

## ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

**GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP**

NEWSLETTER No. 16

February 1997

Study Group Leader/Editor: Diana SnapeTreasurer/Membership: Peter Garnham

Dear Members,

First of all, very best wishes for 1997 - may your garden grow well. It was a busy time for conferences in Melbourne towards the end of last year. The 2-day Landscape Australia Conference in October had the theme 'The Natural Garden', then the 3-day Karwarra one on 'Australian Plants for the Rural and Urban Environment' took place in November. With so many stimulating talks and ideas it is difficult to know where to start.

The papers for the Karwarra Conference have already been produced. Memorable on the first day, which dealt with the rural environment, was Andrew Campbell's quote from a W.A. wheat farmer: "We grow plants and animals which don't want to grow here and kill or cut down animals and plants which do want to grow here." Andrew said rural sustainability must address issues of social policy.

Don Thompson introduced me to the idea of decagons of trees - four concentric circles of trees to provide a substantial group in the landscape, enclosed by a decagon of standard panels of fencing, easy to erect. Jason Alexander spoke of different treatments needed for sustainability in five regional types - rangelands, sheep/wheat belt, urban fringe forests, high rainfall areas and forests. We'll look at some of the talks given on the third day of the Karwarra Conference, dealing with the urban landscape and more directly with design, in the next Newsletter.

The theme of the 'natural garden' and 'wildlife in the garden' have dominated this Newsletter. Nowadays anyone conservation-minded might well hesitate before building on an untouched bush block, depending on the extent and nature of the 'bush'. If you are the lucky owner of a bush block, like Ann and Geoff Long, how do you create a 'garden' or do you already have one? Betty Maloney has kindly allowed us to include her notes and the plan of her archetypal 'bush garden'. Beryl and Trevor Blake describe in detail how a degraded but still promising bush block where they live was gradually restored to health. Cherree Densley looks at her beloved 'camping' bush block and lists what she would **not** like to incorporate in her home garden, then tries to identify the elements she would wish to extract. (Later she gives a word of caution.) Catering for wildlife is the theme of Danie Ondinea's article, whether this be in building or re-building on a suburban block or in extensive revegetation work. Shirley Fisher writes about creating a school garden, with its practical limitations, in a bush area.

In the past, we may have pictured a 'bush' garden as meaning woodland or heath and shrubs. The type of 'bush' has to be appropriate. A large garden may have many trees unsuitable in size or number for small gardens. There is increasing interest in using grasslands or grassy herbfields as models, as in the work of James Hitchmough. It is fascinating that interest in such 'natural gardens' has developed overseas - in Europe, as described by Brita von Schoenaich, and in the USA, as presented by Ken Druse, during the Landscape Australia Conference. I'm still hoping that some members who attended will have time to write a few words about their impressions from that conference.

**MEMBERSHIP & TREASURER'S REPORT****Peter Garnham Vic**Financial Statement - quarter ending 31/12/96

<u>Receipts</u>		<u>Expenditure</u>	
Members subscriptions	370-00	Printing/photocopying	248-70
Bank interest	1-95	Postage/stamp	115-30
		Petty cash - misc. expenditure	40-20
		Bank charges	1-25
	<u>\$371-95</u>		<u>\$405-45</u>

Bank Balance (31/12/96); \$1818-17Membership

1996/7 subscriptions (to 31/12/96) -198 (a number o! these cover two members at the same address)

A list of the members in your State is included with this Newsletter.

Please note: all subscriptions for the 1997/8 year will become due on 30/6/97.

You will receive a printed reminder containing full details regarding payment with Newsletter No. 17.

## 2

### INDEX

- 1 Membership and Treasurer's report - Peter Garnham
- 2 CORRESPONDENCE extracts
- 3 THE 'NATURAL GARDEN'
- 3 Landscape Australia Conference - Theme: The natural garden
- 3 Re establishing local bushland in suburban Melbourne - Beryj & Trevor Blake
- 5 "Natural gardens?" - Cherree Densley
- 7 Strategies for protecting and creating habitat areas and their wildlife - Danie Ondinea
- 7 A garden or a piece of bush? - Ann's Geoff Long
- 8 A school garden in the bush - Shirley Fisher
- 9 An unnatural garden? - Diana Snape
- 9 Too much wildlife?! - Cherree Densley
- 10 GARDEN DESIGNS
- 10,11 Betty Matoney's garden - a quintessential 'bush garden'
- 10 Designing a small rainforest garden - Barbara Buchanan
- 12 BOOKS & MAGAZINES
- 12 *Australian Garden design: In search of an Australian garden style* by Andrew Pfeiffer - Shirley Fisher
- 12 *The Natural Garden* by Ken Druse and *The Natural Habitat Garden* by Ken Druse with Margaret Roach
- 12 from reviews by Ralph Neaie in *Landscape Australia* - May 1996
- 13 A short book list
- 13 Directions in using Australian plants in the designed landscape - Jane Shepherd (reported by Diana Snape)
- 14 DESIGN IDEAS
- 14 Design ideas, for fun - Diana Snape
- 14 Plans for 'wetlands' - Cherree Densley
- 14 Reversal in design - Geoff Simmons
- 14 Limits to design - John Hulme
- 15 Australian plants for themes - Geoff Simmons
- 15 GDSG GARDEN DESIGN SEMINAR, September 1997
- 16 GDSG MEETINGS & NEWS
- 17 Slide & print library; members' news, new members & membership renewals

---

### CORRESPONDENCE extracts

*"I'm looking forward to exchanging ideas. Our garden is basically a bush block with some rehabilitation work near the road, but of interest is that we have established a native garden on our concrete roof where many plants are now flowering. I would be pleased to share it with other native gardeners."*

**Deirdre Morton NSW**

Deirdre included some photos of her roof garden which looked very beautiful. I've asked her to tell us more about it.

*"I am just getting serious about design. Issues of current interest to me are:*

*(i) ecological control of pests by design.*

*(ii) fulfilling customers' wishes for greenery, colour, neatness, with low maintenance.*

*(Hi) water conservation.*

*(iv) practical lawn alternatives and management."* **John Hoie NSW**

John's particular areas of specialisation are water conservation and low maintenance.

*"I have everything to learn about garden design and am afraid I shall not have anything to offer. We retired two years ago and built two retirement units on a block with a 1:8 slope - a few inches of clay on shale. There have been more losses than survivors and as I can't dig into the soil myself we have decided we must bring in soil and build up and start again. It will be a slow process so I hope to be able to learn something as we go along."* **Kay Harries S.A.**

We're all learning of course, at various stages along the route, so we look forward to questions as well as ideas from as many members as possible. No-one knows it all! It would be great to get more short articles, whether thoughts or practical suggestions,

*"I am currently in the middle of a part time two year horticulture course and we are just about to commence a seminar on garden design, so I thought it would be a good time to join the Study Group.*

*I have always struggled with my garden and only in the last 5 years, with some extensive research, have I discovered what will and won't grow here. We have truly dreadful soil, skeletal with a pH of 8.5. Digging here is done with a pick! Design has gone out the window and, with the exception of the expected size of a plant, colour and form are not really taken into account, as long as it will grow! Hopefully, with the help of the group this will change. I have a keen interest in bird attracting plants and I plant them almost exclusively. At the end of my formal horticultural training I am thinking of setting up in business designing gardens to attract birds. This is however a long way off and I have a lot to learn."* **Janet Fisher SA**

### 3

## THE 'NATURAL GARDEN'

Landscape Australia Conference  
Theme; **THE NATURAL GARDEN**  
A brief overview

Australian speakers at this Conference were Marion Blackwell and John Landy, who showed magnificent photographs of Australian flora and landscapes; Kevin Taylor, talking in particular about the plan for the Australian garden at the Cranbourne Botanic Garden; Judy van Gelderen, who spoke about rainwater retention on sites; Gordon Ford and Anne Latreille, with emphasis on the use of rocks and Australian plants in the Eltham area, and the work of Ellis Stones; Jane Shepherd, looking at contemporary ideas and taking the 'bush garden' as a starting point.

These speakers generally illustrated the fact that for many Australians the idea of a 'natural' garden is certainly not new. It is fascinating that similar trends are now being observed overseas, though of course what is 'natural' there differs in its very essence from what is 'natural' here. Many of the principles though are universal.

### Overseas speakers

The following includes extracts from *Landscape Australia* November 1996.

"One of the speakers, Ken Druse from USA, has written three books with 'Natural Garden' in the title and has contributed enormously to the growth of a new movement in America which sees garden design as a system of land management where you do not fight nature. Such a system means savings in water, less use of chemicals and less use of energy. His book *The Natural Garden* has gone to seven printings." Ralph Neale's review of his more recent book *The Natural Habitat Garden* is included under BOOKS. "During the course of his lecture Ken Druse referred to the revegetation work at North Head in Sydney as the most inspiring thing he had seen during his time in Australia, and clearly his visit to our county has given him a new perspective on the use of indigenous plants. ...

**James Hitchmough** spoke of natural gardens in Britain to which he has contributed following his Australian work with indigenous grasses. His research has indicated that indigenous flowering plants cannot compete well with grasses in nitrogen rich soils and that often it is necessary to manipulate the soils to reduce fertility, in order to succeed in obtaining flowering meadows."

