

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

NEWSLETTER No. 17

May 1997

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

Dear Members,

Accompanying this Newsletter are TWO important forms:-

JL The registration form for the GDSG Seminar weekend of September 6 & 7. when we are hosting SGAP Victoria. Our plans for this weekend are progressing well.

Please register now (or as soon as possible) if you can come, as we need to know numbers.

There will be a cut-off date for registration and after the August Newsletter will be too late.

2L Your renewal form for 97/98 membership. Please don't procrastinate - do it now and make life easier for us. You could send them together and save a stamp!

In their February magazine this year, 'Landscape Australia' included as an article our GDSG 'Classification Types for Gardens of Australian Plants'. This is the classification scheme revised and reproduced in NL9-13, based on the original one in NL 2-2 which was developed by Aliko Zouliou, Paul Thompson and Diana Snape. 'Landscape Australia' is the official journal of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, so this article acknowledges and raises awareness of the work of the Study Group - quite a compliment. I think it's helpful for all of us when visiting and recording gardens to keep this classification scheme in the back of the mind (if not the front!).

Our 'Open Garden' weekend in April was again successful in drawing a steady stream of visitors, 660 in all over three days. (The extra day, which was a Friday, was a mistake - relatively few people came so it was less rewarding for our helpers and more tiring for us.) We were lucky with the weather, though the recent hot dry summer made preparation difficult. My best wishes go to all members suffering from water shortages, especially those in the country where the effects of the drought have not been tempered by town water supplies.

I am now on the Selection Panel for the Open Garden Scheme in Victoria, with the specific goal of introducing more Australian gardens to the Scheme, which is now actively looking for them. It's UP to us. If anyone in Victoria knows of an Australian garden that they would recommend, please let me know. In other states, contact the Regional Co-ordinator directly. (Their names and phone numbers are in the Guidebook, or ring me if you don't have access to a Guidebook.) This is one way we can make contact with many people who have no links with SGAP but do have an interest in gardens and can possibly be influenced by seeing Australian plants used well in gardens.

It's great to see more plans in this NL, which I think presents many stimulating articles, ranging from the 'invention' of a new Australian garden style by Geoff Simmons to some of George Seddon's highly perceptive comments from the last *Landscape Australia* Conference. Don't forget to send us ypjir_ideas, suggestions, information, etc.

MEMBERSHIP & TREASURER'S REPORT

v

Peter Garnham Vic

Financial statement - quarter ending 31/3/97

<u>Receipts</u>		<u>Expenditure</u>	
Members subscriptions	130.00	Postage	219.50
Donations	20.00	Photocopying	<u>251.75</u>
Past Newsletters	<u>85.00</u>		<u>\$471.25</u>
	<u>\$235.00</u>		

Current Funds (31/3/97)

Bank deposits	1704.32
Cash/cheques in hand	<u>81.30</u>
Total	<u>\$1785.62</u>

Membership-

210 subscriptions recorded for the current financial year, which ends 30/6/97

Please note the membership renewal details on the enclosed sheet.

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CORRESPONDENCE extracts

"The Newsletter arrived today and what a treasure trove - the mind's eye was challenged from start to finish. Of particular interest to me were the regeneration efforts of the Blakes and Longs, also Cherree Densley's 'five main elements'. Last year was very dry - rainfall down 250mm on yearly average - so growth was rather slow. However as I write it is the second day of consistent gentle rain - fingers crossed. The dam is slowly filling after reaching an unusable lowlevel." Shirley Bloomfield NSW

"I couldn't resist putting pen to paper after reading the last Newsletter. Are we so bereft of ideas that we now have to seek and be influenced by concepts produced in non-Australian environments? How can an Australian Design philosophy be nurtured if the Newsletter feeds overseas views?... I would hope that members would concentrate on designing within their Australian experience rather than wasting time deciding how to incorporate overseas ideas.... New concepts to express a purely Australian outlook should be the main aim of the Newsletter.... The influence of overseas thought is an interesting topic and no doubt could be debated at length." Geoff Simmons Old

(See Geoff's articles on pages 7, 8 & 14.) I think NL16 suggested that many ideas associated with the concept of "natural gardens", such as low water use, the influence of the natural environment and sustainability, originated quite early here in Australia. They're more than just 'trendy', being relevant now and in the future to garden design in Australia as elsewhere. The term the GDSG uses for a garden influenced by study of nature is 'naturalistic', as we reserve the term 'natural garden' for one actually created by nature alone (see NL2-2 and NL9-13). DS

"Sorry I have not contributed any articles lately to the Study Group. My only excuse is that I have now become 'Newsletter Editor' for the North Shore Group of SGAP (enclosed is a copy) and it has taken me a while to get organised and on top of it. It has a print run of 200 per month. I have enclosed a copy of an article from the Sydney Morning Herald that you may find of interest as it talks a little bit about the design of Mt Annan." Jeff Howes NSW

A monthly Newsletter must keep you very busy, Jeff - I enjoyed the one you sent me. Extracts from the SMH article on Mt Annan will probably be included in the next Newsletter. DS

"My husband and I are landscape gardeners in Mount Gambler, South Australia, and have a keen interest in the use of native plants in our garden designs. I am very interested, therefore, in joining the Garden Design Study Group, in an endeavour to gain ideas and knowledge about the use of native plants in a range of garden situations." Taresa Yates SA

"I've been a member of SGAP for some time now but could only be a 'passive' member as I have been going to night school to get some qualifications, in horticulture, from TAFE. Now that I have finished, I'm looking for some involvement. I'm a head gardener for the Adelaide City Council (one of 14) at the Adelaide Aquatic Centre. I don't do many designs, but I find that sort of thing interesting." **Brenton Isted SA**

QUESTIONS

Low shrubs with white flowers for around a birdbath

Annette Houseman NSW

"John and I have a two-year old garden planted on what used to be cow paddocks. We have a few acres inland from Port Macquarie. I am asking for advice after making a mistake. We put a birdbath on top of centre of septic tank. That's OK. Then we planted Nerium (Dwarf Oleander) in a circle around it, with daisies. They look nice and flower continuously but (1) the birds don't eat oleander and (2) the oleander are exotics.

What do you suggest we plant in their place? *Grevillea* 'Superb' grows well not for from the circle and flowers almost continuously. I'd like a white-flowering native shrub as the garden at that end of the house is, or will be, predominantly white."

Depending on availability & how well they grow in the area, I've suggested *Austromyrtus dulcis* (Midgen Berry), white *Correa pulchella*, dwarf *Baeckea virgata* or low forms of Lilly Pillysuch as 'Blaze'. None of these flowers

continuously but all look nice all year. They could be combined with daisies such as *brachyscomes* e.g. *B. seamentosa* or white *B. multifida* which are long-flowering. *Scaevola albida* and local *pimeleas* (which attract butterflies) are also worth considering. What other plants do readers suggest? DS



Keeping sandflies and biting midges at bay

Lyn Reilly Qld

"As our house plans are starting to gel for our rainforest-to-beach acre at Hervey Bay, may I ask a question of my fellow members? Has anyone any experience of planting or paving round a house with the express purpose of keeping sandflies and biting midges at bay? Along with designing vistas, shade, wind shelter and breezeways in our new garden, we want to be able to enjoy it without layers of long clothing and repellent all the time."

Other Queensland members, or people living near the coast, might be able to help Lyn with some ideas.

Eurobodalla Native Botanic Gardens

John Knight NSW

The E.N.B.G. project was initiated by members of the local community to showcase the variety of the local indigenous flora. The Eurobodalla Council agreed in 1988 to underwrite the project. The stated aim of the Gardens was to ensure the conservation and preservation of the local flora, and to present the flora in horticultural, ecological and taxonomic displays for the enjoyment and education of visitors.

In the 1994 bushfires, the Gardens were destroyed and since then has faced many crises as Council decides whether or not the E.N.B.G. has a future and, if it does, then what this future might be.

The Management Committee contacted the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Landscape Architecture, to develop a concept design which would meet the stated aims of the Gardens, and also appeal to a broad cross section of the community. We were fortunate to have the very talented designer, Jane Shepherd of RMIT, and also Paul Thompson, well known to GDSG members and widely respected for his imaginative use of Australian plants in his work, to oversee the work of over 20 students and then pull their many ideas into a cohesive design, which made excellent use of a degraded, challenging site, incorporating intensive horticultural developments with nature trails through the regenerating forest.

In recent times, unwarranted attacks on the project by two local people, including an elected Councillor, have caused Council to review its commitment to the development, and a Consultant report is now overdue. This report is expected to challenge the validity of using only local plants, sourced entirely from local forests, and scientifically documented in an Herbarium collection which currently numbers over 4500 specimens.

The Committee and volunteers involved in the project remained steeled to the ideal of using local plants and indeed see this aspect as the greatest selling point in ensuring the success of the project. Indeed, all major Australian Botanic Gardens have supported this concept, which is now a world wide objective for regional gardens. Development plans

The Gardens site comprises 42 ha. (about 100 acres), adjacent to Deep Creek Dam, 5 km south of Batemans Bay on the NSW south coast. About one third of the site was denuded during construction of the dam, with soil won from the site to build the retaining wall leaving four open, flat areas devoid of vegetation other than exotic pasture grasses and a scattering of regenerating acacia plants. Deep Creek trickles through the site, fed by controlled seepage through the dam wall and three tributaries which are dry except after rain.

The natural forest comprises mixed Eucalypt species (*E. longifolia*, *cypellocarpa*, *piperita*, *fibrosa* and *elata* as gully species, with *E. globoidea*, *E. paniculata*, *Corymbia gummifera*, *C. maculata* and *Angophora floribunda* on the drier slopes), 8 species of Acacia, many grasses and sedges and a rich array of shrubby plants. A survey of the site has shown that 282 species occur naturally on the site, and much of the natural forest will be allowed to develop without extra planting. However, with over 1700 species known to occur within the collecting region (which comprises the catchments of the three major rivers which flow through the Eurobodalla Shire, Tuross R., Deua R. and the Clyde R.), there is much scope to develop interesting and varied displays to showcase this variety.

