundance - drought and flood. There's also the challenge of designing to resist two other contrasting problems, frost and fire. Issues to be studied in future NLs? DS

"I came to live in this area of the Otways, south of Colac and north of Lavers Hill, in 1991. Field trips with the local SGAP group are helping me learn what plants are indigenous to the area. Otway SGAP have a section on indigenous plants at their annual Wildflower Show but I don't believe members actually use them in their garden. I feel that being a member of this GDSG will assist me in developing my garden and in figuring out how to use local plants to advantage.

We have over 30 acres, most of it natural bush, including a fern gully at the bottom. Only a small area at the top, around our owner-built mud brick house, requires a garden design. Our goal is to blend in with the bush. We have inherited some introduced Australian plants and a few exotics. In my effort to attract birds I have also introduced

4

CORRESPONDENCE extracts (continued)

grevilleas and anigozanthus. GDSG members visiting the Otway area would be very welcome to visit us for a look around, cuttings, seed, suggestions and a cup of tea." **Jo Kopp** Vic

It sounds wonderful, Jo -1 must plan a visit to the Otway area. DS

"I find the newsletters of great interest and help in some of my work, although Australian plants form a small part of my work - unfortunately. Does the group ever meet on an evening basis? It would be so much better for me. I have other commitments on a Sunday, plus I work most Saturdays." **Spencer Wilson** Vic

We'll try to have at least a couple of evening meetings per year - the question then is, which evening? During the week might be better than weekends. Please send in your suggestions . DS

"I find that reading the Newsletter is quite stimulating, as I find new ideas and facts on design and the plants that can be used. I am writing to you in regard to the Newsletter and areas of it that are good and could be improved. The section which has the plant Study Groups giving details on their particular plants is great. It gives the best aspect of a plant that many people would overlook when using the plant in a design - I hope more will be forthcoming. Another section that is greatly appreciated is the Book reviews. Can we have some more please?" **Peter Graham** Vic

There are a number of book reviews in this NL but it does depend on a kind reviewer to write them. DS

"Your Newsletters continue to provide an enormous amount of information and enjoyment. I have been intending to send you a copy of the garden I designed for my son at Petrie, but have not yet had time to complete it. Anyway, it has now been modified slightly and the planting is on hold as my son has to (a list of jobs!). One day I shall get it done. I have been involved in a number of landscape projects in inland Queensland towns in the past few years. These are very interesting and involve a whole new range of plants for me. Out of this work has come a small publication that Lawrie Smith and I put together for inland Queensland gardeners. I am enclosing a copy for you. Best wishes for the continued success of your Study Group." **Jan Sked**, Study Group Liaison Officer, Old Region

Details of Jan's publication are included under 'BOOKS' on page 9. DS

A move from Brisbane to Sydney

Susi Barber NSW

My husband and I bought a block of land two years ago and we are finally getting ready to build. I am looking forward to the challenge of designing an interesting garden in keeping with the largely bush environment. We spent two years in Brisbane recently and I had great fun designing a rainforest garden there - our block was on the side of a gully, which had beautiful spotted and white trunked gums growing in it, so that our pole house felt like a tree house, although our block was largely an untouched building site. At the time, we thought we were staying put, but the call of Sydney was too strong!

I am not interested in authentically recreating the original vegetation of the area, although I will retain as much as possible what is there on the site - there are lots of hakeas, goodenias, banksias, grass trees and eucalypts I have yet to identify. What I would rather do is enhance the views by encouraging the eye towards them, planting for privacy and windbreaks, and creating different areas that each have their own focus. I am very lucky in having wonderful rocks and changes in level already, I just have to work out how to make the most of them! I am also very interested in trying to grow some West Australian natives and would like to know if anyone in my area has had any success in doing so - probably not a topic for your group. I also want to grow some of the wonderful subtropical trees that I discovered in Brisbane, which I will do near the house itself, grading down to a more bushland feel as you get further away from the house.

I have always loved Australian plants and have quite a collection of books on them and on garden design. I studied architecture many years ago, which reinforced a love of simple forms, with interesting use of colour and shapes and textures. However, I have an awful lot to learn and am very interested in learning, as well as contributing whatever I can, to your garden design group.

We'll look forward to hearing how Susi's plans develop. DS

"Australian-like" plants

Jeff Howes NSW

I would like to add a comment to Geoff Simmons' article on Multiculturalism in gardens (NL 13 p10). I was once quite one-eyed, in that I only grew Australian plants in my garden. However over the years a few (not many) exotics have crept in. One of these was the result of my non-gardening wife, Glennis, coming home from an Australian Girl Guide Camp that had been held in Brisbane clutching a beautiful circular crimson flower and saying "I would love one of these plants". The plant *Calliandra nemiphylla* (from South America) is now well established and flowers nearly all year and is especially liked by the parrots (that have escaped the local cat population). This plant is very "Australian-like" in appearance and is also much admired - more than many of my Australian plants, much to my annoyance.

Is landscaping with or growing this plant any worse than growing Australian plants that are not indigenous to your area? The answer to that question is philosophical and probably outside the charter of the GDSG. Although if they were used, how many of these exotics could you have and still retain the "Australian character"? As Diana Snape would say "a matter of balance".

The GDSG Newsletter Index for 1993 to 1995 (Numbers 1 to 11) is now available, thanks to the excellent work of **Maxine Armitage** of NSW.

The index is very detailed and is well spaced for easy reading (16 pages in length). It is available free to financial members, either at Melbourne meetings or to those who send me a stamped, self-addressed envelope, (business size, i.e. the size you receive this GDSG Newsletter in) to receive a copy.

I find I'm using my copy constantly. **Thank you, Maxine**, for a sterling effort!

GARDEN DESIGNS

Establishing a Picture Garden at Karwarra Garden

Marilyn Gray Vic

Karwarra Garden is a picturesque botanic garden tucked away in the Dandenong Ranges. While our range of plants is extensive and the garden is a delight all year round, we suffer from being hard to find by visitors. Access is quite circuitous, following a track around a cricket oval. More direct access is possible but the suggestion was soundly beaten by the local people.

To address this problem it was decided to plant a small garden along the main road beside the entrance to the Reserve. Car travellers have about 5 seconds to see this garden as they race around the corners of the mountain road. What they see in that short space of time must be punchy and memorable, encouraging them to slow down and discover Karwarra.

It was decided to plant a picture garden - a garden of small plants grouped together to provide massed floral displays throughout the year. Use has also been made of foliage colour, such as silvers and greys, and form, provided by tufts of *Orthrosanthus multiflorus*, *Conostylis candicans* and *Epacris impressa*. Preference was for a small species range, using frequent repetition. The plant material was selected from known performances and flowering times at Karwarra Garden and needed to be hardy as it will have little supplementary watering.

The area to be planted was 29m x 7m. Its back line is bounded by a large garden originally planted by the local Brownies. This garden has had tatty plants removed and replaced by taller floriferous species such as *Ceratopetalum gummiferum* to provide a colourful backdrop. The area is used by locals to walk from the bus stop at one end so a path had to be incorporated. The path is 1.5m wide to encourage people to stay on it and has been cut down to provide soil for mounding on the lower side. Three large pine trees had to be removed and grubbed before work could begin.

The top section of the picture garden was planted in April with the help of local students. So far 132 plants are in place with a few holes to be filled soon. The size of plants in this section range from prostrate daisies along the path to shrubs to 1.5m at the back. Use has been made of groups of *Tetopea speciosissima* because it has a large, bright flower, is traditionally associated with Karwarra Garden and is featured on two colourful big signs advertising Karwarra at the entry point to this garden and the Reserve.

The lower section is much narrower and will feature prostrate and low plants such as *Chrysocephalum aptulatum* and *Thomasia pygmaea*. Small plants to 1m will tie the two levels together.

Developing this project has been an exciting challenge. It provides us with an excellent opportunity to show both the locals (some of whom tell me that no-one grows Australian plants anymore) and the touring public that Australian plants can be as glamorous as exotics and produce the same massed effect that they are used to seeing in more traditional gardens.