Another overseas speaker was **Simon Swaffield** from New Zealand, who addressed the philosophy of the Natural Garden, including aspects the GDSG addressed in our early classification scheme (NL2-2) when we introduced concepts such as the ethos garden. This idea was also present in Brita von Schoenaich's talk, when she spoke of using plants that looked right together and often came from similar environments, even if they were not indigenous to that particular area.

Brita von Schoenaich spoke of the natural garden movement in Britain (Ost beginning) and Germany (well advanced). The use of herbaceous perennials has in the past often concentrated on plants which are "perennial thugs" (did I hear someone say agapanthus?). New design trends in Europe "feature naturalistic planting schemes which include a rich mixture of native and exotic herbaceous perennials. Their style is more reminiscent of a meadow rather than a border." Such naturalistic planting schemes depend on the study of ecology and plant sociology and may use lists of plants, or communities of species, with identical habitat requirements. This is also true for other "living spaces" ranging from woodland to open ground and water,

A well designed scheme should be a sustainable and to a lesser degree self-regulating plant community. This will depend on the plants' competitive behaviour and longevity and should consider minimal maintenance. The ultimate aim might be to start a natural process and to keep human interference to an absolute minimum. The "aesthetic lifespan of plant associations" should be considered, ideally short lived perennials should form companion plants to long lived species. The natural effect may be increased by having a gently meandering path system and planting in loose drifts, with gentle gradation in the height of vegetation and drifts of taller accent plants. If the ground is covered by plants or gravel mulch, low fertility enables maintenance by selective weeding. (Recent legislation in most federal states in Germany has outlawed the use of all herbicides and pesticides.)

.....

### **Re establishing local bushland in suburban Melbourne                      Beryl & Trevor Blake Vic**

The interest in bush regeneration and habitat establishment has prompted me to write of our efforts to regenerate local bushland and create a garden on a site that had retained a bushland infrastructure but had been degraded by the grazing of two horses and inappropriate planting.

18 years ago my family moved to East Ringwood to a 1 ha. site with great potential. At that stage we could not pick any native flowers for the house or the regular bunch that went to the A.C.F. where Beryl worked. Native gardeners know that a range of species can always be on tap in the gardens we grow. Incidentally, the interest and education that took place through the bunch going to the A.C.F. inspired a regular rack of named specimens being displayed each week.

Our land is on the north side of the second highest hill in the metropolitan area. Some large *Pinus radiata* were along the western boundary and a mixture of eucalypts provided a canopy that helped to deter frosts. Indigenous

#### 4

species are *£ melliodora*, *obliqua*, *macrorhyncha*, *cephaiocarpa*, *goniocalyx* and *cypellocarpa* with some other tall species which provided a sheltered windbreak to the site - *Acacia dealbata*, *howittii*, *longifolia*; *Exocarpos cupressiformis* the Native Cherry and some fine examples of *Kunzea ericoides* and a closed canopy of *Pittosporum undulatum*.

The horses had been gone 5 years and there had been areas of either little damage or a regrowth of local species which looked encouraging. However there were plenty of invading species present - blackberry, privet, holly, ivy, loquat, coprosma, boneseed, wandering jew, cotoneaster, honeysuckle rampaging 10m into trees, periwinkle and the unkillable agapanthus. These we removed but still get the seed of a number of these species being spread by birds.

Around the house we quickly established in existing beds a wide range of colourful plants and removed many of the exotics that we didn't really need to live with. Birdlife was quite good with a resident rufous fantail being a highlight. Spring always brings the mobs of demolishing yellow-tailed black-cockatoos who absolutely delight in ripping open thick branches of *Acacia longifolia* for the prize - a very large wattle goat-moth caterpillar. These wattles have now all but been removed from the scheme of things and all seedlings are pulled.

Of the 12x1 ha. blocks on the north side of Wambalano Park most have now been subdivided into various sized blocks over the years. One to the north of us, with almost untouched bush, was flattened by an insensitive subdivider which left our place receiving far more wind than ever before - the midstory trees we realized were vital to break the wind and protect the taller eucalypts. The trees that were doing this of course were, and are, real pests - *Pittosporum undulatum*. Individually they have a lot going for them. Our strategy has been to remove them from key positions and replace them with protective species,

With the light blocked by areas of pittosporum nothing grew below and this suited the experiments which followed. We were concerned that if we opened up too much we would be swamped with weeds. This I really didn't want as we were about to start a major rebuilding project and this was going to involve a great deal of my time over the next couple of years. The area where we selected to remove an enormous pittosporum was virtually sealed from all direct weed invasion by shrubbery and yet would receive plenty of sunlight. We were fascinated over the next two years to see the regeneration of local species - the seed was still there and viable. The richness with poas, stipas, microlaena, lepidosperma, danthonias, lomandras, etc. and subsequently with lilies, glycine, pultenaea, hardenbergia, platylobium, acrotriche. Some little gems appeared too; droseras, orchids and brunonia.

This provided great incentive and our curiosity was aroused to see what we could do. Our neighbour's property on the south side was pretty rich in local species and had been deliberately left undisturbed by a very sympathetic owner. We have used existing pittosporums in places to provide a 'seal' from weed species while we tried our version of the Bradley Method<sup>1</sup> on a large scale. It has worked with pittosporum and *Acacia longifolia* gradually being removed to allow in light. Careful attention has been applied to these areas as they are regenerating, particularly in the first couple of years until the seal of the bare ground is well on the way with indigenous flora. Removal of any weed species has been carried out quite regularly and I regard this as vital to success. The western boundary has a strong screen of pittosporum which takes full brunt of the frequent howling westerlies. The upper story here are the several very large *Pinus radiata* which marked an old boundary line. East of the property are healthy examples of stringybarks, some stipa/poa grassed areas and a healthy patch of *Gahnia sieberana*,

From the house to our northern boundary was a sea of very vigorous large pittosporum - most of these have now gone and a microlaena grassland/lawn drops down to a water area where *Gahnia sieberana*, microlaena, *Ate/ateuca ericifolia* and *Acacia melanoxylon* seem to be thriving below the overflow. A wide range of waterplants was established and three species of frogs have gravitated to shriek throughout the night after rain and when the temperature is satisfactory. The pool deliberately has no fish and the tadpoles are in their thousands with no mosquito larvae apparent. Occasional visits are made by white faced heron and little pied cormorant to feed on the tadpoles and check out the food potential. Microlaena and danthonia are strongly colonizing the areas of overburden from the pool excavation. We also transplant these species as they germinate in unwanted areas each year.

Since the removal of some pittosporum an area of Burgan (*Kunzea ericoides*) has established itself and will be restricted in its spread. Many *Exocarpos cupressiformis* have begun to appear - these showed no sign of regenerating for the first ten years or so. Many nesting boxes have been placed in trees and possums of course moved into some, eastern rosellas, galahs and gang gangs have bred and we have sugar gliders feeding in a very large *Eucalyptus obliqua*. A perfect sighting of a powerful owl was had in 1995 where we gawked at each other for over half an hour at 2am. This remained in the area feeding on possums whose chilling screams shattered still nights as the ringtails were dismembered. A tawny frogmouth is in residence and can be seen in the fork of a dead tree sunning.

The incentive for including a pool was the appearance of wood duck with their chicks on our swimming pool. They had been visiting for several years with the occasional visit of a pair of black duck, Encouraged by Paul Thompson and his enthusiasm for water in the garden we literally took the plunge and the focus of the garden has changed and been remarkable. Someone commented that it's like sitting around a fireplace in the garden. The life that it has attracted is a constant source of great enjoyment. The mayflies and dragonflies are hatching at the moment (Nov.). Both species of duck are constantly weaving in amongst the trees and landing on the water, wattle birds dive for insects, the butcher bird is never far away and the odd tadpoles provide food for their fledglings. A magpie family breeds in a large eucalypt and they parade around whilst a pair of magpie-larks probe the banks of the pool. Last year we produced 32 ducklings and it's on again this year with 21 appearing so far. No birds are fed and as a result there is no expectation and trust has been built up.

Butterflies and moths play an important part in the life of this regeneration project. Certainly the grasslands are developing to provide a food source for some caterpillars. Many other food plants are also present for larvae, and

## 5

garden beds with daisies seem to provide nectar for many adults. The large flowers of *Leptospermum scoparium* and the massed flowers of *Kunzea ericoides* are constantly frequented by skippers and wanderers.

Blue-tongued lizards breed and shelter amongst rockwork, woodpiles and grass thickets. Warmer evenings have bats collecting insects from over the pools. On two occasions we have collected specimens and they are Goulds Wattle Bat and Lesser Long-eared Bat.

Returning to the management. We inherited a large patch of angled onion weed which took 3 years to eradicate each and every bulb; this we achieved some years ago. Presently we are using the same technique to remove a most invasive bulb - Montbretia - I estimate this too will take 3 years.

Another technique we used to prevent an invasion of weed from a neighbour through a wire fence was to transplant heavy outbreaks of microaena and danthonia where it was not needed (we had encouraged this for the purpose) and place the sliced off layers of 'good grass' along our boundary - this came away so strongly that only an occasional weeding is needed,

Another method I tried on a steep slope was to cover the area with flat slabs of stringybark bark and then control the grasses - underfelt also works well. All this does is cut down the immediate bare earth which would not easily have held mulch. The bark will slowly break down but the cover will be established. I am about to continue this method over an area of winter grass that is on a boundary fence, but will cover the area with newspaper first so that this persistent and invasive grass will not re-establish. Sweet vernal and shell grass have been pulled each November when they 'show' themselves. Both of these opportunistic grasses seem to peter out once strong opposition is encountered. Flat weed broke out when the water area was created. Intensive weeding removed this problem and the occasional plant is dug when noticed. Evergreen alkanet tends to invade grassed areas and is constantly removed along with common centaury and petty spurge.