Along the creeks and gullies, trees woody shrubs, herbaceous plants, grasses and ferns from rainforest and wetter forests will be introduced to complement those already growing, and to interpret the ecology of both depauperate and temperate rainforests. Rainforest plants such as *Ceratopetalum apetalum* (Coachwood), *Doryphora sassafras* (Sassafras), *Acmena smithii* (Lilli Pilli), *Tristaniopsis laurina* and *T. collina* (Watergums), *Clerodendrum tomentosum* (Hairy Clerodendrum), *Backhousia myrtifolia* (Grey Myrtle), *Synoumglandulosum* (Scentless Rosewwood), *Ficus rubiginosa* and *F. coronata* (Figs), and smaller plants such as *Psychotria loniceroides* (Hairy Psychotria), will also be planted as horticultural specimens to demonstrate the plant variety, adaptability and unrecognised potential for broad landscape and garden use.

The cleared flat areas will be developed in discrete sections, beginning with the largest area which is adjacent to the carpark and incorporates a picnic area. It is proposed to concentrate initially on extending the existing wetlands and lake, and use the spoil to enlarge a mounded area to display an intricate and complex arrangement of horticultural collections, the pretty plants which catch the eye and demand closer inspection. As a foil to this complex display, broad areas of natural grasses such as *Themeda australis* (Kangaroo Grass), *Chionochloa/Danthonia pallida* (Wallaby Grass) and *Stipa verticillata*, interplanted with brightly flowering herbs for seasonal colour will merge with experimental wetland displays of reeds and other plants to highlight the complex nature of these areas. The wet areas will be defined with bold plantings of casuarinas and melaleuca/leptospermum, and merge into the adjacent forest across the creek, through low foreground plantings in the reed garden.

To ensure an enjoyable experience for disabled visitors, this section of the Gardens will comprise gentle grades with firm surfaced tracks which meander through all the major displays.

Once the northern displays are completed, work will begin on the central displays, innovative ecological heathland gardens which are to be established on an area which is poorly drained and very flat. The Eurobodalla has heaths on dry sandstone plateaux, perched swampy ground and heathy woodland. In the latter, a number of mallee Eucalypt species are found, and these will be grouped on a dry bank adjacent to the heath gardens. The heath gardens will grade naturally into creekside displays of shrubs which are found naturally in wetter areas.

Across Deep Creek, a more formal lake with grassed verges provides a focus for distant views through an open coastal forest to an interpretation of the dry, rugged wilderness areas of the Eurobodalla, the Deua and Wadbilliga National Parks. These parks contain scree escarpments and wild rivers charging through unbelievably steep gorges, and many rare plants, remnants of once more widespread populations. The rare plants, such as *Eucalyptus palliformis*, *E. wilcoxii*, *Prostanthera porcata* and *Acacia lucasii*, and unusual forms of other species such as *Grevillea victoriae* and *G. sp. aff macleayana (barktyana)* will be featured to ascertain their adaptability in horticulture, and to alert visitors to the need for conservation of these plants.

A broad planting of trees in a grassed arboretum will highlight the variety of local trees which can be successfully grown in home gardens and parks/reserves. This will hopefully lead to a more imaginative use of Australian plants in council reserves and streetscapes, and show that local plants have the potential for amenity horticulture.

Returning from the arboretum to the central lake, visitors will stroll through a formal eucalyptus lawn, a verdant, restful site where the majesty of local, smooth-barked trees can be appreciated.

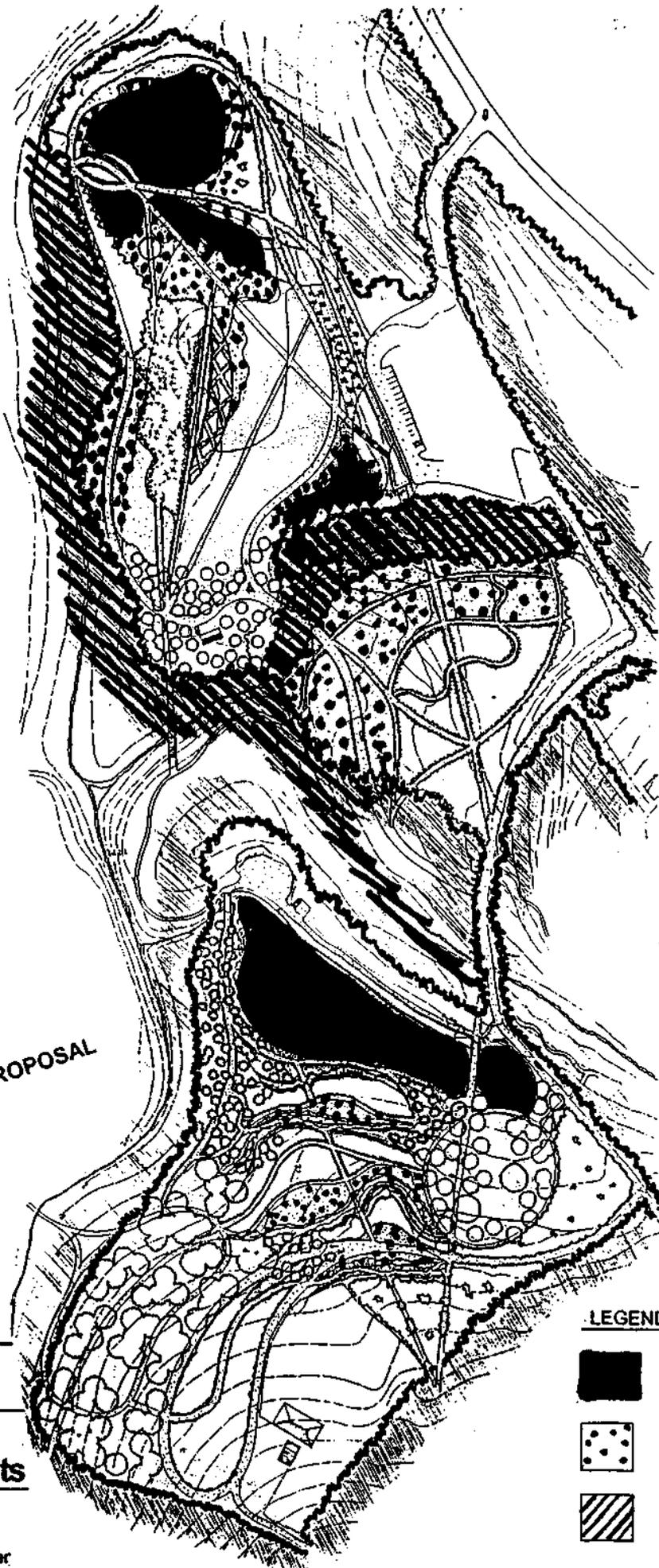
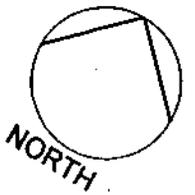
The concept design as presented by RMIT achieves all the aims and wishes of the Garden's Committee and provides a very workable staging of the development. The Committee has no doubts that if the design as proposed is accepted by the Council, then in the future the Eurobodalla will have a world class display which will attract attention from all Botanic Gardens. Indeed it will be unique.

Is this design, our dream, too much for local government to strive for?

We believe it will cost no more to develop using our local plants than a more conventional style using the same palette of exotic plants, both Australian and overseas, that all other gardens currently use. It will be innovative and therefore attract the attention of the many visitors to this area. Tourism is the primary source of income in the Eurobodalla Shire. Would tourists prefer to see a garden the same as those established in every other regional centre, with roses, azaleas and petunias, or would they be more interested in something different? We believe they would choose the latter and, by using local plants imaginatively, we can attract, educate and enthuse visitors, show them that local plants have horticultural potential, and that "bush" need not be spurned or avoided.

We are currently waiting patiently to see what the future holds.

.....
 Part of the preliminary design proposal, that concerned with waterbodies, is shown on the following page.
I have written to the Eurobodalla Shire Councillors as an individual, strongly recommending that the Eurobodalla Native Botanic Gardens be retained with their focus on indigenous plants. The interest of the Gardens lie in their uniqueness. If they are allowed to become just like Botanic Gardens in small towns all over NSW, they will have no special attraction for visitors or tourists. On the other hand, if they remain devoted to indigenous plants, the Gardens can still provide a pleasant area for local people to visit too. The Gardens can show the many beautiful local plants in a new light and provide a fascinating contrast with the same plants growing naturally in the bush. DS



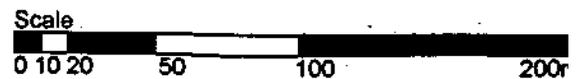
PRELIMINARY DESIGN PROPOSAL

Eurobodalla Native Botanic Gardens
Waterbodies and Moisture Tolerant Plants
November 1996

Prepared by
Jane Shepard and Marshall Kelaher
Department landscape Environment
and Planning
RMIT

LEGEND

-  Water Bodies
-  Moist - Wet Area Plantings
-  Irrigated Rainforest



It would be fair to say that nostalgia has played a major role in Australian garden design both in the past and the present. In looking to the past, we can go back to the 1870s to realise that Victorian people desired garden beds of familiar flowers and lawns in their Botanic Gardens. This can only be an example of nostalgia.

Melbourne has been the base for two of Australia's most noted figures in botanical history. Ferdinand von Mueller was a scientist, botanist and collector of plants; William Guilfoyle, who displaced von Mueller as Director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, was a landscape architect and a nurseryman who also travelled in search of interesting plants.

While their biographers have written books on the accomplishments of these men of many years past, the information can only be based on few physical items that persist, such as trees, buildings or layout of gardens, and written sources at the relevant times. Sociological factors influencing the results of their activities can only be assessed by their biographers subjectively.

When Guilfoyle took up the position of Curator of Botanic and Domain Gardens on 21st July, 1873, his appointment was evidently the result of pressure by the citizens for a botanic gardens of lawns and flower displays. This contrasted with the scientific approach of von Mueller. Guilfoyle began to remodel the botanic gardens and did so much that Pescott, the biographer of Guilfoyle, was able to write that "when Mueller died in 1896 there was no remaining visible expression of his earlier labours in the gardens".