The species list for the first section includes: *Acacia acinacea*, *Anigozanthos* spp. and hybrids, *Astartea* 'Winter Pink', *Boronia denticulata*, *B. muelleri* 'Sunset Serenade', *B. pinnata* pink & white, *Bracteantha bracteata* forms, *Brachyscome angustifolia*, *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*, *C. baxteri*, *Crowea exalata* forms, *Dampiera purpurea*, *Epacris impressa* forms, *Eriostemon myoporoides* small leaf form, *Grevillea dimorpha*, *G. diminuta*, *Helichrysum scorpioides* alpine form, *Hibbertia empetrifolia*, *Homoranthus papillatus*, *Hypocalymma angustifolium*, *Leptospermum* 'Jervis Bay', *Olearia phtogopappa* forms, *Orthrosanthus multiflorus*, *Pimelea nivea*, *Pseudanthus pimelioides*, *Scaevola albida*, *S. "Mauve Clusters"*, *Stenanthemum scortechinii*, *Telopea speciosissima*, *Tetratheca bauerifolia*, *T. thymifolia*, *Thomasia macrocarpa*, *T. purpurea*, *Zieria littoralis*.

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PREAMBLE

The following research paper explores the garden design theme of a temperate Australasian fern gully. The plant selection is based upon the ongoing development of a fern gully landscape in outer eastern Melbourne. The fern gully is situated in a property where plantings have combined Australian native, edible and botanically significant plants. It is sited at the lowest point of the property under the shade of deciduous and evergreen trees, in heavy clay soil, alongside a naturalistic waterfall and pond using recirculated water.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Most of the plants selected originate from, and are best suited to, a shaded, sheltered, moist rainforest understorey. Two of the ferns are native to the northern hemisphere, with all other ferns native to Australasian temperate rainforests. The other plants in the selection are included here in order to explore the taxonomic diversity and evolutionary record present in the Australian rainforest. They include a gymnosperm, tree palms, a grass and a herb. Given suitable microclimatic conditions, all plants selected should comfortably adapt to the cool, temperate rainforest conditions typical of the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges.

NATURAL HABITAT

The temperate rainforests of Australia vary. In warmer areas there is an upper storey of two or three layers comprising up to six dominant trees with an understorey, including palms and vines; cooler areas include a single tree canopy comprising two or three dominant species with an understorey that includes smaller-leaved plants and moss-covered trunks.

Conditions for growth in these understoreys are humid, shaded and protected from strong winds. Soils are usually rich with the humus of rotting leaf litter, but can also be shallow, hampering deep root penetration and creating a fierce competition for water and nutrients near the soil surface. Many of the plants included here have shallow root systems adapted to cope with these conditions. Due to the absence of human and vehicular traffic, and the constant decomposition of organic matter, soils are usually well aerated and free draining.

As one would expect, rainforests experience high rainfall and the usually dense tree canopy minimizes the rate of evapotranspiration during warmer weather.

SOIL CONDITIONING

In a bid to provide optimum growing conditions in the fern gully, a peat-like growing medium made from coconut fibre was mixed in with the existing clay soil to improve water retention, provide nutrient and aid drainage. A renewable resource, I believe it has significantly increased the survival rate of plants in the fern gully. All exposed soil has been covered with a layer of mulch.

WEEDS

No good planting design should ignore the threat of weed invasion. Up to 25% of identified plant species in the East Gippsland rainforests are considered weed species (Cameron, 1987) and a similar problem is also experienced in the fern gully landscape.

Dichondra repens (Kidney Weed) is a naturalised weed in the native rainforest, although the fern gully landscape uses it as a transition plant, between dappled light and full sun.

LIST OF SELECTED PLANTS

Adiantum aethiops (Common Maiden Hair Fern), *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana* (Bangalow Palm), *Asplenium aetnopicum* (Shredded Spleenwort), *A. bulbiferum* (Hen and Chicken Fern), *Correa lawrenciana* (Mountain Correa), *Cyathea brownii* (Norfolk Island Tree-fern), *C. cooperi* (Lacy Tree-fern), *C. medullaris* (Black Tree-fern), *Dichondra repens* (Kidney Weed), *Dicksonia squarrosa* (Wheki), *Dryopteris strata* (Shaggy Shield Fern), *D. erythrosora* (Autumn Fern), *LMstona australis* (Cabbage Tree Palm), *Lomandra longifolia* (Spiny-headed Mat Rush), *Macrozamia communis* (Burrawang), *Nothofagus moorei* (Antarctic Beech), *Platynerium bifurcatum* (Elk Horn), *Polystichum proliferum* (Mother Shield Fern), *Pteridium esculentum* (Bracken), *Pteris tremula* (Tender Brake).

EDIBLE PLANTS

Some of the plants selected are usable as a food source. *Macrozamia communis* has seeds which can be made into a flour, once the toxic seed has been removed. *Pteridium esculentum* has a rhizome which can be roasted, then beaten to a paste. The two Tree Palms, *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana* and *Livistona australis*, both have an edible apical bud or "cabbage". This cabbage may be cooked or eaten raw ...an appealing nutty flavour".

AUSTRALIAN PLANTS PLANTED IN AREA

Acacia boormanii, *A. cognata*, *A. iteaphylla*, *A. spectabilis*, *Acmena smithii*, *Angophora hispida*, *Asplenium australastum*, *Azolla filiculoides*, *Banksia occidentalis*, *Cyathea australis*, *Dicksonia antarctica*, *Elaeocarpus reticulatus*, *Eucalyptus leucoxylon*, *Grevillea robusta*, *Hymenosporum flavum*, *Lophostemon confertus*, *Marsilea drummondii*, *Melaleuca diosmifolia*, *Nephrolepis cordifolia*, *Nothofagus cunninghamii*, *Restio tetraphyllus*.

CONCLUSION

The plants chosen here are not intended as an exhaustive guide, rather as a selection of interesting and varied ferns and tree ferns, which can be seen in the context of a variety of complementary plants. Mixed together, these plants provide a palette of rich greens and a relaxing connection with antiquity.

Mark's bibliography is available to members who request it. DS

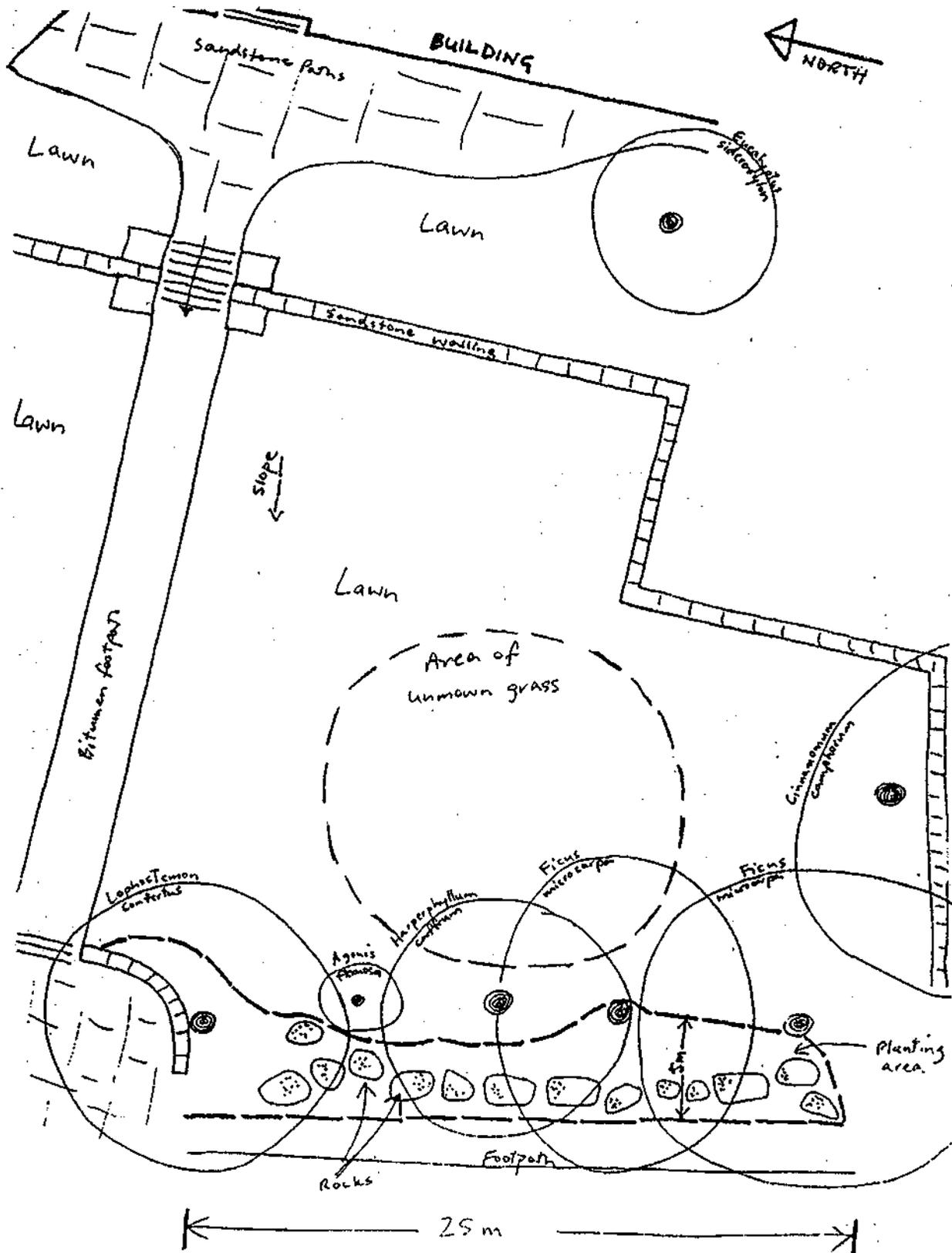
Integration of Australian plants in a large, formal garden