An area where we wanted to establish ferns and rainforest plants was covered with a deep layer of buzzer chips - this certainly stopped all weed and has supplied a great mulch depth and rich soli as it has broken down over the years.

The ferns were not looking vigorous at one stage so we removed some key pittosporums and let in light and the ferns responded magnificently. All material that is cut down or pulled is either mulched or composted except for the real nasties which are sent to the tip.

There is always plenty to do but the response of species indicates we are on the right track.

As a general comment on places where there is total weed invasion it is essential to cut seed heads before they ripen. In fact I am of the opinion that spraying, heavily mulching over newspaper to prevent invasion of areas of remnant bush and then re-establishment of local species would be worth considering.

We welcome people interested in reclaiming bushland to see our attempts.

.....

*In a recent (August 1996) draft report on 'Sites of Biological Significance in MaroonDAH', by Dr. Graeme Lorimer, Trevor & Beryl's property is included as 'an excellent example of how appropriate land management can maintain a very high level of nature conservation'. The brief description mentions that the area contains at least 55 indigenous plant species, and that birds and other wildlife benefit from being able to move between this site and Wombolano Park. DS*

.....

### "Natural gardens?"

Cherree Densley Vic

The romantic ideal of reproducing a "natural landscape" within our own contrived gardens and landscapes is almost impossible. I see the designing, planting and nurturing of an Australian garden as an exercise in the reproducing of only the desirable qualities of a natural landscape. Australian landscapes, whether they are coastal heathlands, dense warm rainforests or alpine bogs, appeal through their diversity, their beauty, their vivid contrasts, their biodiversity and of course, to GDSG members, their plants.

But some elements of the bush are not desirable and not suitable to be reproduced in our gardens. For example, much of my wonderful and much loved bush block of 187 acres on Mt Clay, north of Portland, consists of very prickly vegetation - especially the shrubs (*Bursaria spinosa*, *Coprosma quadrifidus*, *Leptospermum continental*, *Acacia verticillata*, *Epacris impressa*, *Platylobium triangulare*, *Melaleuca decussata*, *Hakea rostrata*) and *Ghania sieberiana* and other sedges and grasses which have very sharp edges. Many areas are almost impenetrable - if one fell over whilst pushing through the metres deep thickets of those prickly shrubs and wire grass, one could almost vanish without a trace! It is very easy to become disorientated and even lost as there is a sameness to the vegetation because there are no outstanding landmarks. (Many of our natural areas throughout Australia are like this.) A sense of danger can be more prominent at times than a sense of discovery or anticipation (will that sudden confrontation with the dominant male Eastern Grey Kangaroo prove to be aggressive; how quickly will the leeches find me if I stand still for more than 10 seconds during the cooler and wetter months; will I inadvertently step on a snake whilst pushing through areas where I can't see where to place my feet, or will I stand on a bull ants' mound whilst I photograph some delightful orchid?

So these are some of the qualities that I do **not** want to reproduce in my garden. These qualities ARE the bush - they have evolved to ensure their continuance and survival and they are integral with the Australian natural landscape. In my garden, I don't want a predominance of prickly shrubs (however beautiful or essential for ring-tailed possum and small birds' nests). I want well defined pathways that allow me to see where I am going, to see the plants in

## 6

my garden and for ease of garden maintenance. I want more variation in the plants in my garden and I want some special features which highlight certain areas. I won't mind the odd koala\*, skink, blue-tongued lizard, birds, antechinus or possum, but please no bull ants or snakes. (\*See *Cherree's separate note*.)

Well, what is it about the bush that I wish to reproduce in my garden? After some thought I have narrowed this down to five **main elements** I would try to incorporate (I have deliberately left out the wildlife bit - we want birds of course!):-

- 1 a sense of discovery;
- 2 a sense of quietness and peace;
- 3 some of the wonderful and unique sounds;
- 4 the contrasts and changing nature of natural landscapes;
- 5 and the use I can make of the landscape as a learning exercise.

### 1 Sense of discovery

Whenever I visit my bush block or go for a bushwalk it is with that wonderful sense of anticipation. What will I see this time - what is flowering, what birds will I see, will I find where the powerful owls roost, have the mistletoes finished flowering, is the Kangaroo Grass higher this year, can I find that white form of tetraetheca I saw last year, have the kangaroos trimmed all the flowers of the indigofera, will that patch of Potato Orchids appear again? This sense of discovery should be the same when I walk around the garden and I need to keep this in mind when I design new areas - bend that pathway or place some rocks or build up a mound so that all the new area cannot be seen at once; have plants which flower at different times; plant a creeper with a shrub in the same planting hole so that it grows quietly up through the bush to surprise me with its flowers amongst its host plant - you get the idea.

### 2 Quietness and peace

The bush can act as a cushion from outside noises whilst it has a certain sound of its own into which one can tune, but at certain times of day it is almost totally quiet. The quietest is when there is a heavy fog, just after dark, or a very fine misty rain. The birds are quiet, footsteps are muffled and outside noises - dogs, machinery, cars - cannot intrude. What peace. What a wonderful sense of oneness with the bush. This quietness does not evoke a feeling of loneliness and there is no need of another human being. It is unique. How can we incorporate this into a landscape? Obviously we don't want to sit outside in a heavy fog, in darkness or in a light misty rain. The easiest way is putting in seats in an out of the way spot where we cannot see, or be seen by, others and where one can quietly sit. Choose a spot amongst a fairly densely planted area or beneath a shady tree whose branches have been allowed to descend to the ground. If you don't have either, then plan for this - it may take a few years, but that's planning! The seats do not have to be elaborate - even a stump or sleeper across two limestone slabs would do. Just somewhere to sit quietly to read, write or think.

### 3 Wonderful & unique sounds

What is it about the sounds of the bush which attracts us? I personally find the sound of the wind in various types of foliage fantastic. Many would find that the wind through allocasuarinas produces one of the most wonderful sounds. In my bush, the sound of wind moving through exocarpus is both soothing and stimulating. At other times, for instance when the different eucalypts and acacias are flowering, the air can be alive with the loud droning and buzzing of feeding insects and the raucous fighting of birds to gain their share of nectar and insects attracted to the flowers. Alien sounds of scratching and bark being torn can be traced to treecreepers or other birds such as crested shrike tits or to climbing koalas or loose bark blowing in the wind. After heavy rain, the loud dripping noises onto the ground sound lovely - unless they land straight down your neck!! Running or falling water make a sensational sound - even the tiniest flow can make music.

So, once again, how can sound be designed into a garden? Of course one could do elaborate waterfalls, but just planting a small grove of allocasuarina would help. Movement in the garden caused by the wind is another aspect which can be planned for - one of the best landscaping qualities of grasses is their movement as the wind passes over them. They need to be planted in clumps or in patterns to get the best effect. The movement may be without sound - for example skydancers silently fluttering to find their food amongst the flowering grasses, brunonia, daisies or bursaria.

### 4 Contrasts and the changing nature of the seasons

Supposedly Australia doesn't have such dramatic changes to the seasons as in the Northern Hemisphere - but I wonder. At Mt Clay, when particular species are flowering, the predominant colour can be white (*Hakea rostrata*), red (tall *Epacris impressa*), yellow (various acacias), pink (large patches of *Styliidium graminifolium* in one part of my block have shoulder high flowers and they shade the whole area with a pink haze) and there are plenty of other colour combinations depending on the time of the year. Then along the gullies in winter the ground is covered by maidenhair fern in filmy green veils and the tower trunks of bushes are covered with sphagnum moss and one feels like one is trying to see underwater where everything is misty and green. The reproduction of this element of the bush in our garden where seasonal changes are marked with colour changes is a particularly challenging one. Could it be done on such a dramatic scale?

### 5 The natural landscape as a learning experience

The bush can teach us much about where and what to plant. Hopefully we should also be able to see what we *shouldn't do* such as planting ferns on mounds, placing ponds on the high side of the garden, or planting some of those prickly bushes right beside pathways, or leaving sharp sticks, logs and rocks where we can trip over them. What should we learn? Among other things, we need to make some mysteries in the landscape; we should make pathways of a practical width; and we should landscape a garden so one can be **inside** the garden, not be an outsider looking in.

.....

## 7

### Strategies for protecting and creating habitat areas and their wildlife

Danie Ondinea NSW

The following extracts are from a longer paper by Danie directed at restoring, protecting and creating habitat areas in bushland and local parks as well as gardens.