Considerable research would be necessary to evaluate Guilfoyle's attitude to Australian plants. The biography written by R.T.M. Pescott in 1974 does give some hints of his views. One of the impressions gained is that Guilfoyle had a very strong streak of economic botanist in his thinking. His pursuit of paper production and other uses of Australian plants as fibre sources was well documented and the work of the Guilfoyle family in the introduction of commercial crops such as sugar in northern NSW is included in his background. But what of his views on Australian plants for beauty and landscaping? One of the pointers to this may be the information given by Pescott that "he claimed that these plants (dwarf exotic shrubs) were 'quite overshadowed by useless indigenous scrub such as acacias and leptospermum' and 'hakeas, eucalypts and melaleuca'. He is said to have relocated these plants - whether he appreciated them can only be surmised. In 1873 after his first month at the gardens he planted an Algerian Oak - hardly indicative of a love for Australian plants but probably in harmony with current thought about interest in non-indigenous flora. It is interesting that Pescott on his retirement from the Directorship planted a tree, *Eucalyptus guilfoylei*, in memory of W.R. Guilfoyle.

Guilfoyle is remembered as a great landscape designer. He sought to define 'natural' or 'wild garden' and 'wilderness' and considered that the Versailles garden was not a landscape - a thought we read echoed in a recent Newsletter.

Nostalgia obviously played a major part in developing thought about the use of exotic versus Australian plants in Melbourne in the early days of Victoria. It is interesting to speculate on what would have been the outcome if von Mueller had received more support in his use of the Australian flora in relation to the Melbourne Botanic gardens.

Although there has been an awakening of interest in Australian plants, nostalgia still plays a dominant role whether expressed by recent arrivals or second or third generation Australians. There is now the added pressure of international as well as local plant development in discouraging the use of Australian plants.

GTRDEN^ESTGT»T

Brief notes on principles of landscape design

Margaret Lee S.A.

What is landscape? For us, the environment in which we live.

We perceive through our senses; view; interact.

It is important that we be in harmony with our environment for our physical and mental health. We provide optimum conditions for our plants, animals, vegetables. If not, they do not thrive. The same applies to us.

It is difficult for us to influence the broader landscape, although not impossible. It is, however, much simpler to adapt our immediate environment to suit ourselves.

It is important to establish the environment we personally prefer. Peaceful, cool, carefully ordered, formal, informal, natural, colourful, hard, soft.

It is important also to respect the Genus loci or "spirit of the place". When choosing a district in which to live, it should be one where the personal environment we choose to create will blend with the surrounding area.

DESIGN includes:

1. Relationship of spaces - linked cells
From driveway to doorway and from each doorway through patio, or carport, paths, etc.
Movement from one space to another through various cells, different experiences, vistas, open areas, sunny, warm, sheltered, cool.
Building is a foreign element in a landscape. More formal hard lines may be used close to a building, gradually softening further away. E.g. large-leaved rainforest plants or ferns near house, green, lush, watered, moving away to more subtle forms in keeping with local environment
2. Scale - should have regard for human reference points; nothing should be incongruous.

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3. Symmetry and asymmetry

4. Line:- Can be used to create patterns, give direction; converge - slow down; diverge - speed up; across - stop; random - confusion; curved - direct to experience spaces; Can be indicated by masses e.g. planting bed, tree trunks.
5. Form :- Is the most dominant visual element e.g. mountain range, building, silhouette of tree.
6. Texture:- Fine, medium, coarse; examples of materials, vegetation, surfaces.
7. Colour:- Use may be bold or subtle, depending on mood and surroundings, may vary from season to season. Green is a colour - infinite number of greens.
8. Variety and harmony in form, texture, colour.
A balance between monotony and confusion i.e. harmony. Skill needed to create unity.
9. Repetition:- May reduce confusion, create order.
As in music, adds emphasis. Analyse a piece of music, relate to landscape.
10. Balance:- Perception of positives and negatives reacting in harmony / symmetrical and asymmetrical about axis.
11. Emphasis:- Indicate desired direction of eye, foot; highlight view, frame vista.
May use plants or focal points of man-made object.

Papers on Design presented at the **Karwarra Conference** on "Australian Plants for the Rural and Urban Environment" November 1996
report by **Glenda Datson** NSW

1. Designing in a rural landscape - Don Thompson

Design considerations in implementing Landcare works:

- community attitudes and responses and their effect on landscapes (awareness of problems and what they do for improvement of the landscape)
- political, cultural and economic forces
- importance of preserving landscape character types and uniqueness
- definition of landscape type - components e.g. landform, hydrology, vegetation, cultural elements and agricultural land use
- changes over time: Koori; clearing; milling; surveying (roads, houses, fences, plantations); tree decline
- species selection
- establishment and fencing techniques
- siting
- remnant vegetation protection

2. Design and Construction of Water Areas - Tony Brindley

Environmental works - soft engineering.

Initial consultancy - client and aspirations. Brief proposals.

Design: landform, vegetation, existing buildings, land usage, taken into account
must be compatible with surrounding environment
conforms visually so as to become undiscoverable as man-made structure

Construction: good visual appeal

3. Designing and planting in small spaces - Paul Thompson

- There are few differences in principle between the approach to large and small areas. Major difference is the extent.
- Small gardens - control of sunshine, plants' need for water, impact of and upon neighbouring properties and durability of design. Microclimate effects of fences, pavements, buildings, etc.
- Invention and experimentation the driving force with Australian plants. The opportunity for recreating impressions.
- Be conscious of the implications of every form or shape, every plant your space may be composed of.
- The importance of the effect of the borrowed landscape.
- All gardens have periods of splendour and times when they are not as exuberant as they might be. It is during the duller times that the quality of the garden shape, composition and structure come to the fore.

4. Water in the urban landscape - Robert Boyle

Caring for water - precious and finite resource

Design considerations - client, local landscape, locality, style, water source, water quality, margins, budget, plantings

Design qualities of water - reflection, sound, movement, life, atmosphere

Construction - methods, range of materials, costs, equipment, details of design

Maintenance - problems, design of a program, pollution, costs.

5. Planting living pictures - Judy Barker

The painting of pictures depends on many factors, most of which are inter-related. Personal attributes including taste, enthusiasm, plant knowledge, colour sense and energy will influence the completed picture.

Other major aspects include:

- * size of canvas - bearing on choice of plants
- * background - forms the frame

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* surface treatment - colour of soil or mulch

Massed plantings to produce an unbroken carpet; close plantings to produce a riot of colour or a mosaic (gave examples with slides).

Duration of the desired picture has a major effect on the design. Long term considerations require the choice of reliable plants with foliage interest.

Seasonal effect

Spacial alteration gives variety derived from height and colour.

"A garden provides the opportunity for anyone to paint pictures of their own conception and so to enjoy the great sense of satisfaction that comes with this."

6. Creating a grasslands garden - Ian Shears

Grasslands as vegetation types provide excellent aesthetic and practical opportunities to create inherently Australian landscape treatments for open space areas. The design, establishment and management of new or existing grasslands will benefit from adopting ecological approaches which promote and take advantage of the inherent qualities of the plants in relation to specific site conditions.

Critical issues in the establishment of successful flowering grasslands relate to the careful selection of species, prevention of weed invasion, encouragement of diversity and canopy management.

The Wallum garden

Geoff Simmons Qld

Gardeners are not immune from the desire to use descriptive labels for different styles of gardens, hence terms such as cottage and natural. But why not have a lexicon of Australian terms instead of aping overseas authors? An example is the Wallum garden concept described in this note. No doubt there are other examples around Australia that could express a purely Australian ethos.

The Wallum garden design is a special type of Australian garden based on a natural occurrence of plant life and environment in coastal Queensland. The name is derived from the aboriginal name for a species of banksia, *B. aemula*. Wallum country contains many interesting and attractive species suitable for landscaping. Ideally the garden should be situated on relatively poor soils where there is a subsoil moisture, even flooding at times. The aim is to produce an open uncluttered look of trees and plants of lesser height, with emphasis on a woody gnarled look that is characteristic of rough barked banksia.

By choosing plants carefully, this type of garden would be of low maintenance and have an appearance not seen in other designs. The area should not be totally crowded so that open spaces occur. A mix of groundcover, shrubs and trees that express a sparse and pointy aspect is desirable. Many Australian plants fall into this category, such as baeckeas, banksias, grasses, hibbertias and grasstrees. Even several species of Australian conifers could be used to introduce a brighter shade of green to contrast with the greyer leaves of other plants. Paperbarks enhance the barkscape, bear scented bottlebrushes attractive to insects and are capable of sucking up sub-surface moisture.

Walkways made of light coloured fine sand partly covered with a sprinkling of leaves and other plant fragments would also be features of this garden. As there is minimal close planting, visitors and maintenance people (owners!) would be free to wander among the bushes.

Low maintenance, a wide choice of species with resulting variety of leaves, flowers and bark make this a desirable type of Australian garden design.

Vic SGAP exhibit, International Flower and Garden Show 1997

Joan Barrett Vic

Designed by landscape designer Roger Stone, organized by Tim Morrow and set up with help from John Armstrong, Gwen Elliot, Margarete Lee, Helen Morrow and others, you could say members of GDSG had a large hand in the exhibit Vic SGAP presented at the 1997 International Flower and Garden Show.

Far removed from the curving lines and soft, well-mulched bush gardens of yore or the more recent "cottage" gardens, this presentation was of a formal courtyard with lots of rectangles, low hedges, paving and potted plants which would fit easily into an inner city block.

The courtyard was partially covered by a pitched roof of green lattice which seemed to invite a pandora or other Australian creeper to clamber up the sawn timber supports and cavort in the sun (this was a typical Melbourne autumn day!). Below, one or two pavers had been removed in places to allow for plantings of mazus, pratia and viola.

On my right as I entered was a "hedge" of *Phebalium squamulosum* and on my left a bank of variously hued croweas edged with white and mauve/purple brachysomes. Featured at the far end was a tiled rectangular pond with a central fountain, backed by another "hedge", this time of restio.