Louise Gore NSW

After Louise's fascinating article in the last newsletter (p 8), I asked her if she could provide a plan to help us picture her design; this plan is below. I also asked her about the maintenance of her grassed areas and she replied:

The grass under the big old trees is not sparse, but nor is it thick or dense looking. I don't mow it because the mower can't cut it high enough for the effect I want, so I cut it by hand with a scythe. I hope never to mow it! I'll just keep trimming it to mid-shin height with the scythe. I haven't done this now for a couple of months - it's very green due to tots of rain. I'll have to wait to see how the seasons affect it and just observe what happens under this new 'regime'.

Plan



Whichever way we view Australian plants, there is no denying that there are some formidable examples of thorny, prickly species. I can vividly recall a wildflower trip in W.A. with the noted botanist C.A. Gardner as leader. Coming to one area, he jumped out of the bus and rapidly set off across the plains to point out a particularly fine example of Grew/tea *dielsiana* but, to get there, a dense growth of prickly plants (mainly other Proteaceae) had to be traversed; scratches and torn clothing were the result if extreme care was not taken. It is no wonder that early pioneers felt that the clearing of the native bush for cropping was a definite benefit to their ease of living. There is a lesson in this for garden design, i.e. if inhospitable plants are to be used they should be placed so that their harmful characteristic is not a menace.

Fortunately, Australia does not have animal species such as lions and tigers to be kept at bay by prickly acacias or other thorny bushes. On the other hand there are situations that may warrant the use of protective plants that do not have dangerous features but foliage with just enough stiffness to act as a deterrent - perhaps some grevilleas and hibiscuses fall into this category. Some plants may only be protecting themselves from animals or insects bent on a feed and our view of their nuisance is a side issue as far as their survival is concerned. Sometimes it happens that the very protective mechanism used by a plant also offers protection to other living things - e.g. small birds may build nests in prickly shrubs such as citriobatus or carissa. This may provide a reason to place them in an appropriate position in much the same manner as we use nectar producing species to attract honey-eaters.

Incorporation of prickly plants in garden design certainly requires some thought. One of the most striking examples that I have seen in this respect was a neatly trimmed low hedge of Pandanus at a roundabout outside the entrance of a hotel. It looked most attractive but would obviously need constant pruning to prevent people coming into contact with the serrated sharp edges.

A list of the plants that have such physical attributes that need to be taken into consideration in garden design would be of interest but of greater interest may be reports on how such plants have been used. The list could include those with rough leaves such as the sandpaper figs, those with spiky stems e.g. hibiscus, plants with sharp pointed leaves such as lambertia and those with razor edged foliage such as gahnia.

The use of Australian plants such as those mentioned above should not be rejected out of hand, as many of them have other attractions and, after all, they are part of the Australian landscape.

An article by Geoff on other categories of 'Awkward plants' will be appearing in the next Newsletter. As a starting point for the list Geoff mentions, there is a list of "PrickHes" p155, "Grow What Where", Aus. Plant Study Gp. (Nelson) 1980.

Slide and print library → an A/V presentation

Our slide library, which has been growing very slowly, is about to become a slide and print library. Following on a suggestion by Jacci Campbell, we've decided we should widen our photographic library to include prints. Many members take prints rather than slides and nowadays it's easier to convert from one to the other.

We are also about to start producing an introductory A/V presentation on garden design which will be available for borrowing. Initially this will probably be in the form of a set of slides with spoken &/or written commentary. It will mean that members and SGAP Groups, wherever they are, will have access to an illustrated talk on our ideas.

So we can do this, we'll ask in each Newsletter for slides or prints of specific aspects of garden design (either good or bad examples). Our first request is for photos showing **where it all started**, eg topography, existing features, borrowed landscape, etc. 'Before & after' photos are very welcome, or even just 'before'. Then **shaping of the land** - changes in level (terraces, slopes/embankments) and 'hard landscape' (eg steps & retaining walls).

Please see if you have any slides or prints along these lines and send them with details of the garden where the photo was taken. (Photographs of other aspects of garden design are still welcome too.)

Send photos to our **Slide Librarian, Doug McIver,**

Phone Doug if you have any questions or would like a GDSG form to note helpful details of the garden or what your photograph shows. We'd really like to have photos from every State.

BOOKS (etc)

"Your Garden Design Book" by John Brookes

Matthew Collins NSW

I have discovered a very informative book on garden design, which other members may find interesting. It is titled *"Your Garden Design Book"*, by John Brookes, who is a well known author on the topic. The book starts with the basics of how to design, and leads through the design process discussing concepts such as shape, pattern, style, proportions, planting design, site assessment, ingredients of a garden, etc. Although most photos and examples of planting design are of exotic plants and overseas gardens, the information could easily be applied to Australian plants.

The book is 352 pages and retails for \$75. Well worth the price!

Jan Sked has kindly sent the GDSG a copy of the booklet *"Planting an Outback Garden"*, written by Lawrie Smith and Jan for inland Queensland gardeners, based on their experience. It includes sections on: Planning outback gardens; Planting and maintenance; Some Australian plants; and an extensive plant list for those conditions.

For further information please contact the publishers, Landplan Studio - Landscape Architects PO Box 685 Lutwyche Q 4030 Ph (07) 3857 1445 Fax (07) 3357 5525

BOOKS

GARDEN DESIGN IDEAS: Reflections on two books about Garden Design

Colleen Keena Qld

There are two books that I have found useful when planning our new acreage garden. Neither features Australian plants to any marked degree, but for someone without any formal training in design each has something to offer the reader.

The first book is Malcolm Hillier's *COLOUR GARDEN*, Hodder and Stoughton, **1996**. The book demonstrates how to use colour combinations to express and evoke different moods and feelings in the garden. The principles of colour theory are explained in simple detail beginning with a colour wheel composed of flowers. Other topics include Properties of Yellow, Orange, Red, Violet, Blue, Green and White, Opposite Contrasts, Harmony, Beauty in Discord, Form and Texture and Distance and Scale. As well as photos of gardens, the sections dealing with colour include actual flowers massed together. For example, under Properties of white, the white varies from bright white when surrounded by golden green to dull white when encircled by warm grey foliage. Similarly, under Contrasts, yellow flowers are shown inside a border of violet flowers and the same flowers are repeated in a border of gold, demonstrating that against the violet the yellow square is dazzling-bright but against the gold it seems to withdraw and becomes much more demure.