#### Strategies to protect and restore existing habitat areas and their wildlife include:

- Consider the habitat potential of weeds, unwanted trees and shrubs and garbage before removal. Limit clearing, heavy pruning, "clean ups" and weed removal in bushland areas or parks and gardens to no more than one third (up to an area of 20m x 20m) of the total area at any one time. Small birds, Common Blue-tongues and other reptiles, possums and bandicoots are sheltered by weed species such as Lantana, Privet and exotic vines, as well as concrete blocks, sheet metal, car bodies and old pipes and timber. Replace (preferably before removal) with more natural (and aesthetically pleasing) habitat components such as rocks, logs, leaf litter and native plantings.
- Use a mosaic pattern of weeding or clearing on degraded sites or sites to be landscaped. Retain mature trees and, where appropriate, remove vines from all indigenous trees and weed round their bases. Choose upslope sites to begin initial weeding, each site to be no larger than 20m x 20m (to reduce predation on moving wildlife).
- Protect mature trees using best practice arboriculture techniques. Trees provide important food, shelter and nest sites for a wide range of native animals. However, if the tree is non-indigenous and a weed of bushland or unwanted, there are two possibilities:- If there are many mature indigenous trees around, remove the unwanted tree as soon as possible or poison in situ. If there are no mature indigenous trees around, plant indigenous trees nearby, wait until they produce flowers and fruit and are a mature size, and then remove or poison the unwanted tree.
- Encourage retention of valuable fauna habitat on private property (including mature trees around blocks of flats) and within the grounds of local commercial and industrial properties. Mature trees (including exotics and non-indigenous species known to be used by wildlife) need protection of their canopy, root system, soil levels and access to moisture. This includes when land use is changed or when land is developed on neighbouring properties. Dense native understorey, exposed rock, natural waterways and waterlogged areas also need to be maintained wherever possible.
- Reduce the impact of Pied Currawongs and other predators on smaller birds by planting dense and spiky shrubs to provide safer nesting sites for small birds, not encouraging large birds into gardens by feeding them and reducing the number of introduced berry-producing plants as these help to maintain high Currawong populations.

#### Strategies to create more habitat areas:

- Ensure that a diversity of habitats are retained and integrated into all reconstruction or regeneration programs (e.g. open unmown grass areas near dense shrubs and trees; areas retaining fallen timber, dead trees and shrubs; exposed rocky outcrops; open areas with exposed rock, sand and timber along watercourses to provide basking sites).
- Enhance the value of existing areas of planted vegetation by:
  - increasing the density of existing shrub planting and increasing the areas of such plantings to allow safe movement and shelter of small animals. The best shrubs are those that are dense and/or spiky and that offer a range of resources such as seed, nectar, insects, nesting material and nest sites throughout the year.
  - planting around existing mature trees to create a shrubby understorey or a group of the same or similar species of trees indigenous to that area. These plantings will be more attractive to the fauna which use them than individual trees. Also small migratory birds such as Yellow-faced Honeyeaters and Silvereyes will head for groups of trees which provide rest sites or from which they can locate safe feeding areas.
  - planting midslope areas within grassy parks and other open space adjacent to bushland with a corridor of shrubs and trees. This provides safer movement for small animals and reduces mowing on difficult slopes.
- Use locally collected indigenous plant material wherever possible in plantings.
- Use hollow logs, excavated rock and leaf litter to enhance habitat areas. Return hollows discovered in pruned branches to provide shelter for ground dwellers such as lizards, insects, etc. When branches are being removed from mature trees, leave dead stumps, approximately 30cm from the trunk. These stumps allow the formation of hollows which will eventually provide nest sites or shelters for possums, parrots, owls, etc.
- Place nesting boxes for existing and potential fauna in appropriate mature trees.

---

### A garden or a piece of bush?

Ann & Geoff Long NSW

#### THE GARDEN

Bolwarra is a steep one acre block of land with a 12 year old house. It is situated on the Illawarra escarpment at about 220 metres above sea level. The block is bordered by a road, a stone wall and an intermittently running creek. It is heavily wooded with emergent *Eucalyptus fastigata* and *E. quadrangulata*; subtropical rainforest canopy of *Doryphora sassafras*, *Toona ciliata*, *Cryptocarya glaucescens* and *Livistona australis*; secondary canopy of *Pennantia cunninghamii*, *Acmena smithii*, *Omolanthus populifolius*, *Melicope micrococca*, *Achronychia oblongifolia*, *Alectryon subcinereus*, *Synoum glandulosum*, *Wilkea huegeliana*, *Eleocarpus kirtonii*, *Cassine australis*, *Ficus coronata*, and an understorey of *Notelaea venosa*, *Rapanea howittiana*, *Eupomatia laurina* as well as climbers and tree ferns - *Dicksonia antarctica*, *Cyathea leichhardtii* and *C. australis*. The botanical audit of the block lists 134 species including 27 fern species. The geology is complex - permian volcanic sandstone producing a clay soil.

## 8

Wildlife includes about 35 species of birds so far identified including resident lyre bird, as well as wombat, echidna, wallaby, glider, glow worms and antechinus, with unfortunately wild goat and fox in the neighbourhood.

### AIMS

- To enhance the natural flora of the block.
- To manage the acre with minimum interference and effort in order to provide an aesthetic experience of the forest via: a walking path to minimise damage; "thinking places"; and some "reordering" of forest debris.

### HISTORY

Apparently the block was logged for Red Cedar approximately 100 years ago. The extent of logging or clearing is unknown. Severe fires swept through the district in the late 1960s but it seems that this area was not burnt. In the 1970s, timber was removed from the block to provide building material for the then owners' house about 500 metres to the north. The one acre was sold and a house erected about 12 years ago. It is understood that the house occupies the site of the area cleared for building materials. The Longs purchased the block in August 1994.

When we arrived there were patches of lantana which covered about 20% of the block. All lantana has been removed, the stone wall has been repaired, a path through the forest has been built of stone and mulch, two glow worm viewing platforms or thinking spots have been constructed, some forest debris has been mulched and spread on the forest floor, eucalypts have had attention from a tree surgeon, a garden gate has been added and the old drive blocked off. Some re-planting has occurred - *Acmena smithii*, *Pittosporum undulatum*, *Syzygium australe*, *Dicksonia antarctica*, *Omolanthus populifolius*, *Baloghia inophylla*, *Eupomatia laurina*, *Ceratopetalum apetalum* and *Alphitonia excelsa*. Two species have been planted which have not been found on the block, *Melia azederach* and *Polyscias elegans*. Both are in the area. In general the introductions have not done well except the ferns and the polyscias.

### SOME QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is this a garden or a piece of bush? Is there a difference?
2. What is the difference between management and maintenance? Should we "gather and mulch"? Should we have a path? Should we extend the pathways?
3. What plants should be used to encourage revegetation - if any?
4. Should only "indigenous" plants be grown? How far away is "indigenous"? Should the polyscias and melias be removed?
5. Has too much "tidying" been done on this block?
8. Should watering be done at all?
7. Should the garden have a water element? How does one have a natural looking pool in a creek subject to fast flows and intermittent dryness?
8. Are the native birds, animals, insects (like all those spiders) important to the pleasure of a garden, and if so how are they encouraged?
9. (A general question) Does beauty and harmony in the spaces outside our houses demand the "integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community" (Aldo Leopold - Father of the Conservation Movement 1949)?

### READING

*The Natural Habitat Garden* by Ken Druse (see review page 13?), especially the preface.

*We 'll happily receive general comments on these questions from other members, unable to visit Ann & Geoff's place.*

---

### A school garden in the bush

Shirley Fisher W.A.

In NL14-1, Diana referred to a college garden she visited in the West. In 1972 this school was started on an almost pristine 30 hectares of coastal bush. In 1978 the grounds committee planned to restrict all plantings (apart from lawn) to Australian plants and all areas verging on the bush to be strictly local. This was for both aesthetic and practical reasons. The soil is ancient Tuart sand dune, with hot dry summers and the bore water (no scheme water here!) heavily laden with iron, conditions only native plants will forgive.

The school had plenty of the original trees for shade, The main challenge was to find tough shrubs that would survive the conditions (and the students) and which could be propagated cheaply. We grew acacia, calothamnus, kunzea, melaleuca, eucalypt and agonis from seed. The rest we bought in from an exceptional coastal nursery who grew trays of plants for us and these were potted on. They were mostly grevilleas (*G. curviloba*, *hookeriana*, *obtusifolia*, *bipinnatifida*, *crithmifolia*, *olivaceae*, 'Sandra Gordon', 'Frosty Pink' and *humifusa* (formerly grey-leaf *thelemanniana*), thryptomenes, westringias, sollyas and melaleucas.

### Some successful planting combinations were:

- On one side of the entrance driveway there are large sweeps of *Grevillea humifusa* building up to 6. *olivaceae* and the soft but upright *Kunzea ericifolia*. A few scattered *Adenanthos cuneatus* give colour with new red leaves. On the other side, *Thryptomene saxicola* then *Grevillea* 'Sandra Gordon', with tall clumps of Kangaroo Paws showing their massed heads in front of *G. hookeriana* and *G. 'Winpara Gem'*. The credit for this impressive entrance belongs to the chief groundsman.
- *Kennedia nigricans* and sollya planted on difficult retaining banks have taken any amount of abuse from



wayward children, look good and cover quickly.