Throughout the exhibit much use was made of potted plants and I was particularly struck by an *Eremophila nivea*, its silver beauty in sharp contrast to the vibrant purple flowers and dark foliage of *E. gilesii* with which it had been underplanted. Another favourite was a *Syzygium australe* cut in a tapering columnar shape - for all the world like an exclamation mark in one corner! More topiary was provided by a *Waterhousia floribunda* as a tall standard.

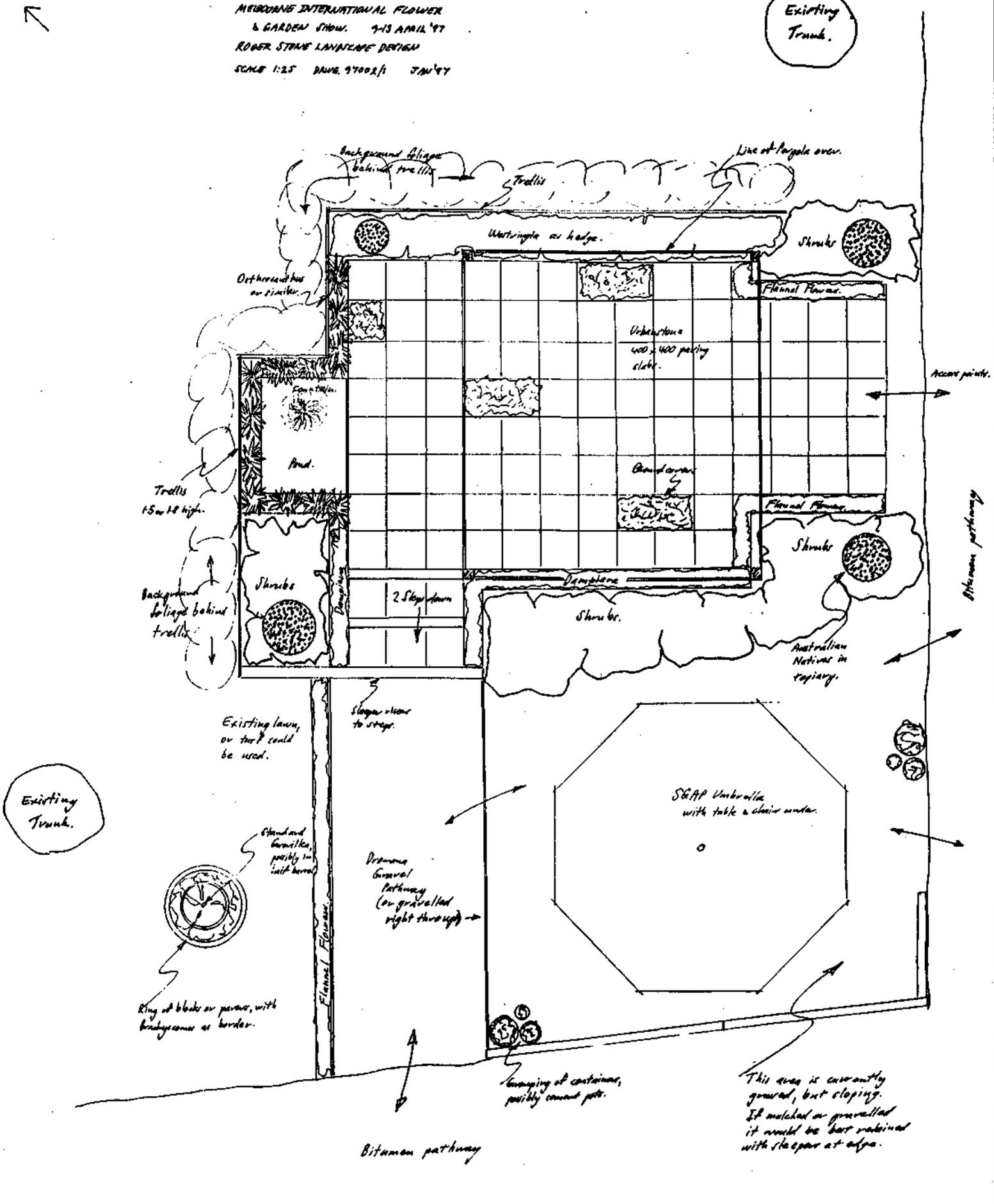
Leaflets of different colour describing the various plants used in the exhibit were available - a good idea.

Plan

A plan of Roger Stone's design is shown on the following page. Some of the plants detailed on the plan were unavailable at the time of the Show and so were replaced by similar plants which were available then.

PROPOSAL for SCAP DISPLAY ~ 812
 MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FLOWER
 & GARDEN SHOW. 7-13 APRIL '97
 ROGER STONE LANDSCAPE DESIGN
 SCALE 1:25 DRAW. 97002/1 JAN '97

Existing
Trunk.



Existing
Trunk.

Trellis
1.5m to 1.8 high.

Background
foliage behind
trellis.

Existing lawn,
or turf could
be used.

Ring of blocks or pavers, with
backgrounds as border.

Standard
benches,
possibly in
with barrel

Slopes steep
to stage.

Dramatic
gravel
pathway
(or gravelled
right through)

Grouping of containers,
possibly covered pots.

Bitumen pathway

This area is currently
grassed, but sloping.
If mulched or gravelled
it would be best retained
with sleepers at edge.

Access points.

Bitumen pathway

Flannel Flowers.

Umbrella
400 x 400 paving
slab.

Bandstand

Flannel Flowers.

Shrubs

Australian
Native in
topiary.

Shrubs.

Temple

2 Step down

Shrubs

Pod.

Warrigala or hedge.

Trellis

Background foliage
behind trellis

Line of foliage over.

Shrubs

Jo Hambrett, leader of the GDSG Sydney branch, has sent the following letter to Jim Boswell, the President of SGAP NSW, and also a copy to Cherree Densley, President of ASGAP.

"In the January 1997 edition of "Native Plants for NSW", Gordon Brooks asks how we can 'promote our Australian flora and our Society more effectively?'

I am convinced that an excellent way to do so would be to organize and sponsor an Australian 2000 Garden Design Competition. The competition would, of course, coincide with and help celebrate the Olympics, the coming of the new millennium, 100 years of Federation and possibly the Republic!

This should be a particularly progressive, stimulating and relevant garden competition which will address the place of Gardening into the next millennium (as I see it - aesthetics, practicality, productivity) and it will hopefully reflect the aims and aspirations of the society and its members.

Some suggestions I have are that -

- 1) there be four categories, rural, semi-rural, urban, community
- 2) there be four finalists in each category in each State and four overall prizewinners Australia wide.
- 3) that the judging panel represent such professions as Landscape Architects, Architects, Scientists and such bodies as the National Trust, Botanical Gardens, Permaculture associations, as well as a well known TV/radio gardening identity.

4) the gardens be judged on:

A: DESIGN including

- the relationship of the garden to its setting
- satisfactory solutions to various logistical problems
- the application of various design principles in order to achieve harmony and balance within the garden
- the use of organic and non-organic garden elements

B: PLANTING

- type (indigenous, native, exotic - % of each)
- size
- texture
- colour
- shape
- "fragrance"
- relationship to design

C: CONSERVATION & ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

- use of practices to prevent soil and land degradation
- applying organic principles to pest control, soil enrichment and fertilizing
- use of composting, mulching (recycling)
- energy and water conservation (recycling)
- use of particular plant species e.g. indigenous, threatened
- provision of food, shelter and breeding sites for native fauna
- provision of green corridors - linked to neighbours or adjoining parks or bushland

I think publicity and promotion should be vigorous and the prizemoney offered substantial; it will provide an excellent way for SGAP to interact with not only the rest of the horticultural community but the larger general community as well, in a vital and interesting way.

If this project is considered too big for SGAP to tackle alone, perhaps it will be possible to link up with other groups such as Landcare, Greening Australia or CALM. I would imagine sponsorship within the horticultural industry would be a strong possibility too.

Which brings me to publicity - how wonderful if we could enlist the help of Snugglepot, Cuddlepie, Ragged Blossom and even a big bad Banksia Man - just a thought. If that proves too difficult (we could find out through the May Gibbs Foundation) the Society could create its own character.

I hope you find this an interesting proposition."

A garden of contrasts

Ian Bond S.A.

As a member of the Anglican Church at Victor Harbor, South Australia, I was asked in 1991 to suggest some plants for a block of land at the rear of the Church. Having accepted the challenge I first identified the potential problems. As shown on the plan on the following page, an old road had been used for probably 90 or more years and a soil test revealed a hard, compacted layer of limestone. Close to one corner of the Church was a huge 100 year old Cypress and four very large *Melaleuca armillaris* threatening severe competition for any new plants close by. There was also a non-wetting sand with pH 8.5.

I hope I have solved the first problem by using selected eremophilas. So far they are performing quite well. As for the competition problem, the eucalypts, atriplex and senna look healthy and are making steady growth. Little can be done about the soil.

As for most churches these days funds are limited, so I opted for plants which would thrive on the natural rainfall of 535 mm, plus two 25 mm irrigations, one in December and one in February. Low maintenance was also

Text continued on page 12

A garden of contrasts

Ian Bond S.A.