Sections on each of the seasons follow, each beginning with a Palette for the season and then topics related to the particular time of year, e.g. Essential Spring, Exuberant Summer, Radiant Gold, including *Helichrysum bracteatum* and *Eucalyptus torquata*, and Winter Cheer. The book concludes with Seasonal Plant Ideas.

The section on Harmony of Rich Pinks has inspired the planning of a predominantly pink design for our front garden and ideas from Vivacious **Yellows** will be translated into a border for the backyard, both beds of course featuring local species such as *Grevilleas*, *Hibiscus*, *Brachyscomes* and *Everlastings* in the appropriate colour range.

The second book is **The COMPLETE GARDENER** by John Brookes, Ken Fin, **1994**. There are two parts, The Outdoor Gardener and The Indoor Gardener. Both have topics relevant to garden design, e.g. Principles of designing a garden.

The section I have found most useful is the Garden-by-Garden Guide in Part 1. Gardens of different shapes, sizes and styles are shown in a full page photo. On the opposite page are illustrations of two alternative possibilities for the same site. My favourite is **Garden with a view**. In each of the treatments a pool has been chosen as the link between the garden and the view beyond. Brookes states that the garden with an imposing view has its own set of design problems with the gardener having to decide on the balance between the attraction of the foreground garden planting and the attraction of the view beyond. He continues that this balance is altered by revealing more or less of the view and by altering the strength of the pool composition in relation to the whole. So far, we have installed a pool to make the transition between our backyard and the bush beyond. The Vivacious Yellows bed will be beside the pool as a screen for the neighbour's fence. However, we are still deciding which of the planting proposals to adopt, substituting Australian species of course, but the alternatives presented by Brook enable us to implement design elements more meaningfully.

After we build, this text will be consulted again for other areas such as the Entrance garden. Will we opt for the privacy effect or the welcoming effect or the third proposal which gives a feeling of hospitality and also links house and garden.

Later there will be inside the house. Brookes suggests that many people without gardens keep plants inside as a means of maintaining a contact with nature throughout the year and that plants enhance almost any interior. Numerous illustrations demonstrate that garden design need not be restricted to outdoor gardens but is also relevant indoors.

Although both these editions were published in Australia, local plants have received scant recognition in either text. Both of these books will be read and reread for their information and inspiration on garden design but I long for the day when no longer will it be necessary to substitute almost all selections of plant species in books aimed at the Australian market

I happened to be at Elspeth and Garry Jacobs' when a copy of this new book arrived. It had been sent by the author because a description of the garden (previously the Elliots') was included, based on Diana's book which is listed in the bibliography and further correspondence with the Jacobs and Elliots. I only had time for a quick glance at the relevant section but it rather made my hackles rise, it was so dismissive of Australian plants; not the garden, just **our plants**. I was able to get my own copy some months ago and have been stewing over it since, waiting to simmer down and not let my brash Oz nationalism obscure my judgement.

Firstly to the book overall. The Introduction explains the title - Planting is considered quite separate from Design, which is perhaps a useful distinction we are not used to making. The first section is a very brief background to more recent planting styles and history which makes some interesting points, such as the continual see-saw between formal and natural planting; as soon as one becomes accepted its decline begins. Also the effects of the great flood of new plant material introduced to Europe in the 1800s, leading to a rush to grow the latest regardless of its setting. Ring any bells, fellow collectors?

Then in the main body of the book a great many gardens are described, some of which I have read about elsewhere. I was often left vaguely unsatisfied, e.g. the Dry Landscape had only 2 gardens, in France and Arizona, and I learnt nothing new, found no insight that could be applied here. Similarly with the Gardens and Ecology section with 3 samples where the concept of ecology is limited entirely to the plants; the birds and insects do not rate mention. The well established principle of using plants suited to the situation is the main point including, in a Munich garden, non-enrichment of the soil so that natives have a chance. Maybe if this was the first I had read of these gardens I would have been more excited because they are exciting gardens, or maybe I am frustrated because the plant palette to carry out these ideas is all foreign.

In the final summing-up the established design principles are discussed: structure, form and shape, pruning, floors and ceilings (an interesting way of putting it), proportion and scale, rhythm and repetition, texture and pattern, colour and light, solids and screens, inside-outside interface, soft and hard, and the dangers of a collector's garden. Sometimes I am nodding my head saying yes, others shaking it at apparent contradictions. Although it is very brief, I found it a bit wordy, precious and flowery. Perhaps my judgement is still affected by the injustice done to our Australian plants. There are two charges levelled at them. Their leaves are small and uninteresting, neither matt nor glossy, and the plants lack form and structure, which can be overcome by planting them in pots !!!

They are interesting criticisms but must be due to lack of familiarity with Australian plants. It is also true that beauty is in the eye of the beholder - I could never abide hydrangeas, coarse ugly things, and rhododendrons have little going for them 11 months of the year, yet other people love them. So maybe it does need come adjustment to appreciate the fine foliage of many of our plants, which is after all their adaptation to the environment. Yet a fine filmy foliage is often a virtue in recommended plants for English gardens. Sure Callistemon foliage can be a bit monotonous and Callistemon is one genus becoming known in England, but what about Grevillea foliage? or Boronia? or Acacia? and our rainforest plants?? I have long noticed that Australian gardens are difficult to photograph well and the light reflecting properties of the foliage is probably responsible, so that it is understandable that some-one who has only seen photographs is unappreciative. Close up photos of flowers and leaves can hold their own against all comers. In any event, be the charge real or imagined, we must try to show the work! what real beauty Australian plants have.

Form and structure are another matter that I believe depends partly on the range of experience of the observer and we are only just acquiring that ourselves. Many plants have a natural grace and form that need little assistance from us and these can stand alone as specimens in any garden. It is one of the aims of this Study Group to increase the

11

appreciation and use of such plants. Alternatively, pruning and shaping right from planting can work wonders, something we are learning to do. There are other heath plants (not unique to Australia) which are best grown in mutually supporting groups such as in a cottage garden; the trick is to recognize each type and use it appropriately.

The space I have allotted to these problems of perception is out of all proportion to the space they occupy in the book, but it is interesting to see our gardens as others see them, at least in photos. It brings out the fact that our gardens **are** different and we have an uphill battle to have them accepted as equally great in their own right until the criteria for a 'great' garden are updated. It will happen, and we are hurrying it up with our Study Group.

.....
(I agree that lack of familiarity with Australian plants must be a key factor. Does someone from overseas have a right to make such comments when they are so unfamiliar with what they are commenting on, and possibly have seen only photographs? Apart from the genera Barbara mentioned for their foliage, think of the beautifully coloured new foliage of many species of eucalypts, banksias, hakeas and callistemons, let alone those rainforest plants! I think Barbara's comments apply not just to people overseas but also to many people in Australia who do have a chance to see Australian plants and gardens - but do they really see them? DS)
.....

"The Secret Gardens of France" by Mirabel Osier

Reviewed by **Barbara Buchanan Vic**

A good review tempted me to try this book despite a lack of sympathy with the Great French Gardens I have read about in various histories of garden design. Vaux-Le-Vicomte and Versailles hardly qualify as gardens to my mind, although I can appreciate them as great outdoor rooms to form magnificent settings for the absurd French Court towards the end of the monarchy. Still 'secret' gardens is promising - not that they are especially hidden, just private gardens made only for personal pleasure.

In her final chapter, Mrs Osier makes the point that the word 'garden' is too all embracing and we need a few more words in the language to describe the great span of creative places all lumped together as gardens. (Shades of the GDSG classification scheme so that we could be mutually intelligible in talking about gardens.) She discovered a wide range of interesting gardens largely by word of mouth and following up dozens of leads, though her assessment is that the average French garden is dull because the average Frenchman/woman is just not interested, and this is reflected in a paucity of interesting nurseries. The exceptions are the basis of this book in which she has tried to avoid great lists of plant names and tell us instead about the philosophies, the aims and expectations of the gardeners and physical constraints acting on the gardens. Because of the geographical spread of France there is an enormous range of garden settings with, as a rule, only those in the north where the climate resembles the English, following the English style.