- The *Eucalyptus caesia* planted against the brick walls looks dramatic with its white stems. Below, thryptomene and the grey form of *G. thelemanniana* (now *G. humifusa*) are the ground cover.
- *Grevillea curviloba* with its brilliant green and white flowering spikes planted as a ground cover near the green lawns and under *Banksia grandis* is unusually luxurious for West Australia and it keeps spreading with no woody untidiness. This grevillea has also been planted with clumps of *Adenanthos sericeus* (that rewarding soft Woollybush) and *Eucalyptus sargentii*,
- In some areas under the trees wood chips have been spread, as few shrubs would survive the competition and the trampling of feet, leaving the tree trunks and shadows to give pleasure.
- In a very degraded area on the west slope an arboretum of West Australian eucalypts has been planted which is proving useful for the biology classes and diminishing the school hall's huge walls.
- Mass plantings of Kangaroo Paws (*Anigozanthos tiavidus*) have worked well in difficult shady areas between class blocks. Here the Tuarts (*E. gomphocephala*) are pollarded every 3 years as they are apt to drop limbs. This can look attractive if well done.
- Large pots of dianellas and *Orthrosanthus laxus* on the south-facing Administration entrance are a success. (Why do architects design garden beds in the rain shadow of the eaves?)
- Two plants, *Acacia iteaphylla* and *Grevillea hookeriana*, have been invaluable for hiding large ugly areas such as workshops, and for enclosing spaces for outdoor classes.
- On paths through the bush, sawdust has been used to stabilise the sand. It packs down well after the first rains and is very cheap and suits the Bush. Sawdust was also used for the boarders' shady BBQ area where no lawn would grow.

The school's greatest asset is the bush area which has been preserved with paths or vehicle tracks winding attractively through and large playing ovals tucked in amongst the trees. As the school has decided that 500 is the enrolment limit, maybe this increasingly unique piece of natural bush will survive.

### ..... An unnatural garden?

Diana Snape Vic

Following Geoff Simmons' suggestion (page 14) and approaching the topic from a reverse angle, what could the term 'unnatural garden' mean? This must depend on our own perception of 'nature'. For people familiar with the 'outback' and the 'bush' I doubt any created garden can seem altogether natural. On the other hand if people don't venture out of the suburbs, their concept of nature is probably based on the gardens and parks they see around them, so these may seem 'natural'.

Three main categories of 'unnatural' gardens for me are:

- an extremely formal garden, where nature is obviously very strictly controlled with plants clipped into strange shapes and marshalled in unnatural arrangements;
- a garden in which plants look unco-ordinated, inappropriate and unhappy together, a jumble which have probably come from very different environments;
- a garden which predominantly uses created 'hard' landscape with very few plants, though such areas might feature sculpture or art. An extreme example would be some 'gardens' such as those designed by Topher Delaney of San Francisco - attractive (or at very least interesting!) outdoor areas without any plants at all.

In both of the first two categories, 'nature' in terms of the plants is still dominant. If any plants at all are present, I think we are likely to subconsciously try to extract an image of 'nature' - just one plant growing naturally can epitomise nature for us.

So these three aspects detract from a 'natural' look for me - extreme formality, sadly inappropriate planting, and excessive 'hard' landscape. However a 'natural garden' could possibly have a central formal 'backbone' or framework, complemented by a more naturalistic community of plants. Naturalistic planting can soften 'hard' landscape too and we more or less ignore the latter, as long as it's functional. In both these cases, in small suburban gardens, such compromises often help us achieve some structure in the garden. I think really inappropriate planting comes off worst of the three and it's probably by far the most common. It is fundamentally unnatural (and some of the plants predictably won't last too long either).

An unnatural garden is likely to exclude the indigenous plants which are the most appropriate ones for any particular area, and to include plants from very different soils and climates. Some gardeners like an extra challenge!

### ..... Too much wildlife?!

Cherree Densley Vic

If members really want to know about attracting wildlife to gardens, I'll give you my mother's name and address! The early euphoria of discovering koalas breeding in her garden a few years ago has rapidly evaporated. My mother's large country garden is now so overrun by koalas, possums, bush rats and swamp rats, not to mention lots of snakes, that forty years of plantings of natives are being decimated and she has to build wire cages in order to be able to have a few fresh herbs and vegetables in her cooking. Many of the large eucalypts are dead or dying because of leaf defoliation from more and more koalas. Thank goodness she doesn't have kangaroos or wallabies too.

---

# 10

## GARDEN DESIGNS

### Betty Maloney's garden - a quintessential 'bush garden'

Betty wrote in response to my request to use her 'Open Garden Scheme' plan in our Newsletter:

*"I would be quite happy for you to include our plan although it's a bit rough and ready - not meant for publication, it is already out of date. One still cold morning about three weeks ago one of the group of three big stringybarks broke in half and took the other two trees with it onto the house next door. No damage to the house and not much to the garden. Now we have a huge hole but this of course is an on-going feature of any garden - plant loss due to age, over watering, dry out, etc. and I think one of the challenges for any gardener. We will live with our "hole" for a few months and watch the reaction of the plants now without a canopy and also watch for seedlings to emerge. We will replant about April next year but in the meantime move the ferns back into more shade. It is never ending.*

*The banksias in pots section is coming on well and seems to have overcome the problem of oak and liquid amber roots from next door. And we are delighted with our fence covering of Podocarpus scinulosa. This fence has always created a problem; over the years we have covered it with clematis, sollya, pandorea, etc. but they have all become too vigorous and top heavy. Now our Plum Pine covers the fence in a gentle way and can be kept trimmed. The pale new growth is worth a million flowers. I could go for weeks about flowers and colour but I had better stop!"*

The following is Betty's description of the garden for the 'Open Garden Scheme':

When we bought our land in 1955, this sub-division was one of the first in French's Forest. We built our tiny house in a beautiful bushland setting making sure the builder did not disturb our natural garden. It was then we decided that this was the garden we would nurture. Over the past 40 years we have endeavoured to maintain it as a typical bush garden, and it has received classification by the National Trust to be included in its register.

It is a low maintenance garden and is forever changing. In autumn and winter the garden is resting and the leaf forms and varying shades of green create a calm before the coming of the warmer days and the flush of the magnificent bonus of spring flowers. Since our last opening two years ago there have been some changes. The circular path in the front is now complete and we have given up the uneven battle on the southern back border. A compromise has been reached and we are experimenting with a banksia garden in pots! We hope this solves the problem of invading roots.

The little native beehive under the macadamia has about 8,000 busy bees; they are quiet, do not sting but will bite if their hive is disturbed. Our worm factory near the ramp has about 20,000 worms chomping through our vegetable waste. We make liquid fertiliser from the compost and use it liberally in the garden.

We live in our garden all year round experiencing its various moods. It is always a joy to come home to and gives us great pleasure and a special feeling of peace and harmony.