SUMMER FLOWERING

<i>Bursaria spinosa</i>	white	
<i>Eremophila glabra</i>	orange	
<i>E. glabra</i>	red	
<i>E. ionantha</i>	blue	
<i>E. laanii</i>	pink	E.
<i>E. maculata</i>	red, mauve & pink forms	
<i>Melaleuca huegelii</i>	white	
<i>M. thymifolia</i>	mauve	

AUTUMN FLOWERING

<i>Correa 'Marions Marvel'</i>	
C. 'Misty Pink'	
<i>Eremophila youngii</i>	also summer
<i>Eucalyptus leucoxydon</i>	also winter
caesia	also winter, spring
<i>Hakea laurina</i>	also winter

WINTER FLOWERING

<i>Correa mannii</i>	red
<i>Grewia rosmarinifolia</i>	red
<i>Templetonia retusa</i>	red
<i>Westringia 'Winyabbie Gem'</i>	also spring

SPRING FLOWERING

<i>Callistemon 'King's Park'</i>	
C. 'Perth Pink'	
<i>Eremophila nivea</i>	blue/lilac
<i>Eucalyptus Torvood'</i>	
<i>E. forrestiana</i>	
<i>Olearia pimeliodes</i>	

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

<i>Banksia integrifolia</i>	yellow
<i>Goodenia ovata</i>	yellow
<i>Grevillea thelemanniana</i> form	orange
<i>Senna artemesoides</i>	yellow

FOLIAGE

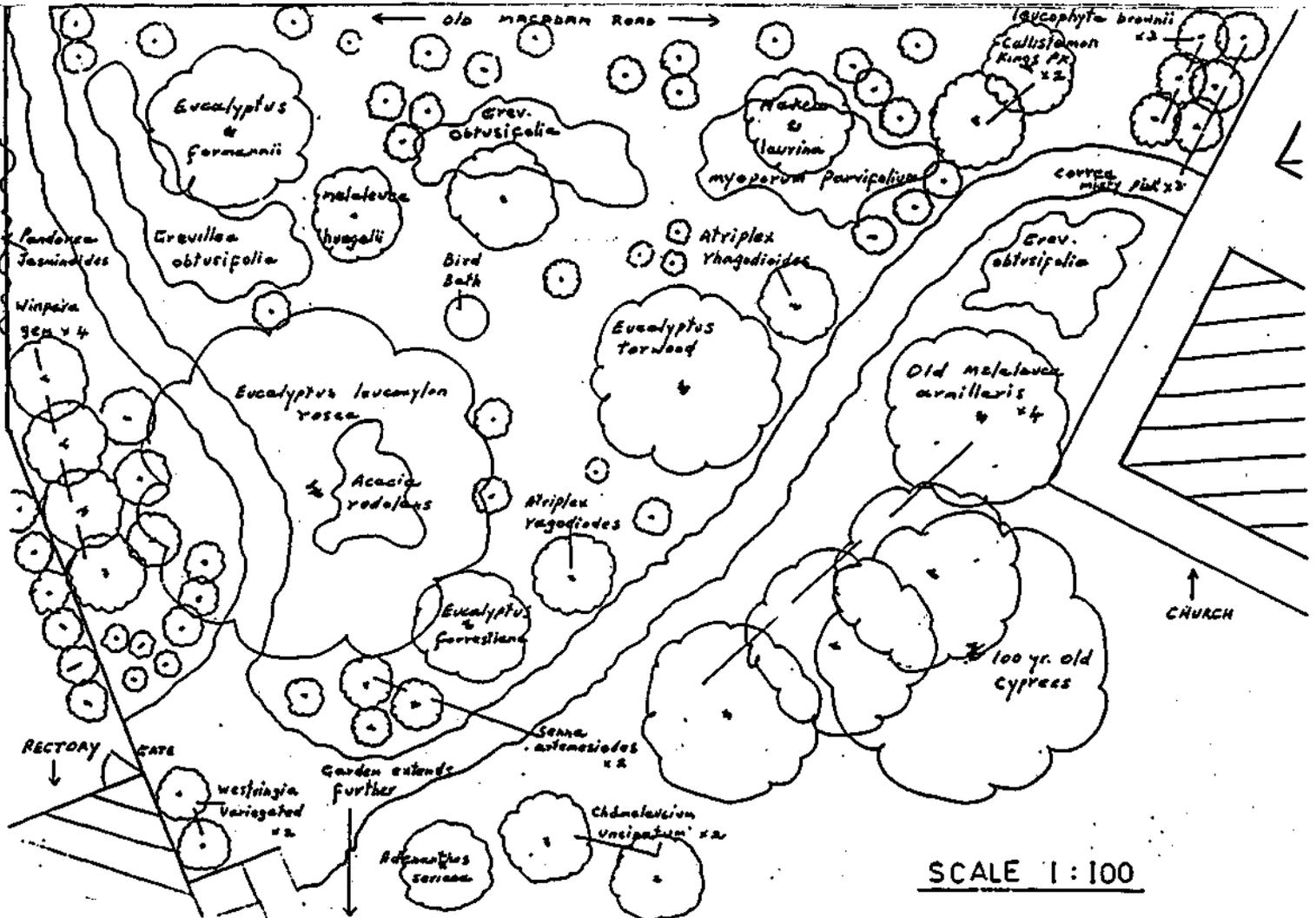
<i>Acacia argrophylla</i>	golden tip growth
<i>Adenanthos sericea</i>	soft silky foliage
<i>Callitris canescens</i>	
<i>Melaleuca coccinea</i>	floral arrangements
<i>Olearia axillaris</i> form	silver grey

GROUND COVERS

<i>Eremophila glabra</i>	yellow prostrate
<i>Grevillea obtusifolia</i>	hardy, vigorous, smothers weeds
<i>Kennedia prostrata</i>	bright red

CLIMBERS

<i>Billardiera cymosa</i>	white/pink, long flowering
<i>Clematis microphylla</i>	white
<i>Hardenbergia comptoniana</i>	violet
<i>Pandorea jasminoides</i>	pink, summer & autumn



12

a consideration so the whole area was mulched with shredded pine bark to a depth of between 50 and 100 mm. Paths are of a similar depth using shavings and sawdust from a local joinery. This gives a nice contrast to the darker mulch.

The main contrasting theme is the use of scattered silver grey plants in appropriate positions i.e. close to bright green foliaged plants. The following species were selected for this purpose:

Eremophila glabra (Murchison River form); *Oleatria axillaris* (silver form)
Leucophyta brownii; *Senna artemesioides*;
Maireana sedifolia

I'm delighted that the senna are starting to self seed, but why don't they germinate just where I want them?

Most of the species are listed (on the previous page) and include those to provide contrasts in leaf shape, form and colour and to have something flowering throughout the year. Several species of birds are now working the area.

Maintenance is important in an Australian style garden and young plants are tip pruned after their first flowering. Most of them are subsequently pruned with hedge clippers or an electric blade trimmer. Some organic fertilizer is applied to eremophilas planted over the old road site. If an occasional plant is unthrifty, it is removed. I am determined to keep the garden healthy and attractive in order to promote the beauty of Australian plants.

For the past two years we've been in the Australian Open Garden Scheme and there has been as much or more interest in the Australian garden than the traditional cottage garden around the rectory building.

I haven't located or named all the small species to avoid congestion on the plan (see page 11). Also, as the garden extends around the corner into the Rectory grounds, those plants could not be shown.

'NATURAL-GAR[r]ENS'

Some thoughts from George Seddon's opening lecture at the 1996 *Landscape Australia* Conference reported by Diana SnapeVic

- We gardeners manage more than 50% of all urban land in Australia. . . . Land management requires objectives. . . .Your list of objectives will surely include meeting a number of specific functional, economic & aesthetic requirements. In addition, our management should be ecologically or environmentally responsible.
 - The art of gardening consists of making good compromises between functional, visual, economic and environmental criteria, which include an understanding of the natural cycles of our own environment.
 - George Seddon evaluated Rottneest Cypress (*Callitris preissii*) and *Leucophyta (Calocephalus) brownii* on these criteria for his own garden. The former was approved but the latter plant was found to be less successful in a garden with trees, as it requires 100% full sun to look its best. For him, trees took precedence.
 - Building a house and a driveway with 'minimum disturbance' will affect drainage patterns, water run-off, soil compaction; soil disturbance brings weed invasion.
 - We demand a higher level of comfort and design in our immediate environment than the natural environment generally offers.
 - There is an intriguing group of garden and landscape words that indicate contrived disorder, which is, of course, a contradiction in terms, but a deep-seated one: words like 'spilling', 'cascading', 'tumbling', 'drift'
The effects we seek are highly contrived, but the contrivance should not be apparentThe spontaneity is all illusion.
 - Macedon, Bowral, the Adelaide Hills, the Darling Downs, are not the only places in Australia where it is possible to have fine gardens, although the gardening literature would lead us to think so. They are regularly described as having climates 'favourable to gardening', which means, of course, slightly more amenable to pursuing generally inappropriate goals than the rest of the country.
 - Only in the wet tropics or Paradise do the flowers bloom the year round. . . . In the world of the garden, we should grow up, abandon futile dreams, learn to adapt our garden culture to our environment.
 - If the European imagination has often idealised the tropics and subtropics ... those who live and garden in these zones know a different world - one where plants grow rapidly, but also senesce and decay rapidly, where weeds also grow rapidly, rampantly, where humid air encourages the growth of fungus, mould, scale, virus, black spot..., where the organic content of the soil oxidises rapidly and where heavy rain leaches the soil of nutrients, yet also where the heat of the sun is such that even a few days without rain can constitute a drought.
 - We can and should redefine our concept of Paradise, using local idioms and in ways that reflect more of the actual. But however we define it, we shall continue to strive for Paradise and it will continue to elude our grasp, and we will profit from the striving. (My underlinings DSj)
-

I recently read an old *Country Life* article titled 'Going Native' by their regular garden writer Christopher Lloyd, about a flying visit he had just paid to Australia. He cannot understand any serious garden maker restricting themselves to their native flora and has a low opinion of the results, although he does admit it is possible, as evidenced by Alvina and George Smith at Tynong North, to make such a garden 'successful'. His opinion seems based on a drive around the streets of Canberra and the "tail, scrawny tree-shrubs, totally uncared for" that he saw and assumes are characteristic of Australian native gardens. My first impressions from train windows of English gardens in January were even lower, perhaps because I had arrived with high expectations. The "totally uncared for" comment is revealing - why is the type judged by the worst possible examples? He then gives recommendations for pruning and training from the earliest days which thoughtful Australian garden writers have been recommending for years. The old 'no care needed' attitude towards Australian plants that was so prevalent 10? 3D? years ago has given our flora an undeservedly poor image.