I had hoped for more on Mediterranean gardens and what use they made of Australian plants, with ideas to adapt or copy here. Inspirations instead come from all over the country. Mrs Osier observed that the French made great use of gravel, where the English would use concrete paving, and in drier areas she found several gardens dispensing with lawns. But above all the French gardens are controlled, tweaked and clipped into line. They seem unable to let plants grow naturally but are continuously pruning and shaping. I well remember the enchantment of a natural garden facing the ocean on the cliffs south of Kalbarri in W.A. It was entirely low rounded bushes pruned to perfect shape by the wind and the salt, a few with flowers, but largely just a contrast of foliage and size to distinguish species; some of the photos here remind me of that magic place. In one well clipped plot there is the same absence of flowers - 'they spoil the outlines' - shades of Japanese gardens, although the shapes are generally different, which is interesting. It seems to me such a controlled garden would lack the interest of seasonal change.

I felt a real empathy with some of the gardeners. The grandmother who wanted more planting space (I have only just outgrown that) believing only big gardens could be truly beautiful despite the evidence of what she had created. She

12

believed it necessary to restrain oneself to plants that really do well (I'm working on it) and acknowledged that her garden was highly organized; she is unable to disorganize, no matter how much she would like to in at least some small areas.

Or the young woman with very limited space whose garden consisted almost entirely of pots, with all the plants chosen for their fragrance. Or the one who said 'I can't make a painting but I can plant a tree' in her windswept garden on an island off the coast of Brittany, who loves correas and is proud of her grevillea. Or the stone addict who bought her house which was an ugly ruin, not for the soil, or any established garden and trees, but for the stones, and who uses only a few species of plants but cuts and trims them differently to make it seem as if there is a greater variety.

Most of the gardeners are ordinary people with the passion for growing things that we in SGAP share, and in letting them tell us what moves them in garden-making, Mirabel Osier has given me hours of delight. She does not pass any judgements but describes the vastly different types of garden - some indeed English in style, some derived from the highly regimented grand French style, others flamboyant, kitsch even, or collectors' gardens - with understanding because of the commitment of their owners. The only standard that applies is whether the garden is effective in its maker's eyes. At that level I suppose even Vaux-Le-Vicomte is/was a garden.

Review of the garden design software package 'Landscape' in the Home Series group of programs by Autodesk **Maxine Armitage NSW**

Positives

- cost - the retail price was quoted at \$99.00 but I was able to obtain it, with an accompanying 'Home' software package, for \$90.00
- ease of use - it's very straightforward
- very useful for quickly entering ideas
- the finished plan can look good, especially when rendered
- the dimensions feature is really helpful for quickly checking the viability of a design
- it includes graphics for elevation drawings
- there is a 3D feature but this is largely unexplored owing to the slowness of my computer

Negatives

- on my old computer it is slow on detailed drawings
- plant graphics
 - the appearance is definitely northern hemisphere
 - there is not enough diversity of plant habits
 - the maximum tree size is only 8m, shrubs 2.5m
- you can't select different sizes for the non-plant graphics

Despite these drawbacks 'Landscape' is a useful and fun to use package. Warning! It may become addictive.

State and Regional Newsletters

The GDSG receives copies of all State and Regional Newsletters, which sometimes contain items relevant to garden design that could interest SG members. For example, in the most recent newsletters:

Canberra June 96, p2	"Planting Australian trees in the garden and landscape" by Glen Wilson
NSW April 96 # p21	"A spectrum of Australian gardens" by Diana Snape*
p30	"In search of unity" by Gordon Rowland* (# July issue has just arrived)
Old 96 June 96 p11	Mini hedges (in 'Mail Bag') - Jan Sked in response to Geoff Simmons*
S.A. May 96 p126	"Australian plants and a low-allergen garden" by Eleanor Handreck
p156	"Will Australian plants replace Petunia and Impatiens as bedding plants?" (a brief report, reprinted on the following page)
Tas June 96 p24	"Australia's Open Garden Scheme - an owner's perspective" by Jill Roberts
Vic June 96 p34	"Getting ready" by Bob O'Neill
p36	"Creating a frog-friendly garden" by Kevin Casey

13

(* GDSG member)

You might like to write something about garden design for your State or Regional NL, or ask a question, or follow up with a note or letter to me on an article you think is interesting. The Newsletters of other States can be borrowed by members able to come to Melbourne meetings, or by post if someone is really keen. You can also request that we reprint an article in our NL as we have already done on several occasions. It's important to spread ideas and knowledge.

• In the most recent issue of **Landscape Australia** (May 1996) there are a number of interesting articles, including a couple from overseas writers on the natural garden' (the theme of the *Landscape Australia* Conference). There is a substantial and challenging article investigating **An Australian Landscape Design Ethos** by **Bruce Mackenzie** (p 123), which I hope to use extracts from in the next NL.

• For members who live in or visit Melbourne, I'd recommend **Kuranga Nursery's** bimonthly Newsletter, "**Bush Telegraph**", (now up to Newsletter No 14). It's free, delightfully written, giving interesting and practical suggestions often with relevance to garden design.

• The new "**Kuranga Handbook of Australian Plants**", published by Lothian Books, is due out soon.

• GDSG member Gwen Elliot's excellent new book "**Gwen Elliot's Australian Garden - The Essential Gardener's Guide**" (published by Hyland House) has just been released.

DESIGN IDEAS

Border plants

Margarete Lee Vic

At the Melbourne July meeting held at Linda Floyd's house, Australian alternatives to *Ajuga reptans* were discussed. *A. reptans* is a suckering soil-binding plant which works well along pathways and between paving.

A. australis is not widely available and grows best in sandy soils, where it can sucker vigorously. The following plants were suggested as suitable Australian plants for growing adjacent to paths, as border plants, between pavers and through gravel:-

Brachyscome angustifolia, *Dichondra repens*, *Frankenia pauciflora*, *Isotoma fluviatilis*, *Mazus pumilio*, *Phyla nodiflora*, *Pratia pedunculata*, *Viola hederacea* and the grass-like sedge *Carex gaudichaudiana*.

Carex gaudichaudiana was particularly admired in Linda's garden. Although it can grow to 50cm, the plants we saw were approximately 15cm high with attractive grey-green foliage, and were suckering vigorously. *C. gaudichaudiana* grows well in moist clay and tolerates full sun. It would be a perfect substitute for the very popular Mondo Grass.

Bedding plants could be the next layer up from border plants and so I found the following piece interesting. DS

In search of the Australian Petunia (reprinted with thanks from SGAP S.A. Region Journal, May 1996)

Dr Alison Fuss and **Rebecca Evans**, until recently of the W.A. Department of Agriculture . . . have reported the results of their project 'In search of the Australian petunia' (*Australian Horticulture*, August 1995, pp83-89). They grew 34 species of small perennials and annual W.A. plants and ranked them for attractiveness to gardeners. None was considered to be excellent but quite a few were ranked as being very good. They could be improved by selection, breeding and the development of production protocols.

The following annual species were considered to have the greatest immediate potential for the bedding plant market: *Actinotus leucocephalus* (Flannelflower), *Brunonia australis* (Blue Pincushion), *Calandrinia polyandra* (Parakeelya), *Gomphrena canescans* (Pink Billy Buttons), *Velleia rosea* (Pink Velleia), *V. trinervis* and a *Lobelia* species from the Mt Magnet area.

Practical tips

Clipped shrubs for dryland gardens - *Eremophila macutata* (aurea) and other eremophilas are recommended as being suitable. **Margaret Lee SA**

Weeping Grass lawn - *Microlaena stipoides* is available from Abulk (ring Todd Layt on (045) 775 912 for more general information or for detailed notes). Approx. 100 per square metre for a lawn effect. (1995 prices were \$300/1000 virocells, \$25/400 mini-virocells.) Information obtained from **Geoff Clarke ACT**

Practical tips - keeping your pond/dam clear**Margarete Lee Vic***"Australian Horticulture"* 15 April - 14 May 1996 p 61-62

- At Brisbane Botanic Gardens, bales of barley straw in bird cages are used to control algal growth.
- Chemicals produced during decomposition of the barley inhibit algal growth but the actual process is not fully understood.
- Straw should be introduced in spring to generate the chemicals before algal growth commences in late spring.
- In colder climates two applications a year, in spring and autumn, may be necessary.