---

### Designing a small rainforest garden

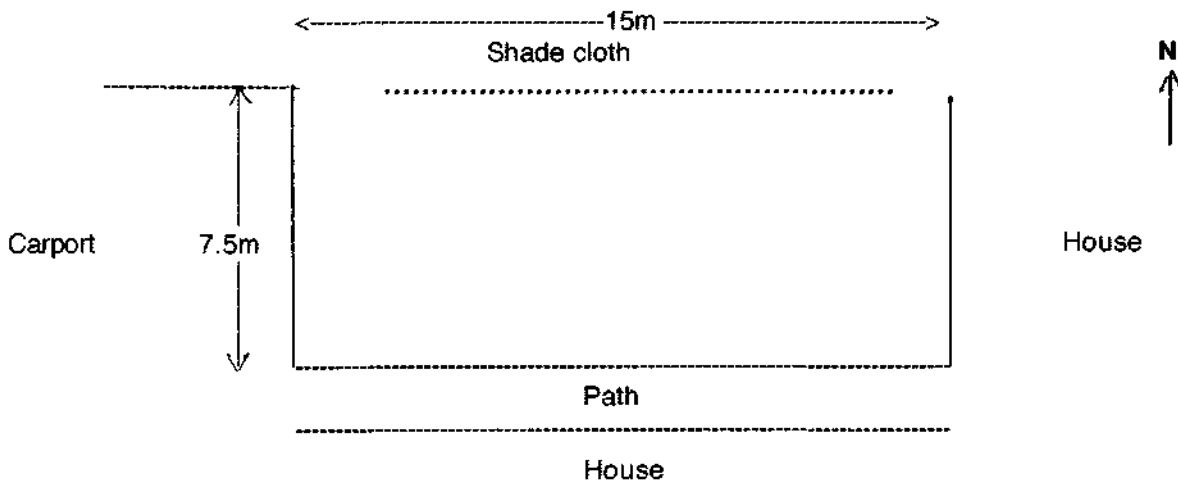
Barbara Buchanan Vic

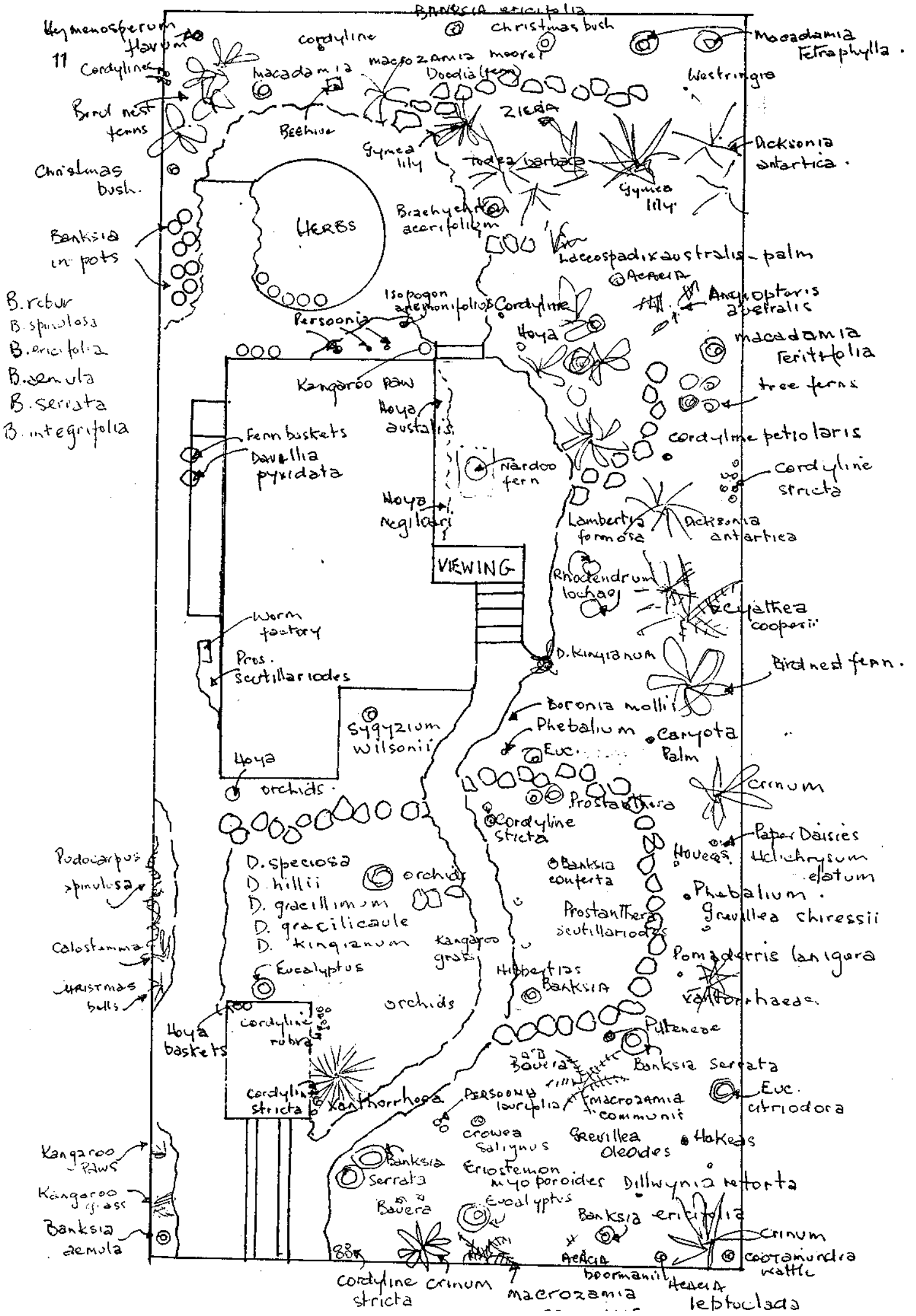
As a follow-up from the last NE Vic branch meeting, try to produce plans and perspectives for a small rainforest area. If you do not have another area in mind, use my entrance area which has shade cloth overhead and to part of the north, and shelter on the other sides from the house and carport, approximate dimensions 15m x 7.5m.

Do not worry about specifying plants (though you can if you like). Mostly we do not know enough about them yet anyway; just try to put on paper a suitable arrangement of space. This is meant to encourage people like myself, who shy away from any form of drawing, to use diagrams to express ideas for the 3-dimensional use of space. To do this we have to think clearly what we want to achieve. In a reversal of the normal process of planting, in designing we start from the shapes and then find the plants.

I have always felt the usual ground plan for planting is very inadequate to convey anything of the end effect and now realize the role of sections and perspectives. If you like, list the constraints likely to apply, the points to be considered before any final planning is done.

- **We'd welcome ideas and plans for this small rainforest garden from all members. DS**





**Australian Garden design: In search of an Australian garden style by Andrew Pfeiffer  
Shirley Fisher W.A.**

Published by Macmillan in 1985, this book is in the shops again. I am not surprised as it inspired my attempts to create an Australian garden. It was also familiar as my mother always quoted Russell Page when talking gardens and in this book Andrew Pfeiffer credits Russell Page's influence on him. This book describes and explains the basic principles of design and relates them to the specific Australian landscape and conditions. He is not a purist in the sense that only native plants must be used but he does stress that any exotic plants used should relate to the local plants in texture and requirements. The chapter on his favourite Australian plants is stimulating. The book is full of good design sense and one I recommend as a delightful read and a stimulating design guide.

.....  
Both of the following are extracted from reviews by **Ralph Neale** in *Landscape Australia* May 1996.

**The Natural Garden by Ken Druse** (Crown Publishers inc) New York 1989

Ken Druse was one of the speakers at the Landscape Australia Conference. "His aim is to show Americans how to have gardens without lawns, beds of annuals and clipped hedges; a garden that is beautiful the year around, and a close collaboration between the gardener and nature. He does not intend us to let the landscape do as it pleases, but the maintenance required is much less if good decisions are made. "Nature", he says, "is still the primary source of inspiration.... Observe how nature softens the edges of the forest; these transitional, staged, layered plantings belong in your garden."

In this, the first of his four books, the Natural Garden is defined as being:

- inspired by nature, especially the character of the region;
- organised into three distinct areas - each planted with easy-care plants, with a variety of permanent elements such as paved terraces and paths and sturdy outdoor furniture.

The three areas may flow into each other and there are no hard and fast rules, but each is planned in response to the character of the site. The three parts are:

1. Inner areas - formal, private and screened.
2. In-between areas - can be viewed from the core space, season-long colour, meadow planting or free-flowering garden beds.
3. Outer areas, the wildest part of the garden, woodland. The last place to grow a lawn. A path should be included in this last part."

Careful selection and placement of plants, which may be indigenous or introduced, is essential,

.....

**The Natural Habitat Garden by Ken Druse with Margaret Roach** (Crown Publishers Inc) New York 1994

According to Ken Druse, the natural habitat gardeners want to preserve the earth and also to replenish it. This book, it is claimed, is for the 21st century. It is a book that will help to create niches, however small, that considered together can provide habitats for indigenous plants and animals on a large scale. Ken Druse states in his preface "Each and every gardener whose work is included discovered that once indigenous plants were brought back to the site, native birds, animals and insects followed. It's no longer good enough to simply make it pretty, they have come to understand; it has to work too."

In travelling around the United States, Druse and his collaborator, Margaret Roach, found that a new movement was quickly sweeping across the nation, one garden at a time. It is a movement that is growing, not because of some central edict handed down from on high - it's happening because all those individuals sense, as does Druse, that habitat gardens are essential to our planet's future. He says "... growing a natural habitat garden is ... one of the most important things each of us can do to help restore a little order to a disordered world."

"Never have the words 'Don't fight the site' held such meaning. It is the habitat gardener's guiding principle."

The habitat-style garden of native plants welcomes the whole food chain, so that rotting tree stumps and puddles provide places for creatures to live ... they are reasons for celebrating, not things requiring obsessive tidying up. However, it's not jungle out there. Instead of just letting plants go, the habitat gardener has to selectively hand weed or mow each year at the appropriate time. There may be a need to use fire, which he deals with in detail. Some grazing may be beneficial .....

You need not throw out all your favourite plants, as long as they do not possess aggressive habits or impact on the environment. It is more a matter of reversing the emphasis, normally on introduced plants, to an emphasis on indigenous plants, to support the bio-diversity we need to survive. Emphasis on bio-diversity extends to paths - in paved areas water must be allowed to percolate downwards (no mortared joints), raised wooden decks rather than concrete for inner areas, boardwalks rather than paths and viewing areas above the ground in hard-to-traverse planting, or mown paths through the meadows rather than hard surfaces.

Outer areas should contain bird habitats. Dead trees should be allowed to stand for nesting sites, although safety has to be taken into consideration and the trunk may need to be trimmed. Leave portions of the trunk on the ground to decay in place and use twigs and leaves for brush piles.

There is an interesting section on "Native of Indigenous?" One rule advocated by some in the USA is a 50 mile radius, but others recommend more flexibility. There is another section on "Wildflower or Weed?" Introduced plants with aggressive habits are of concern and are condemned.

This book is full of information and extraordinarily beautiful photographs, mostly by the author, who is an award winning photographer and writer. Other books by Ken Druse are *The Natural Shade Garden* and *The Collector's Garden*.

### A short book list

Following a request from a member, **Leanne Harper** of Old, I put together this short list of books recommended by various Study Group members. I thought other members might like to see the list too. I haven't managed to read all of them myself yet, but each one gives ideas on design ranging from the more practical aspects to the more theoretical ('pure' design). They're roughly in order of age.