His thesis is that to create a beautiful garden one should select from all the plant material available, regardless of country of origin. In theory I have no great argument with this, I think the problem is in the 'beautiful'¹. Many Australian gardeners are still affected by the traditions they grew up with, the traditions of the exiles, the first colonials trying to recreate something of home; their idea of beauty will coincide fairly well with Lloyd's. For others of us familiar with the Australian bush, beauty can be somewhat different, a thought raised at our recent NE Victoria Branch meeting. We don't give first prize to banks of azaleas, say, and neither does Christopher Lloyd as I reported in a previous NL. His garden at Great Dexter is famous for the colour combinations he achieves with annuals and perennials used in subtler ways. I think we go a step further and beauty is subtler still, in fine foliage with often intricate shapes, in small individual flowers even if they are clumped to be conspicuous, and in bursts of colour which are all the more brilliant for being discrete. Cherree's article in the last Newsletter (NL16-5) is very relevant when she asks exactly what do we seek to recreate from the bush, i.e. what do we find beautiful?

A friend recently sent me a quote from an American gardening magazine which identifies a shift in the appreciation of beauty as a driving force behind the trend to wilderness gardening. Perhaps we are leaders of the next gardening fashion? For in gardens as in all other forms of art there is a constant evolution of taste; each style becomes mechanical with time and novelty, being different, can be an end in itself. This may be what Lloyd had in mind when he accused native plant growers of being jingoistic. Sure I am proud to be Australian, but immensely grateful too. I don't think I grow Australian plants just to assert our independence. I think I grow them largely because they were such an important part of memorable experiences from childhood on. I associate them with happiness.

One secret of good gardening is to group together plants according to their needs. While some of our plants can adapt to all the extras most exotics need, others cannot and this creates a deep division which makes mixed gardens difficult. A garden without Proteaceae is to me unthinkable, and if Christopher Lloyd wants to challenge me and ask why no South African Proteaceae my response is simply why? We have hundreds of species already in cultivation at least as good as the South African, and as time passes better and hardier forms will be available. I understand the proteas at home are uninspiring and when our banksias, dryandras and their ilk have had as much development and promotion there will be no question. (I must admit to a certain bias against South African plants as so many of them have become noxious weeds here.)

While concern for the environment is a fairly recent phenomenon, I trust it is not a passing fad but now a fixed attitude of mind in any civilization. It is not new to want to hand over the farm in as good or better condition than when you inherited it. We will be lucky if we don't hand on a world somewhat worse. Most exotic plants need more water and fertilizer than our locals, indeed Lloyd concedes that Californians may need to grow their natives to cope with their climate and water shortages but dismisses the results as boring. So are English gardens in winter. A dilemma exists in that plant strategies to survive summer drought - cease growth, drop leaves, etc - can result in a boring garden for those months, just like their European counterparts in winter. We accept this; as a child in Perth autumn was to me the season of regrowth and new life. The challenge is to find plants which can look handsome even in summer dormancy so that our gardens makes minimal demands on precious water. Even the drought-hardy will respond to some extra water, far below the needs of most of the exotics seen in gardens.

So to garden responsibly today it makes sense to go first to the group of plants which have been adapted to local conditions. Future generations of gardeners may well bless us for handing down plants which have vanished from the wild, and certainly for all the Mailing and selecting currently occurring, so that they can use our natives more confidently, when water restrictions make it necessary to do so.

There is one further reason why we grow natives, a bit like climbing Everest; it is a challenge, just because they are there. We are lucky that we have such an extensive indigenous flora that we really need not be restricted in our garden design because of our voluntary limits. It is true that I have not yet found an Australian plant to use as the Italian pencil cypress, but I know of no exotic plant like our *Eucalyptus sepulchralis*. It is not, as Lloyd suggests, the easy way out, not yet. In a few generations it will be possible to select for particular roles in a design with much more certainty than now. In the meantime it is the most satisfying way of gardening, to use Australian plants.

'Natural gardens' - another hobby horse

Geoff Simmons Qld

It seems that writers on gardening are always looking for new themes and we are now witnessing the spin doctors selling a new term for garden design. Bush, cottage and meadow have had their turn and now "natural" is the word favoured. Dear, oh dear! What a sad commentary - neglect your own ideas but keep up with the trendy. (See *'Extracts from correspondence'*.)

NL16-5 has at least one worthy comment by Cherree Densley in the first paragraph of her contribution. Having had experience of two large sites surrounded by natural bush at the start of establishing a house and garden, I now believe that it is impossible to retain the natural setting of bushland on suburban or semi-rural properties. Since occupying my present address, almost without exception each year has seen the incursion of a new weed, usually a pasture grass or herb, even though I have made it a practice of not introducing any soil other than potting mix or potted plants. Eternal vigilance is necessary against exotic plants such as ochona, presumably growing from seeds carried by birds, or wind-born foreign conifers.

The road that passes the property is not a busy one, but one has only to look at the debris deposited on the verges to realise that the original natural environment will never be the same as before settlement, or even before two decades ago when the road was a hardly used bush track.

It does seem absurd to speak of natural gardening when the plants are raised, planted and organised by a person. Or is there an assumption that if people do something the act must be natural? Natural needs defining, for instance I doubt whether any natural areas are left in a country such as England in which grazing and cropping has been the norm for centuries and more recently, urbanization has mushroomed.

Why do we need to import concepts from U.S.A., Germany or England, when we have very evident at least two elements in Australian flora that are unique, viz. the fact that Australian plants have developed unusual and beautiful forms because of their isolation in ages past, and there are loci of great speciation e.g. banksias in W.A.. This isolation and development must surely be a factor in the creation of Australian garden design philosophy.

Why not shelve the thoughts of overseas fads and simply use imagination to create an Australian garden that expresses ideas that one believes will make a pleasant place to live, in tune with the Australian experience? (See NL2-2 and NL9-13 for our own GDSG definitions of a 'natural garden' as against 'naturalistic', and page 8 of this NL for Geoff's suggestions for a Wallum garden (which I'd call 'naturalistic', Geoff). DS)

BOOKSTand MAGAZINES~

Three reviews by Jo Hambrett NSW (the first two are briefones). A reminder to members that we love to get book reviews - even if the book is not recent and/or has already been reviewed it's interesting to get a 'second opinion'. Please remember to include the publisher and date of publication.

"The Gardener's **Eye and other Essays**" by Allen Lacy (Henry Holt 1992)

This is a delightful book to curl up with in winter. He is a North American philosophy professor and his absolute delight in all matters horticultural will be universally appreciated.

"**The Culture of Landscape Architecture**" by Edquist & Bird (Edge 1994)

An interesting and challenging book to wade into when one is feeling cerebral.

Jo says: "And now, dare I say it, the best till last!"

"**The Education of a Gardener**" by Russel Page (Harvill 1994)

In reviewing this book I can do no better than quote the composer William Walton who, when asked on a radio program which book he would take with him to a desert island, apart from Shakespeare and the Bible, replied unhesitatingly - "Russell Page's *The Education of a Gardener*".

It is quite simply a must read for anybody interested in spirituality, earth sciences, history, geography, visual arts and their history, philosophy and of course gardening!

Hard core horticultural and design advice mingles beautifully with such sublime passages as -

"I know that I cannot make anything new. To make a garden is to organize all the elements present and add fresh ones, but first of all, I must absorb as best I can all that I see, the sky and the skyline, the soil, the colour of the grass and the

slope and nature of the trees. Each half mile of countryside has its own nature and every few yards is a reinterpretation. Each stone where it lies says something of the earth's underlying structure and the plants growing there will indicate the vegetable chemistry of that one place."

and - "green fingers are the extensions of a verdant heart. A good garden cannot be made by somebody who has not developed the capacity to know and love growing things."

and finally - "my imaginary garden... whatever its size and shape will be satisfactory for like all gardens it will be a world for itself and for me".

- just read it!

The GDSG library now includes copies of the papers of the *Landscape Australia* Garden Design Conferences on 'The Natural Garden' (1996) and 'Gardens for Tomorrow' (1994). These are available for members to organize to borrow. Also the booklet *Ha/cea* produced by SGAP Vic & Wimmera Growers of Australian Plants (in particular Royce Raleigh).

Index for Newsletters

An index for our 1996 Newsletters has been prepared by **Maxine Armitage** of NSW. If you would like a copy, please send me a request with a stamped, self-addressed large envelope (the same size as takes your NL). Maxine prepares indexes professionally and she very generously prepared our earlier one too. **Thank you, Maxine!**

Topiary from Australian plants? from *Australian Horticulture* noted by Barbara Buchanan Vic

In the editorial in the February/March issue of *Australian Horticulture*, Anita Boucher wondered whether native (Australian) plant growers had thought about creating topiary from some of their more suitable species - those that have relatively small leaves, benefit from being trimmed, display a diverse range of attractive flowers, and are fairly fast growing. She mentioned leptospermum, grevillea, eremophila, prostanthera, bauera and callistemon.

"Purists may be horrified at the thought of treating native plants in such a way, but if there is a demand for topiary, perhaps growers could look to native species. There are, of course, no guarantees that the gardening public would like topiarised native plants, but then again they might not recognise them as natives - it could even give native plants a new image."

Editor's note: I wrote saying the answer is yes - for at least some of us. Many SGAP members might not like the idea of a topiary emu or kangaroo but our Study Group is open-minded. However I suspect most of us would choose a more geometric and less conspicuous statement first. In the past, the main emphasis in gardens of Australian plants was generally on a naturalistic or 'bush' look but recently there has been increasing interest in other quite formal styles, particularly for smaller gardens. Of course the ratio of 'formal' to 'informal' can vary greatly. One aspect of this is the use of shaping and pruning of plants as required, individually or in groups or hedges. Such plants are also suitable for topiary and there are many of them, including those mentioned. Apart from the wonderful dwarf lilly pillies such as *Syzygium* 'Lillyput', 'Blaze' and 'Aussie Compact', there are numerous other small or dwarf members of the Myrtaceae family. These include species of leptospermum, melaleuca, callistemon and baeckea. From other families, westringia and correa are both excellent; prostanthera provide perfume too; then there are some acacia, grevillea, darwinia, phebalium, thryptomene. . . . There are delightful possibilities in gardens of Australian plants for combining and contrasting the formal look of pruned or clipped plants, including topiary, with a more naturalistic or 'wilder' look.

Are any members actually trying it? Please let us know.