Design Ideas - the pleasing garden**Grahame Durbidge NSW**

What are we looking for in a pleasing garden? It all depends on the "visual aesthetic" (Louise Gore) that you apply. Personally, a garden with a tree canopy, a shrub layer and groundcover plants is the most pleasing. This canopy is predominantly of Australian trees, "for if non-Australian trees are dominant in a garden, I think the garden as a whole cannot look Australian" (Diana Snape).

About the time of early maturity of the trees (eucalyptus, agonis, melaleuca) is the ultimate. The canopies are just touching but you can still see each tree as a specimen of beauty in its own right and also as part of the larger garden picture. Having this canopy also creates the dimension that exists between the interplay and diffusion of sunlight. In the morning some night time dew may glisten from above as the sunlight shines through to the understorey. In the afternoon long shadows develop and plants that are 'backlit' by different light appear to stand out.

Having set the mood some nice shrubs to admire - it really doesn't matter what they are as long as they grow well and complement each other (banksia and hakea). If conditions were O.K. you could have cycads and ferns in place of shrubs. Just remember that the relationship between plant material and open space should be in balance.

At ground level lots of interesting things - each plant in its own microclimate and growing well. Little plants with interesting foliage (correa, brachyscome) and some rocks with lichen on them, with native grass clumps (themeda, poa). Climbers (clematis, billardiera) add the 'wild' touch.

Knowing your own "visual aesthetic" may help your design ideas develop a pleasing garden.

Sculpture in Australian gardens**Diana Snape Vic**

At the International Rower and Garden Show held in and outside the Exhibition Building in Melbourne in June, I was more interested in the outdoor displays than those indoors, which mainly featured an abundance of exotic colour. Outside there were only two display gardens of Australian plants, one a pleasing design by GDSG member Roger Stone. One or two others of exotics were interesting too, concentrating on design (usually formal) rather than just a showy, colour saturated display.

Some of the garden sculptures really appealed to me. They did not necessarily have a particularly Australian theme or message but I thought they were both original and 'Australian'. One I liked featured a group of three large (2m or so) silver-coloured fish, scaly-patterned and very shiny; two were rising vertically out of a pool and the third one heading back down into it. Another consisted of two huge striped canvas chairs, 3m or so high, taking up most of the lawn - an Australian message here? Animal sculptures can be a problem but there was one delightful pair of grazing kangaroos, created from rusty metal sheets by a sculptor with a most perceptive eye for a kangaroo's form.

Over recent months there has also been a display of sculptures at the Royal Botanic Garden, Melbourne. Near the entrance gate were a delightful pair of flat oval forms (faces) by Deborah Halpern, one rather quizzical and the other looking a little dubious. (I heard someone make the [sexist] comment that "he" is waiting with the spade while "she" makes up her mind where the plant will go). Several other fine abstract stone or metal sculptures, on a scale suitable for such a large garden, were well placed in respect to nearby vegetation. One with russet tones was placed near a stately casuarina showing similar colouring.

Smaller sculptures - abstract or figurative - could add to a suburban garden. They can add a nice touch of humour, be a striking focal point, or beautify a quiet corner. In a larger garden the scope is greater. I think sculptures don't have to have a particularly 'Australian' content but they should have their own integrity, not just copy ideas from other places. This may well make them 'Australian'.

In the most recent issue of *Landscape Australia* (May 1996) there is a description of environmental art for fun in NSW in *Artful Park*, by Jane Cavanough (p137).

Sculpture (and garden furniture) could be good topics for a future Newsletter. Have you seen any examples which have inspired (or annoyed) you, or do you have ideas of what you would like to see?

1. "Touchstone"**Wendy Geale Tas**

Firstly, a big thank you to all the hardworking members of the GDSG for the inspiring newsletters that are being produced. Work and study commitments have meant that I have been unable to attend local SGAP meetings, so newsletters are invaluable for keeping people in my position in contact with what is happening.

Lack of time and funds have meant a delay in the commencement of our native garden project. The first stages of earth works, soil conditioning, weed control and mulching are the most expensive items, and I was reluctant to make a start until these events could be completed in fairly quick succession. With red clay based soil and two young children, having fresh earth works carried out can be very sobering indeed!

I opted for coarse sand as a base mulch and will top this up with either gravel or bark mulch depending on the type of plants we want to grow in different areas.

I am still intending to stick fairly closely to the plan that the GDSG helped me to prepare. The only change I am intending to make at the present is to have smaller species of eucalypts near the buildings. As the soil here is very fertile and the rainfall is high, trees are likely to reach their maximum potential heights. I found the task of finding small attractive eucalypts to use in the garden fairly close to the building quite a challenge. One of the most confusing factors was the variation in height predictions across different references.

I took your advice about the pond near the back door and have a fairly large area dug out ready. My husband Leigh has the front patio and BBQ area well underway and, once it is completed, the pond area is next. I will keep you posted on progress. Hopefully the quality planning and forethought that have proceeded this native garden project will start to show some tangible results soon. I have enclosed a photograph taken in late March which shows an excavator doing the major earthworks necessary for stage 1 of our landscape development.

Wendy's photo shows the beginning of her big project and will one day remind her how "sobering" it was! DS

2. News from the Ormond East Primary School indigenous planting group

(An extract from an article from the school newsletter, written by the children & their teacher Helen Morphet.)

What we have done so far. . . . We have potted some indigenous plants and have also planted some seeds which are all growing very well. Mrs Rennick has provided us with all the plants and seeds which she has collected from the local area. We wanted to use these plants in a school garden and chose a spot near the Art Room. We cut down a tree and cleared the area of weeds. We all had a turn at designing our garden layout. Mrs Rennick invited Diana Snape to look at our garden site and our designs. Diana is the Editor and Leader of the Association of Societies for Growing Australian Plants (ASGAP) Garden Design Study Group. She was very interested in what we had done. She wrote an article about us in her magazine, asking other readers to suggest designs. Diana sent us her ideas and three other designs from her readers. We would like to thank these people for taking the time to share their ideas with us.

Last week . . . with the help of Mrs Rennick, we started planting our garden. We planted Yellow Everlastings, lomandra, Chocolate Lily, Running Postman, Wallaby Grass and Bluebells. Our job now is to look after this garden. We will also continue to collect seeds and cuttings from our plants so that we can grow more in other areas of the school yard.

3. Dunlop Street Reserve Design Project**Peter Garnham Vic**

The plan initiated at the Warrnambool Workshop in March has now been approved by Boroondara City Council. Siteworks are expected to commence in about September/October, depending on the weather and availability of Council staff and equipment. The Friends of Gardiners Creek were very appreciative of the design work done by our Study Group and are looking forward to developing the project.

A reminder to members that they can become involved in Garden Design Projects if they want ideas/feedback when designing their own garden (or a section of it) or would like to help others. Ideally this involves on site consultation but, if this isn't possible, ideas by correspondence can be useful too.

Evergreen - a factor differentiating the Australian landscape**Geoff Simmons Qld**

If one drives from Melbourne to Adelaide, along the road verges for many a kilometre one can see mallee trees and it doesn't matter what month it is, they will present the same picture as far as foliage is concerned. In spring blossom may appear but the basic appearance remains the same. And herein lies the contrast with exotic deciduous trees that are planted so extensively, particularly in colder regions of this continent, to produce autumn colours. It is no wonder that Australians of overseas origins now or in the past find such constancy of our mainly evergreen trees dull and drab compared with the brilliance that they recall in overseas countries. Do aborigines feel that trees that become skeletons in winter are less appealing?

How does the fact that there are relatively few deciduous Australian plants affect Australian garden design? The general gardener may feel that Australian plants are unsatisfactory when they are designing to satisfy a psyche that has memories deeply embedded in other climes. They will miss the burst of growth in springtime and the

subsequent colours of autumn. In warmer climates of northern Australia the latter may be replaced by the brilliant colours of new leaves - an aspect of Australian plants not yet fully explored. In the north also the magnificent mass flowers of trees such as Lace Barks and Flame Trees are not yet fully appreciated. Development of these plants by selection and techniques such as grafting may well bring about the beauty that could produce a great but different landscape, based on native plants. In another direction, is there any point in pursuing the development of the minor deciduous nature of some trees such as those mentioned above, that happens in the cooler regions, when they are planted outside their normal range?