• = more 'pure' design, generally non-Australian

Designing Australian Bush Gardens & More about Bush Gardens by Betty Maloney & Jean Walker (Horwitz, 1967) (the archetypal early books on 'bush gardens')

Landscaping with Australian Plants by Glen Wilson (Thomas Nelson, 1975) (this book is still very good value after 20 years)

• A Pattern Language by Christopher Alexander etc. (O.U.P., 1977) (this one sounds very stimulating)

• Australian Garden Design: in search of an Australian style by Andrew Pfeiffer (Macmillan, 1985 (see page 12)

• In Sunshine and Shade - change in the garden by John Stowar (Kangaroo Press, 1992)

• Your Garden Design Book by John Brookes (very good though non-Australian & expensive)

• The Natural Garden by Ken Druse (Crown, 1989) (see page 12)

• Colour Garden by Malcolm Hillier (Hodder & Stoughton, 1996) (detailed on colour)

Two specifically on rainforest gardens:

Creating an Australian Rainforest Garden by Ralph Bailey & Julie Lake (Lothian, 1994) (more practical)

Australian Rainforest Plants for your Garden by Darren Mansfield (Simon Schuster, 199?) (particularly one chapter on designing with rainforest plants)

---

### Directions in using Australian Plants in the Designed Landscape by Jane Shepherd RMIT

Jane Shepherd spoke at both conferences. The above was the title of her talk at Karwarra, of which this is a brief report.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the 'Bush Garden' movement involved the creation of gardens mimetic or imitative of nature, "Naturalistic compositions, the use of field rocks, construction of informal ponds, grouping of plants into strong masses with very few voids characterised this 'natural' garden style", which went out of fashion in the 1980s. Jane chose two areas of the current designed urban landscape on which to focus - symbolic landscapes and habitat creation.

#### Symbolic landscapes

Even though it has a highly urban population, Australia defines itself by its landscape, the 'outback' and the 'bush'.

Jane selected as examples five public projects which have used Australian plants for symbolic urban 'place making'.

• the Grasstree Courtyard, Perth Airport, W.A. 1996. Here Mervyn Davis, the Landscape Architect, created a "modernist garden" with "an abstracted and highly designed sense of local landscape".

• Monash University Campus, Clayton, Victoria, 1967 onward. This is like a "living history text" with its continuing use of Australian plants. Recent projects by Paul Thompson "reflect contemporary concerns for above ground drainage with on site water retention and the practical and poetic use of water and water loving plants."

• Sculpture Garden, National Gallery of Australia, 1976. Here there are a "diversity of clearly different, small-scale settings" appropriate for a range of sculptural works. "One of the highlights of the garden occurs between midday and 2pm each day when the mist sculpture is activated and cloudy waves of fog billow out of the casuarina thicket and across the marsh pond ...".

• Royal Park, Parkville, Melbourne, Victoria, 1984 onwards. (See NL 15-21). In 1984, Lacework Landscape Collaborative's design (which was not completed) exploited the essential qualities of the site, aiming "to create a coherent, informal pattern of dominant eucalypts in a naturalistic woodland, crowned with the hill covered in native grasses."

• Bicentennial Park, Hornebush Bay, Sydney, NSW 1988. This park differs from the other public projects listed in its 'Post Modern' character. However it has links to the 'Australian' landscape design in the use of massed plantings of casuarinas and in wetland & watercourse treatments, with boardwalks in the mangrove swamps.

#### Habitat creation

Strong recent trends have been the interest in indigenous plants and their use in revegetation and reclamation schemes. One of the numerous projects now underway is the restoration of Merri Creek in Melbourne - potentially "the longest single trip of Australian plant garden in Melbourne's history". Designers as well as conservationists may extend the use of indigenous plants "beyond the familiar realms of habitat recreation".

#### Conclusion

Jane's conclusion struck a sympathetic chord:

**"Freed from the equation that use of Australian plants always equals imitations of the bush, designers can take the plant palette of national and local plants and find a multitude of design styles and potentially innovative new and hybrid responses."**

## DESIGN IDEAS

## Design ideas, for fun

Diana Snape Vic

We haven't had any of these for a while, so if you're not sure about a rainforest garden (or you've already done that one), how about a design for a small square courtyard, 5m x 5m? Choose your own orientation with respect to sun, buildings and fences/walls (please show these on the plan) and of course your own style. The plants should be suitable for your chosen conditions in your own area. Send us in your plan, simple or complex, practical, serious or as way out as you like. Come on, have a go! The plan doesn't have to be professionally drawn. If you really get into the swing of it, you can write a few notes to expand on your ideas.

## Plans for 'wetlands'

Cherree Densley Vic

I have finally decided what to do with the 'wetlands' in the new garden. I have at last been able to clear the thigh-high docks and weed (which I couldn't do when there was water in the bottom - well that's my excuse) and started in-stepping with logs and stumps the edges down to the lowest level. These steps will be planted with ground covers and low growing plants - the ones which need perfect drainage on the highest level and working down (four levels) to use ones which need a wet/dry environment. I just hope the logs I have used on the lowest level don't float away when it gets really wet! I won't use plastic at all - just try to create a swampy area which dries out seasonally. At some places I will mass plant things like melaleucas and ghanias to get some height and create reflections.

## Reversal in design

Geoff Simmons Qld

There are accepted procedures in garden design that are taken for granted. For instance most TV shows or magazine articles suggest terracing of one sort or another for gardens on slopes. 'Reversal' is taken as the use of a different view point.

For instance in NL14-3 we read about the acquisition of metal dust for paths. Indeed mineral material is probably the commonly used surface for pathways. Originally I used decomposed granite for some paths. The appearance when freshly spread was quite attractive but this gave way to a less impressive appearance when heavy rain washed away parts, and weeds seemed troublesome as they were not easy to remove. On the other hand, I used bark mulch on the garden beds. Following a bush fire I reversed the materials - beds are mulched with 5mm blue metal and my present choice for the paths is now fine bark (hoop and slash pine) over weed mat. The paths are pleasant to walk upon and fire hazard is minimised as the thick layer of bark on the garden is no longer there. The use of bark over weed mat means that weeding is easy and the appearance is possible more akin to the bush environment than gravel, granite, metal dust or coloured bitumen to name a few of the solid surfaces usually used for paths. To sum up, the reversal is bark on paths and gravel on beds.

Another reversal that I wrote about in the now defunct *Australian Garden Journal* was for landscaping a slope. Instead of the usual terracing, a disguise effect was suggested. In this method tall plants (in my case pandanus and *Pittosporum phylliraeoides*) are placed at the bottom and shorter plants and ground cover at the upper levels. This would produce an effect that disguises the slope, presenting a tree-like aspect when looked at from the bottom but a view from above of the tops of trees and the mass of colourful smaller plants.

These are just two examples of the usual garden features being reversed. What can be done along these lines will vary depending on whether a public or private garden is being designed, but is worth thinking about, especially for those gardeners who like to get a design down on paper before beginning a garden.

## Limits to design

John Hulme NSW

May I suggest that some of us find it difficult to stick to a theme or design plan. I know I visit a nursery to see if there might be that special plant available to have a go at. So I get it home and then find a place to put it. Well I guess there is a bit of a theme. The house is below the street on about 600 sq. m, so 'wet plants' are at front near the house and 'dry plants' are up front or out the back in terraces. The front boundary is only 10m from the house with 7m width (all garden, no front lawn). The shrubs are small leaf {*Grevillea* 'Winpara Gem', *Hakea sericea* and others similar). They were selected to be below the winter sun line to the lower window (sunroom).

The house is two storey cream cladding, facing north. The problem was to select a largish tree to screen it a bit, just west of the midday sun line. First thought was *Melia azedarach* (flower colour and deciduous). However the problem was the grubs. So I chose (dare I say it?) a jacaranda!!! The fine foliage matched the others, the colours set off the house and it was deciduous, although it deciduates at the end of winter. My dear old mum always says "It'll knock the house down"; it's about 6m away. I've left it in mallee form in the hope it won't be too strong. Is this true? Anyway the purple flowers look good just now, especially near the (here I go again) *Albizia julibrissin*. Beautiful pink sprays, especially as viewed from above (kitchen window). It lets winter sun into the lower sunroom and it's one of my wife's favourites (that's my excuse anyway). Under this is a *Banksia robur* pruned to the same shape as *A. julibrissin* (Y shape) and to decrease the density and impact of the big leaves. It's a 'wet' plant. I think it looks alright anyway. So I guess my point is that design is for the individual.

## 15

My other point is that we should be aware of what we are going to do with our garden - what drives us. Are we going to resist the urge to buy that special plant or stick with the design? Answer - the design should be flexible, we should be able to do what we like in our garden. My *Eucalyptus caesia* up front of all the above has flowered for four years. My *Banksia prionotes* is now flowering down the back for the second time (although it's only one). The rock orchids look great under the *B. robur* outside the sunroom window. My other point is that plants don't always grow the way the books say. Some even die! I guess we just keep on trying with some basic idea/theme in mind. After all that, I've planted the White Cedars up front, one each side boundary. We'll see how they go.

(If you'd like to know Bruce Mackenzie's method for dealing with those caterpillars, see page 44 in my book "Australian Native Gardens: putting visions into practice", or write to me. DS)

---

### Australian plants for themes

Geoff Simmons Qid

Stamp collecting, that once most popular of all hobbies (barring gardening of course), was rejuvenated by the introduction of thematic collecting. Philately provides unlimited scope for such an endeavour but does theme have a place in Australian garden design? The answer must be in the affirmative as witness the popularity of designing gardens in imitation of the bush or rainforest. While these are frequent themes, why not explore other possibilities? In my case, I have a tendency to use genera as themes e.g. brachychitons or crinums, or groups of plants such as ferns. These have a taxonomical basis but other themes can be explored while ignoring the actual species. One that comes readily to mind are prickly plants but, even within this category, holly-like plants could constitute a theme for a design of a garden. Any plant that has the name 'ilicifolia' would be a candidate, e.g. *Alchornea Hicifolia*, *Graptophyllum ilicifolium*.