Ecosystem gardens by Rosalind Creasy from *Orion Nature Quarterly* noted by Cherree Densley Vic

Extract & comment by Diana Snape

"What did the land look like before your home was built on it? Was it a meadow filled with black-eyed Susans and goldenrod? An oak woodland? Did an elk migration cross what is now your front yard? However your land looked then, it is certain that workers showed up one day with a shovel or bulldozer and leveled part of that area to bare dirt - the first step toward creating a suburban, people-oriented ecosystem and permanently altering the existing natural environment. After the house was built, the grounds were landscaped. The homeowner chose non-native plants for the landscape design, because for the better part of the past two centuries fashions in landscaping have favoured

'immigrant' plants and human-made hybrids over naturally occurring species. Thus, the majority of American gardens are artificial habitats, melting-pot ecosystems consisting of hydrangeas and chrysanthemums from the Orient, apples and roses from Europe, gladiolas and even so-called Kentucky bluegrass from Africa."

This is the first paragraph of an article in ORION Nature Quarterly, Spring 1986. Replace a few key words and it could be applied to Australia today. The writer goes on to discuss in detail the nature of different types of American garden - meadow, woodland, prairie, chaparral - their planning, preparation and maintenance; and suitable 'native' American plants for them. Do we need to analyse more thoroughly all these aspects and components of our possible naturalistic gardens - grassy herbfield, grassy woodland, heathland, alpine, coastal, or whatever? Geoff Simmons has briefly looked at some of these aspects for a Wallum garden and in our next NL we'll see how Ian Anderson from SGAP Canberra is doing this, in his article(s) on creating a grassland/grassy woodlands garden.

DESIGN IDEAS

A small courtyard garden

After suggesting in NL 16 that members might like to have a go at designing a small square courtyard garden, 5m x 5m, I was intrigued to see that exactly the same challenge had been set for six Melbourne garden designers by *The Age*. Their plans were in that paper on April 7. There's no spare room in this NL but I'd like to include one or two of these in future NLs. Don't think this means I'm not still hoping to see what you can do with a courtyard OR small rainforest area!

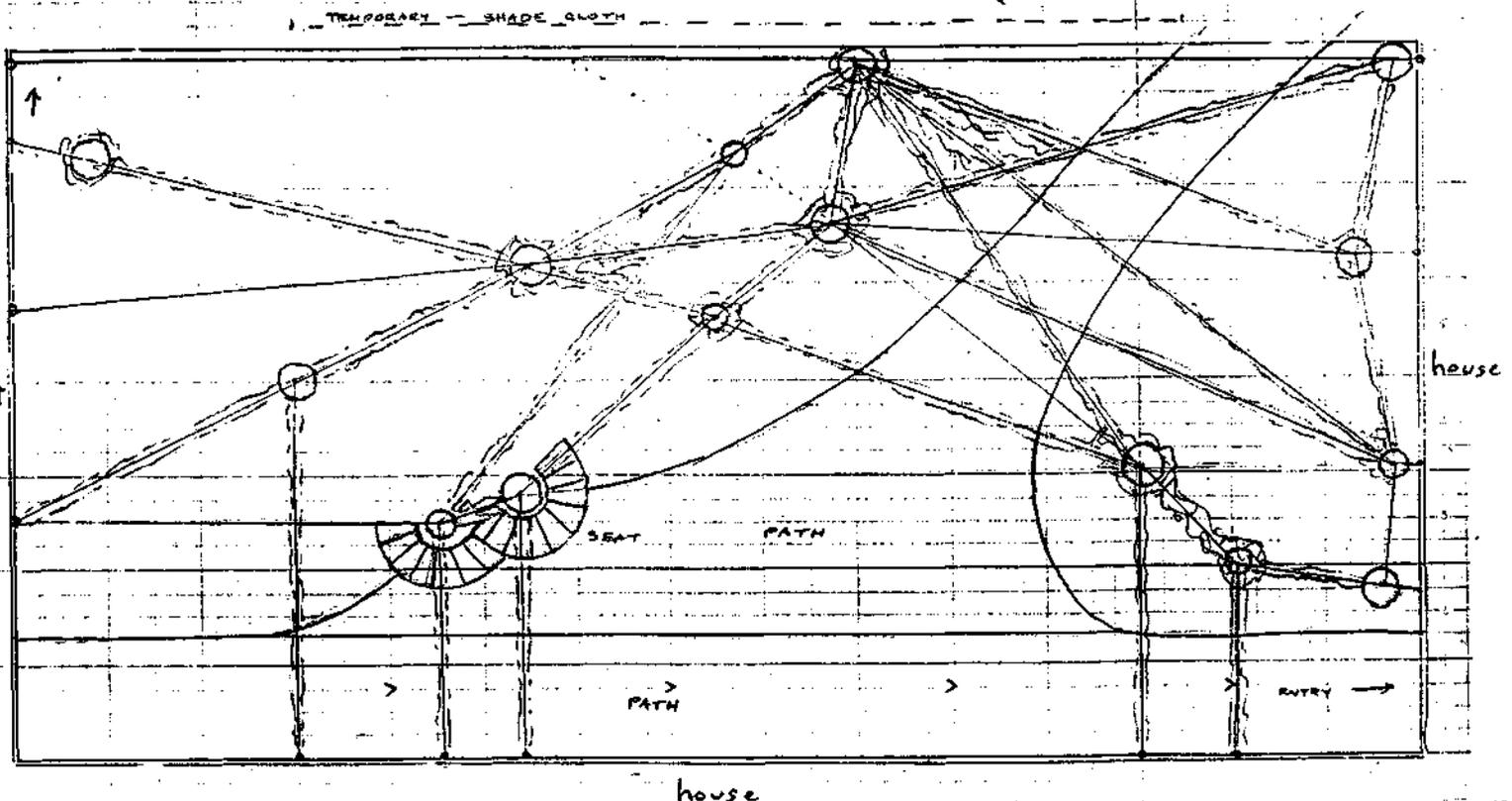
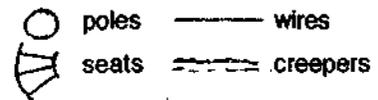
Design for a small rainforest area 1

Kay Dempsey & Gloria Thomlinson Vic

Brief:- Rainforest area near front entrance to house, next to carport. (See NL 16-10)

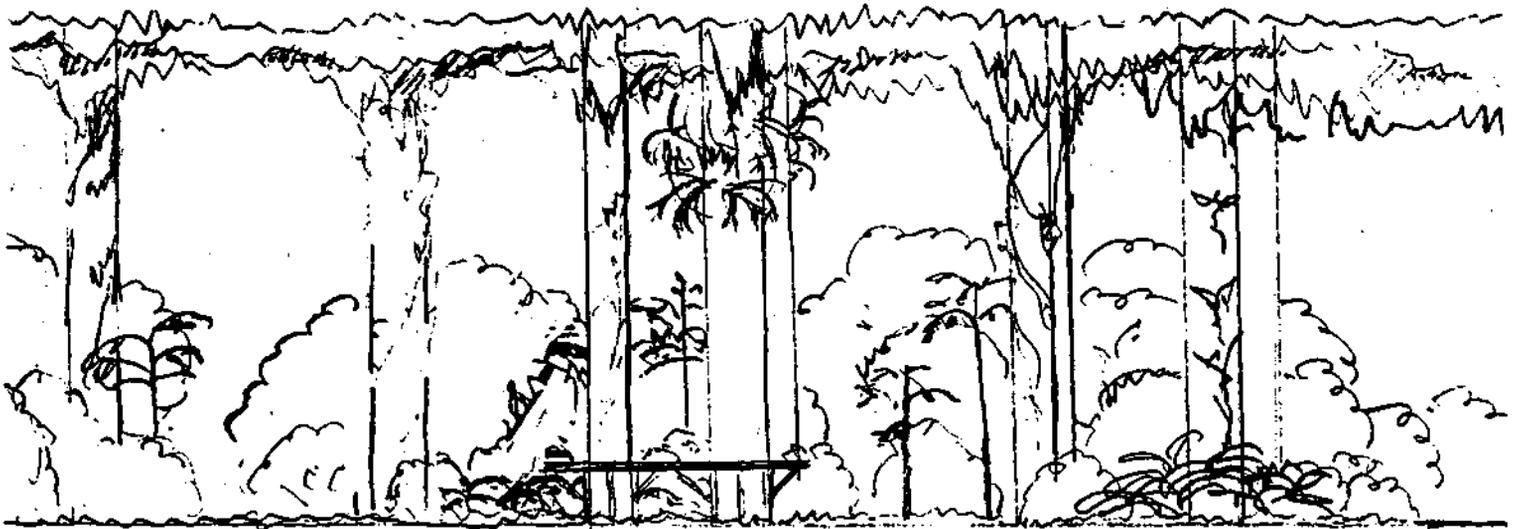
- No water feature as this is near front door - don't want mossies! - rather a 'cool look' space, designed in such a way as to look 'mature' early.
- We presume there are no in ground pipes in this area and that the height of eaves is around 10 feet (3 m).
- 1. Area divided into two beds - separated by path (two different circumferences all the better).
- 2. Posts / poles ea telephone poles: - represent old growth trees; - support wires for creepers and shade cloth; - host to epiphytes if desired; - support mist spray system if used.
- 3. Wires - three strands - two for creepers (sometimes three); one for shade cloth.
- 4. Shade cloth - supported by network of wires, three edges attached to house and carport with aluminium attachments; fourth side? wire alone? not enough?