Whether generations to come will ever look on evergreen trees as affectionately as on deciduous ones may be doubtful but it should not deter Australian garden designers from using the nature of Australian plants to their best advantage as a counter to this.

AROUND AUSTRALIA

Australia's Open Garden Scheme

I have just seen the book for the 1996 Australia's Open Garden Scheme and once again it was salutary to check the number of gardens featuring Australian plants. For the first time, these are listed separately in the back of the book (along with other 'special interest' lists). Many of the gardens listed include some exotic plants too and the numbers are probably just a rough guide, but the percentages are still interesting to compare:

State or Region	Number of gardens		% Australian gardens
	Australian	Total	
South Australia	12	64	19%
Tasmania	10	78	13
Victoria	12	165	7
NSW & ACT	14	255	6
Western Australia	3	79	4
SE Queensland	3	102	3
Overall	53	743	7%

South Australia and **Tasmania** obviously lead the way with a significantly higher proportion of Australian gardens in the Scheme! Also for Tasmania, four gardens were listed as featuring Tasmanian plants - an additional achievement. **Congratulations to SGAP members in both these States** for any part they played in achieving this result. To spread our message, it remains a challenge for SGAP members in general and GDSG members in particular to try to increase the number of Australian gardens open to the public in whatever way we can.

*A **request**: please try to visit a garden in your area and then have a go at writing a comment or report (however brief) for the Newsletter. You can just give your impressions and say what appeals to you about this garden, or write a fuller and more critical appraisal. It would be good to get several comments on the same garden.*

***A special request to Melbourne (or Victorian) members.** Four gardens of GDSG members are in the Scheme this year and two will be open on the weekend of 14-15 September, Diana & Brian Snape's and Peter & Wilma Garnham's. If you'll be in Melbourne for the Melbourne Wildflower Show and could spare a couple of hours to help, please ring Diana or Peter soon (phone numbers on the frontpage). Many members are involved with the Wildflower Show. You are, of course, also very welcome to support us by visiting our gardens - greater numbers will indicate interest in Australian gardens. Opening hours are 10 am to 4.30 pm and the entrance fee is \$3.50.*

The other two are the gardens of Rodger and Gwen Elliot, open with limited sessions on 28-29 September (you need to phone if you wish to attend), and of Royce and Jeanne Raleigh, open on 5-6 October.

W.A. NEWS Wildflower Society of Western Australia SPRING FUNG

Sunday 8 September 9.30 a.m. - 4.00 p.m. at Perry House, 71 Oceanic Drive, Floreat Park
 Wildflower walks every hour from 10.00 a.m. and bird walks every hour from 10.30 a.m.
 All enquiries to Perry House ph. 383 7979

Victorian News**North-East Vic sub-group**Coordinator: **Margaret Garrett**Report by **Kay Dempsey**

At the inaugural meeting at Margaret Garrett's, it was decided that one component of each meeting should be a garden inspection, initially of members' gardens then other worthy gardens. It was agreed that we design our own gardens for ourselves but hope to encourage more widespread use of Australian plants by displaying them attractively.

Before a visit the gardener will try to provide a profile of their garden-making process, the constraints and problems of the site, the extra difficult spots, the mistakes, the development over time and their attitude to gardening and vision of how it should be.

The next meeting will be at my home in Katandra West on Sunday 11th August at 11 am. Topics :-

- Glen Wilson's "*Landscaping With Australian Plants*"
- Planting around Kay's new dam

Profile of a garden**Kay Dempsey Vic**

Development Has been slow because of other commitments. It is only during this last year that I have made a start.

Problems Being a flat block, drainage is a big problem. Raised beds seem to be solving this. Sand and soil have been imported for these beds. Pasture weeds continue to be a constant part of maintenance.

Attitude I enjoy propagating my own plants and in the past have tried many, ultimately to sort out the hardy species. Anything that self sows is a bonus and is encouraged. I think these plants give continuity to the gardenscape if repeated throughout.

Vision To encourage bird life I envisage some kind of wetland. This will extend from the new dam to connect with plantings of mostly low profile beds, framed by dense clusters of taller trees and shrubs, leaving vistas to the hills.

Melbourne Wildflower Show at the Botanic Gardens September 13-16
Help needed at GDSG Open Gardens - see pageW September 14-15

Melbourne Meetings

Members in Melbourne have been discussing the frequency and nature of our meetings. It was decided to reduce the number slightly, from 9 or 10 a year to 7 or 8, which will include a couple of evening meetings especially for those who cannot come on Sunday afternoons. Regular meetings will probably remain on the first Sunday of the month, every second month starting in March 97 (with a committee meeting in January or February). Evening meetings would be organized in the 'in between' months. It all sounds a bit complicated, but dates will be made clear in the Newsletter.

I think Melbourne members, like Sydney members (from Jo Hambrett's survey - see p 19), probably appreciate having different activities at meetings, including garden visits, discussions, talks and practical activities like the very popular "rock"-making.

Meeting dates

As usual, please contact the member whose place the meeting is at to confirm arrangements, or ring me. DS

Sunday September 1:1.45 for 2 pm - Peter & Wilma Gamham's,

A garden visit two weeks before the Open Garden Scheme weekend opening of this delightful garden.

October - no meeting

Sunday November 3 - we are planning an all-day excursion to a number of fascinating gardens and sites along the Elwood foreshore, with the expert guidance of Rodger Elliot as our leader. We hope to use a 22-seater bus, so please let me know early if you wish to be included in this activity, our last for this year.

Conference on "Australian Plants in the Rural and Urban Environment" Marilyn Gray Vic

I noted with interest Catherine Drew's comments in the last Newsletter regarding a conference concentrating on landscaping using Australian plants. I agree that there are few opportunities for people to discuss such issues in a forum. Catherine's comment was very timely as **Karwarra** Garden Advisory Committee is currently organising its third **Biennial Conference** from **25th to 27th November 1996**. While not run by SGAP or GDSG we do have a close involvement with both and several members of GDSG have either spoken at previous conferences or will be addressing our third conference. Our major aim is to encourage practitioners to consider many different ways that Australian plants may be used in the garden or landscape setting.

This year's program includes 2 days of lectures and a full day field trip and will be opened by Professor David Yencken. The keynote speaker, Andrew Campbell from the Australian National University, will address the topic "Development and Future of Australian Plants in the Rural Landscape". The cost is \$75 a day (concession for GDSG members who book early).

The theme for Monday 25th November is "Australian Plants in the Rural Landscape", Our aim is to consider various situations in the rural area where Australian plants can be used to advantage and maybe even for profit. Topics include landscape design, sustainable farming, Landcare, restoration of habitat, design of water areas, cut flower and foliage production, bush food growing and conservation covenants.

Similar considerations will be given on Wednesday when lectures will revolve around the urban landscape and use of Australian plants in design. Jane Shepherd will begin the day by discussing "Directions in using Australian Plants in the Urban Landscape". Other topics cover trees in suburbia and their management, the middle storey, "Designing and Planting in Small Spaces" by Paul Thompson, textures and forms, pictures with small plants, grassland gardens, water and habitat.

The field trip on Tuesday will visit several venues which illustrate aspects of the topics from both days and include Land for Wildlife and Landcare properties, industrial and home gardens both large and small, revegetation areas and Lillydale Lake.

If you wish to have more information or add your name to the mailing list please contact Marilyn Gray at Karwarra Garden on (03) 9728 4256. We have organised special rates at a nearby motel for country participants.