Other themes with possibilities are fern leafed trees and shrubs. Colours form a theme but purity of colour may be a problem for, just as with thematic stamp collection, obtaining examples of the theme offers a challenge. While new discoveries can be added, an important aspect is the creativity in how they are displayed.

Rather than thinking of boxes or rooms in garden design, why not consider thematic design to add interest?

---

### \*\*\* GDSG GARDEN DESIGN SEMINAR. September 6 & 7. 1997 —

Last year it was mentioned that a GDSG Seminar might be organized in conjunction with a SGAP Victoria weekend. This is now going to happen, on **September 6 & 7**. Please mark it in your diary straight away and, if you hope to come, **contact Peter Garnham or myself as soon as possible** so we can anticipate numbers for planning purposes. (Our phone numbers and addresses are on the front of this Newsletter.)

The seminar will be **held in Melbourne**, based at **Burnley Horticultural College**. On Saturday and Sunday mornings there will be talks and design workshops led by experienced designers. On both afternoons there will be garden visits, not just to look but to think about aspects of garden design. There will be a speaker after dinner on Saturday evening. We need to know approximate numbers to work out the final cost. This will be between \$40 and \$45, including two lunches, dinner, hire of hall, and any cost involved for speakers or workshop leaders. **Further details and a registration form will be included in the May Newsletter, but please don't wait till then to indicate interest.**

We'll be relying on all Melbourne members to give a helping hand, as we are hosting SGAP Victoria. We hope that as many Victorian members as possible will make the effort to attend the weekend. It will be good fun socially as GDSG weekends and SGAP Vic weekends always are, and I expect it to be inspiring - I'm sure we'll all learn something. We'd really like to see members from other States too - check your 'Fly-buys' or other such schemes. **Let Peter or me know soon if you'd like a billet.**

---

### GDSG MEETINGS & NEWS

#### VICTORIAN NEWS

##### Melbourne meetings

Our first meeting for the year, on February 2, was largely a planning meeting and the following is the proposed program for the first half of this year (but check future Newsletters for any changes):  
The program for the second half of the year should be in the May Newsletter.

## 16

**Sunday March 2:** No GDSG meeting because of SGAP Victoria weekend in the Latrobe Valley, which members are encouraged to attend.

**Sunday April 6:** 1.45pm to 2pm at **Joan Barrett's** place, 11 Pleasant Ave, Kew. Main topic - "Where to start" or "starting from scratch again". We'll see how Joan's re-worked front garden is progressing. Please let Joan (on (03) 9817 2255) or Diana know if you are coming.

**Saturday May 3:** Special evening meeting at **8pm** at Diana Snape's place, speaker **Neil Marriott**. As anyone who has heard Neil speak knows, he has the ability to impart his own enthusiasm to his audience. It is important you ring me on (03) 9822 6992 if you plan to come so we can count the chairs!

**Sunday June 1:** Probably at Doug McIver's place. Main topics - using CDs on garden design; and Roger Stone's design for the international Garden Show at the Exhibition Building, April 9-12.

### Open Garden Schema - a request for help

Having been involved in the Open Garden Scheme last year I understand better what is involved. It's very enjoyable, but a lot of work, and you do need helpers on the day. It is one of the aims of the Study Group to have more gardens of Australian plants open, so I think it's a valuable activity for the SG to support in this and other States. I'm sure other SG members will be willing to help you if you take it on.

Brian and I rather rashly agreed for our garden to be open again in April, over a three-day weekend, Friday 18 to Sunday 20 April. For these three days we'll need two helpers continuously on the gate. Last year our helpers were each on duty for two and a half hour sessions. We don't want to rely too heavily on the members and other friends who helped Peter and Wilma Garnham and us last time, so would any Melbourne members who could assist on any one of these days please ring me on (03) 9822 6992. You don't have to be knowledgeable, just have a friendly smile. DS

### Report of NE Victoria branch meeting 17-11-96

Barbara Buchnan

**Next meeting: February 23** (note change from Feb. 16, to enable us to discuss the Feb NL) at **Glenda Datson's**, 762 Hodge St. Aibury, at 10,30 for 11 am start. Glenda's phone no. is (060) 40 1090. The following meeting is provisionally at Kennedy's, Strathmerton, May 25.

#### Meeting report

Diana suggests one of the main aims of the Group is assisting in the self education of members. We all have individual levels of experience in design and in the qualities of Australian plants and are at different stages in the making of our gardens of widely differing size and situation. So we have begun at the beginning. Glenda gave us a set of notes summarizing the first stages of garden making from the original brief to the production of a plan. Actual plants are left out at this stage of the process, so different from the usual business of starting with an odd assortment of plants we want to grow. The notes were originally meant for professional use and therefore cover every conceivable point. In applying them to our own circumstances we can be selective. Glenda confessed her garden had never been laid out on paper, nevertheless putting ideas down on paper helps to clarify the mind.

We then talked briefly about the special qualities of rainforest plants, their rich green leaves, usually larger than other Australian plants with colourful flushes of new growth. Jan had some examples which converted at least one member. Mention was also made of general growing needs.

#### 'Homework' - a small rainforest garden

Try to produce plans & perspectives for a small rainforest garden. See suggested area on page 10.

- We'd welcome **ideas and plans for this small rainforest area from other members too.** DS

### SYDNEY NEWS

The **next meeting** is coming very soon - please note the change of date.

It will be on **Saturday February 15** at **Ann & Geoff Long's** place in Foxground, which is south of Wollongong and before Berry, less than a 2-hour drive from Sydney. Their address is Lot 10 Foxground Road, Foxground, and the phone number is (018) 413 587. The meeting time is from 11 am to 3 pm. BYO picnic lunch (also raincoats and gumboots if wet weather); tea, coffee & cake will be provided.

Ann & Geoff have a natural rainforest garden where the cool temperate rainforest of the southern highlands meets the most southerly of the subtropical rainforest. See the article on page 7 which describes their garden and lists some of the questions they'd like help with.

Please ring **Jo Hambrett** on (02) 9651 1827 before Feb 10 for detailed directions and to let Jo know you're coming. (I hope this NL reaches you in time.)



## Reliable plants for Sydney

**Caroline Gunter** has kindly volunteered to co-ordinate the collection of data for a list of Australian plants which have proved reliable for Sydney's climate and soil types. It would be great if all Sydney members could contribute to this list from their experience to make it a really worthwhile exercise. Caroline's address is 4 Winsome Ave, Nth Balgowlah 2093.

---

### S.A. branch

S.A. branch members please ring **Margaret Lee**  
about the next meeting.

or **Margie Barnett**

---

### Slide and print library

We're still looking for photos illustrating the following:

- 'before & after' photographs, or just 'before' photos, e.g. showing topography, borrowed landscape;
- shaping of the land - changes in level (mounds, terraces, slopes, embankments);
- 'hard landscape' (steps & retaining walls);
- also trees in the garden.

Photos of any other aspects of garden design are always welcome too. We'll copy and return slides if requested.

Alternatively, take two photos of any interesting/ beautiful/ instructive garden scenes when you see them.

Black and white prints would be excellent to illustrate the Newsletter.

Please send photos to our Slide Librarian, Doug Mcfver,

Phone Doug

if you have any questions or would like a GDSG form to note helpful details of the garden (we need to know whose it is), or what your photograph shows. Thank you to members who have already contributed to our library.

---

### Members' News

*Congratulations to John Bramtey for achieving his Advanced Certificate in Landscape Construction and Design and, in particular, the Australian Institute of Horticulture Award. This award for academic excellence is made available by the Institute (AIH) for an outstanding graduate with the School of Horticulture and Rural Studies. Well done, John!*

#### New members

*A warm welcome to the following new members.*

Janet Fisher  
Barrie Gallacher  
Peter Gould-Hurst  
Mary Graham  
Kay Harries  
John Hoie  
Deirdre Morton  
Iris Mullins  
Rudie & Debbie Youssef

#### Membership renewals

Ted Belcher, Betty & Bob Drummond, Sue Keon-Cohen, Ian Percy, Anne Pye, Gil Teague, Paul Thompson  
Wildflower Society of W.A., SGAP Foothills Group, SGAP Maroondah Group

---

I hope to meet more members during this year, with our Seminar weekend in Melbourne, September 6 & 7 (see page 15) and the ASGAP Conference in Adelaide in late September/early October. I'll also be speaking to several SGAP groups in NSW and Victoria.

In regard to meetings or other activities organized by branch leaders or other members, please let the organizer know whether you are able to support them or not. It's discouraging when time and energy have been expended and then the response on the day is poor. Please keep in touch with your branch leader.

A suggested theme for the next Newsletter is "Where to start?" I imagine most of us have asked that question at some stage and come up with our own answers. Tell us your ideas. We'll also hear from John Knight about the Eurobodalla Botanic Gardens where the indigenous plants are (Councillors willing) to be showcased in what will be an inspiring display. Thank you to all members who contribute to the Newsletter, which is our most important means of communication, if you have any questions, suggestions, big or little design ideas, please don't hesitate to write - just a line or two is welcome, or a paragraph or a page. Have you re-designed any garden beds lately? What inspiration have you gained from your own or other peoples' gardens, or from reading? We really need those snippets of news to add a bit of life and reflect the diversity of our membership and their talents. (Do we have any illustrators or cartoonists out there?)

Best wishes



Diana Snape