Landscape Australia Garden Design Conference

Theme: "The Natural Garden"

Dates: **26 & 27 October 1996**

Venue: The Camberwell Centre

Overseas speakers: Ken Druse, Brita Von Schoenaich, James Hitchmough, Simon Swaffield, Isabelle Greene

Australian speakers: John Patrick, George Seddon, Jane Shepherd, Anne Latreille, Gordon Ford, Marion Blackwell, Kevin Taylor, John Landy, Judy Van Gelderen

Registration fee (this covers the two days with lunches, morning & afternoon teas and on-site car parking): \$250 per person if booked before 1 August; \$275 before 18 October

GDSG Garden Design Seminar 1997

Preliminary discussions are taking place, with the possibility of organizing a Seminar in conjunction with a Vic SGAP weekend. August 23-24 1997 have been suggested as potential dates. Please let me know ASAP if these dates would present problems for you, as nothing has been decided upon yet. There'll be further news in the November Newsletter.

Sydney Meetings**Jo Hambrett NSW**

The next meeting will be **Sunday October 20** 11.00 am - don't forget Mt Annan Horticultural Development Officer Peter Cuneo walking and talking us through the design of Mt Annan. Spring will have sprung so it should be glorious - see you there. Please ring me () at the beginning of October for details. **Jo Hambrett**

Survey of NSW members

Jo Hambrett, coordinator of the NSW chapter, recently carried out a survey of NSW members to find out what they thought quarterly meetings of the Study Group should achieve. The results of her survey, showing the number of members supporting each option, were (with some supporting more than one option):

- Garden visits only 5
- Informal discussion groups held in members' gardens 6
- Garden visits plus discussion (and hence obligation to engage in discussion) 14
- A speaker 7

Two other questions asked were:

- Do these gardens have to be totally native? A strong majority said NO.
- Would you be happy to visit a mainly exotic garden in order to study the design element, if it was exceptional or very interesting? A somewhat smaller majority said YES.

It is difficult to be 'all things to all people'. The option of 'Garden visits plus discussion (and hence obligation to engage in discussion)' appeared the most popular; however a few members commented they saw Sundays with the GDSG as a relaxing escape from a busy working week, or queried the word 'obligation' as being too dictatorial in tone. Jo says "I am naturally a bit of a consensus person; at this stage I think we have to have fairly flexible meeting arrangements which allows maximum enjoyment and participation for as many as are attending."

"Native Plants (and why I don't use them) in Garden Design" by Peter Lawson, NSW

Peter is Managing Director and Principal Landscape Architect of CLASP (Consultant Landscape Architects and Site Planners) and a Past President of NSW Group of Australian Institute of Landscape Architects. He has deliberately kept his practice small but is involved in a wide range of projects.

A report on Peter's talk at the **Sydney meeting on Sunday 21-7-96** by **Jo Hambrett** NSW

Peter opened his talk by making observations of the profession over the last 25 years and the role of native plants in the profession in that time in Sydney. The 1960s saw the profession beginning to form with the likes of Bruce Mackenzie, Bruce Rickard and Harry Howard (Native Art Gallery). The early 1970s saw a small close knit group solidly embracing the Sydney school of architecture. Although Peter's first firm was Canadian and of the International School, every plant on its list was Australian!

The next ten years saw a change so that by the early 1980s the office had its native list reduced to 60%. (Peter emphasized that this did not happen with Bruce Mackenzie or Harry Howard who perhaps had a better appreciation of Australian species and determinedly followed a more purist policy.)

The mid 80s saw a need to humanize architecture by the use of architectural decoration - enter the Post Modernist Movement. There was also an International (American influenced) Movement at this time, followed by a Nostalgic era, cottage gardens, Federation look-alikes, etc. All of this seemed to coincide with a generalized failure of native plants at this time - a 1975 project by 1982 looked "stressed". By 1990 "the crash" meant designers tended to be conservative to find and keep the client!

The mood now appears to be thoughtful and tentative with hopefully the Sydney 2000 Olympics providing the desired impetus for experimentation and original thinking to revive the ethos of Australian design with Australian plants. Peter stressed the importance of having an ecological basis, absence of monocultures, no irrigation and little or no fertilizer in garden design.

Site analysis is very important in the design process, with its spatial, functional and visual aspects.

Spatial components — tall: trees
 medium: large shrubs - the backbone for the first 10 years
 low: small shrubs and groundcover

Visual — accent plants tend to be nearly all native. Peter said he tries to think of the long term - the garden just may be there in 100 years, so put in two beautiful slow growing specimens for FUTURE EFFECT (*What a great thought JH*).

We can now welcome Science and Technology to help us with our use of Australian plants and Peter thought we should design to 'pH need' zones as well, especially when mixing with exotics.

Ann Long made the insightful comment that Australian plants could be maintained and preserved by appealing to the inbuilt emotional response that most people have about birds &/or marsupials. Peter replied that he was often able to sway a client by informing them of a particular native plant's bird-attracting abilities, as well as cut flowers now that a geometric/architectural look has been adopted by more than a minority.

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The meeting was attended by 17 people and we listened attentively as Peter spoke eloquently and at times passionately about his 25 years in the profession and his thoughts and philosophy on design and matters horticultural in general. I trust it was stimulating and informative and I thank the members who attended for their interest and support. Many thanks to Peter who gave up a Sunday to inform us so entertainingly.

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New members

A very warm welcome to the following new members. I hope you enjoy your membership of the GDSD.

- Susi Barber
- Sandra Davey
- Robin Gemmill
- Aoi Nakata
- Georgina Persse
- Frances Rein
- Karen Russell
- Elsbeth Swan
- Tanya Wheeler

Membership renewal

Ingrid Adler, Helen Allen, Karin Andersson, Maxine Armitage, Marion Bakker, Margie Barnett, Carol Bentley, Beryl & Trevor Blake, Shirley Btoomfield, Ian Bond, Jennifer Borrell, Elizabeth Brett, Barbara Buchanan, Steve Burley, Mark Burns, Jacci & Robert Campbell, Wendy Cannon, Patrea Cook, Mary Cotter, Chris & Leigh Cousins, Ian & Tamara Cox, Jennifer Davidson, Gillian Davies, Michael Dear, Kay Dempsey, Cherree Denstey, Alison Dredge, Catherine Drew, Grahame Durbtdge, Rodger & Gwen Elliot, Peter Feige, Shirley Fisher, Linda Floyd, Peter & Wilma Gamham, Jan Hall, Felicity Hallam, Tony Heawood, Jeanette Heinemann, Monika Herrmann, Jeff Howes, John Hulme, Gregory Ingerson, Barry Jahnke, Mark James, Morton Kaveney, Colleen Keena, Catherine King, Jo Kopp, Chris Larkin, Jennie Lawrence, Margarete Lee, Margaret Lee, James Lenard, Geoffrey & Ann Long, Gillian Morris, Wendy McClelland, Rhys & Julie McGregor, Anne Neild, Danie Ondinea, Dorothy Parris, Tony & Joy Roberts, Gordon Rowland, Betty Rymer, Gwen Sanders, Peter Shannon, Geoff Simmons, Ross Smyth-Kirk, Diana Snape, Stephen Thomas, Jim & Pat Watson, Merele Webb, Phil & Jane Williams, R.K. Willson, Spencer Wilson, Tim Wilson, Fred Young

- *Please let us know if you'd like a separate receipt for your subscription.*
- *I have never had any comments or complaints about this, but of course also please let me know if you don't want your address &/or phone number included in Newsletters or membership lists. The idea is to enable members to contact each other either if they live in the same area, or en route if they are travelling.*

A final reminder about membership renewals - if you meant to do it after the last Newsletter but forgot, do it right away now!

Members don't necessarily want to remain members forever, so we'll understand if this applies to you, but it's helpful if you let us know. We'll look forward to a renewal of energy & ideas too, as the weather warms up & our gardens flourish. I'll be in W.A. in late September/early October, so (as usual!) I'd appreciate receiving articles for the next NL early (as soon as possible). I hope I can meet up with some W.A. members & possibly S.A. members en route.

Barbara Buchanan's two book reviews started me thinking again about the degree of control people like to have over their plants, mainly with pruning - on a scale from none at all to total. I think I'm gradually shifting from close to the former position a little more towards the latter. 'ControlledTformal' plants are usually linked to a formal garden - it's difficult to picture a naturalistic garden with very controlled/formal plants. Can a formalistic garden have 'informal'/'uncontrolled' plants? I'd be interested in your thoughts on this - and on our proposed GD Seminar next year.

Best wishes for spring

Diana Snape