Plan view



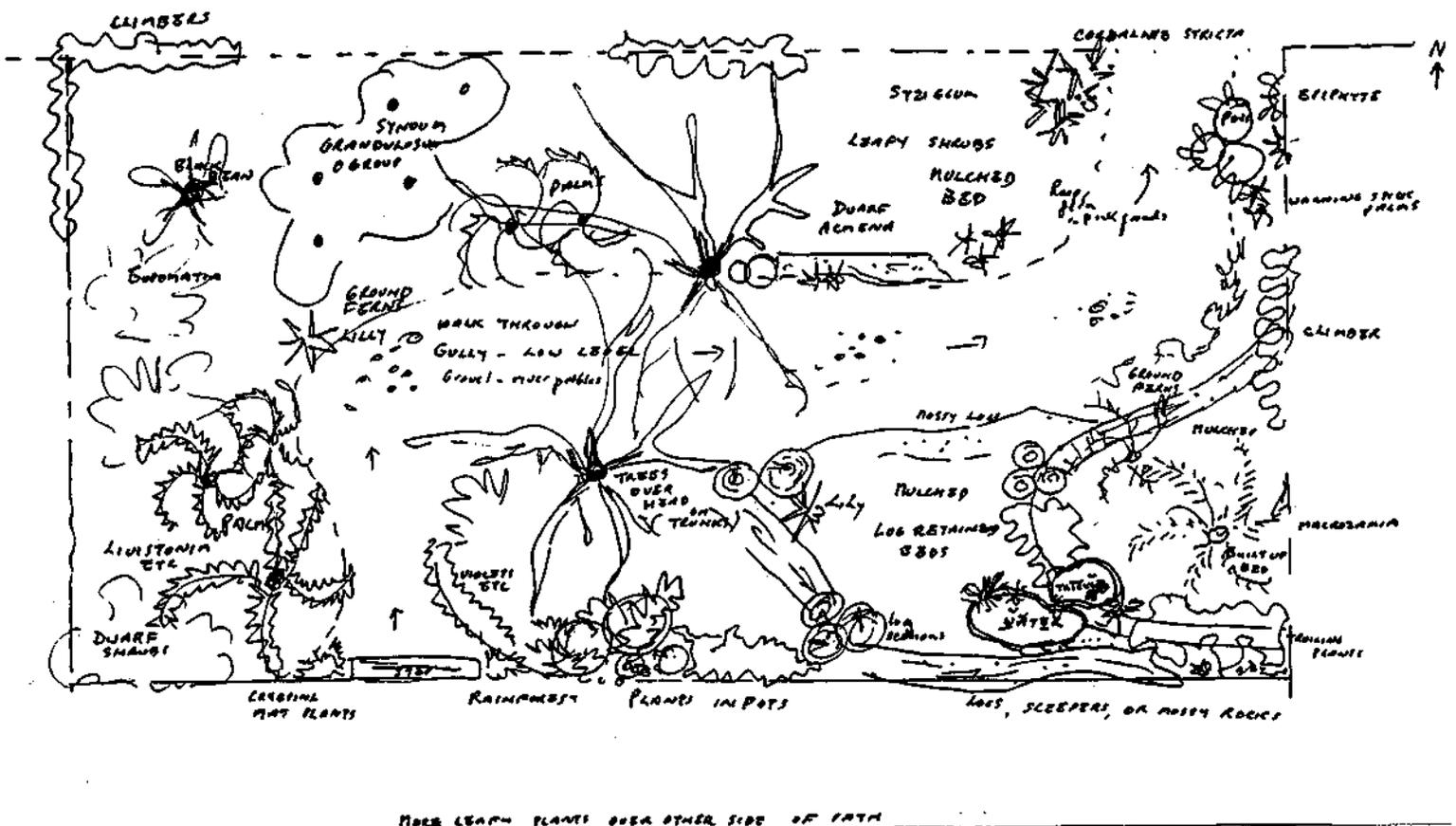
5. Shade cloth on north side - temporary structure.
6. Path to house - paved? with what? at moment concrete.
7. Beds to be mulched heavily, soil raised with depression towards centre of beds to hold moisture and so it runs away from house. Path through garden and around seats - mulch eg mainly wood mulch.
8. Planting -transitional thicket inside and outside of N-facing shade cloth, maybe 3 species (subject to what exists).
 - hardy eg not requiring shade cloth on outside
 - more delicate species inside area
 - groundcover - moss-like species
 - preepers, climbers & epiphytes on poles
9. Seats - slatted and attached to poles.

Choosing plants: We were in favour of a dry rainforest look, thinking that these plants would be an easier transition from the garden, but any 'look' could be achieved within this structure.



Design for a small rainforest area 2

Jan Hall Vic



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Excavated pebbly path - wettest spot, water trickle. Moist, leafy, with various levels of shade. Overhead dappled shade - cloth, or fast growing 'trunky' trees? Straight trunks to give feeling of height. Climbers around and over - quick light climbers to climb up poles or tree trunks or hang out of baskets.

Heavy mulch, logs kept moist to grow mosses, ferns. Logs to retain built up area with feature plants. Mossy rocks: Glossy shiny leaves, some dramatic leaf forms. Leaf colour dark, light or pink new growth.

~~Trees~~ could include: *Castanospermum australe* (Black Bean)

Omatanthus populifolius (Bleeding Heart) - fast growth & pruned up

Plants in pots:- *Rhododendron lochae*

With pink foliage: *Davidsonia pruriens* (Davidsons Plum); *Syzygium wilsonii*; Lilly Pilly cultivars

Colour combinations

Cherree DensleyVic

Melaleuca nesophila features in both.

Firstly, great excitement - *Crinum flaccidum* (Murray Lily) flowered with a large umbel of soft white flowers with a mauve throat - exactly the colour of the melaleuca flowers - and kept on flowering for weeks.

Then another plant in the front garden was flowering next to an Australian hibiscus with huge, saucer-sized soft golden flowers with a centre of dark mauve - exactly the same shade as the mauve of *Melaleuca nesophila*.

Summer, not autumn foliage colours

noted by Geoff Simmons Qid

Geoff Simmons noted a significant segment by Neville Passmore on a recent ABC Garden Show, in which he talked about our 'European climate mindset'. Most of us probably still think in terms of the northern hemisphere cycle with vivid foliage colours in autumn. Even SGAP and GDGS members have probably not fully adjusted. Neville Passmore showed W.A. plants which have their 'autumn' foliage colors of purple, red, orange and yellow over summer, then return to green with the autumn rain. Some of these plants (all shown when back to green too) were:

1. *Borya aphaerocephala* (Resurrection or Pincushion Plant) - vivid oranges and yellows when dehydrated
2. Tree trunks such as *Eucalyptus wandoo* - wonderful colours, e.g. orange tones
3. *Casuarina humilis* - purple to russet
4. *Grewia bipinnatifida* (Fuchsia Grevillea) - bright yellow; I'd certainly think it looked 'sick' in the garden!
5. *Darwinia citriodora* (Lemon-scented Darwinia) - mauves and dull purples
6. *Acacia pulchella* (Prickly Moses) - light yellow foliage
7. A moss - dark rusty red in summer

I wonder how many of our plants can tolerate and survive more dryness over summer than we realize, and how many times I may have assumed a plant dead when it was just dormant. Watering may be quite counterproductive.

Any comments or observations on this topic would be welcome D.S.

10 favourite plants for designing

Grahame DurbidgeNSW

The following is Grahame's list of his favourite Australian plants to use in designing.

1. *Podocarpus elatus* (Plum Pine) A beautiful very green leafed tree. The branches persist to the ground and make it ideal for screening and the leaves do not fall from the tree. It is related to the Pine tree family and is very hardy.
2. *Eucalyptus maculata* (Spotted Gum) Smooth white-grey bark with grey blotches. Fire-resistant. Usually grows tall and straight and high branching on the poor dry soils of this country. Looks its most spectacular when planted in groups.
3. *Melaleuca quinquinervia* (Broadleaf Paperbark) White papery bark, yellow brush flowers, loves wet swampy ground. Great screen and bird attractor.
4. *Buckinghamia celissima* (Ivory Curl) The most glorious long white grevillea type flowers in early Autumn. This tough rainforest plant is spectacular - usually a 3 metre shrub.
5. *Syzygium australe* (Lilly Pilly) Glossy leaved rainforest tree or large shrub. For shade, privacy, edible berries and its general good appearance.
6. *Austromyrtus dulcis* (Midgen Berry) Ferny leaved plant that always looks good. The little berries are bush tucker and the plant is tough enough to grow under those Spotted Gums.
7. *Baeckea virgata* (miniature) A most formal neat little bun.
8. *Aphanopetalum resinosum* (Gum Vine) Vigorous glossy leaved twining climber with perfumed white flowers.
9. *Pandorea jasminoides* (Bower of Beauty) Vigorous climber to hide unwanted views and frame archways.
10. *Livistonia australis* (Cabbage Palm) The best architectural plant. But give it room - those sharp frond bases can kill.

Grahame asks **"What's your top ten?"**

This is quite separate from Grahame Durbidge's 'lop ten' favourite plants for landscaping. I've been thinking of 'signature' plants used in design which to me cry out 'Australian'. My first ten would probably be the following general list, which concentrates on large (or relatively large) plants that are noticeable in a garden and are able (almost on their own) to establish or dominate its character.

1. Eucalypts (+ angophoras & even corymbias if you insist) - particularly those with classical tall pale trunks like Grahame's Spotted Gums.
2. Banksias - as medium to large shrubs full of character, with attractive form & foliage and characteristic floral cones flowering in sequence and producing those chunky, confronting spent cones.
3. Grass-trees - too often a cliché, but a wonderful plant with the satisfying contrast between the solid base and the fine graceful leaves interacting with light.
4. Tree-ferns - appealing for their elegant sculptural form and their strong, graceful green fronds, immediately suggesting the cool moist gullies of their natural habitat.
5. Casuarinas - more typical of many areas of Australia including the centre, with fine, often drooping or sparse foliage in sombre grey greens (occasionally coloured russet) - and of course that magic sound of wind.
6. Acacias - there's such variety the form or foliage can hardly belong to a 'signature' plant but, when in flower, the massed yellow (or cream) is often most spectacular.
7. Melaleucas - particularly for the wonderful paperbark which gives the trunks of many species a very special, rather majestic look, shared by some callistemons; the flowers are a bonus.
8. Grevilleas - the characteristic flowers help make these the most popular of Australian shrubs for suburban gardens, though only those that do flower all year could really justify these being classed as 'signature' plants.
9. Lilly Pillies - as rainforest trees, large shrubs or now dwarf shrubs, these have attractive glossy foliage and the sequence of buds, flowers and fruits give an additional decorative element.
10. I'm giving up. This could be a waratah, a Gynea or Spear Lily, a Cabbage Palm, or one of many rainforest or other plants with which I am not familiar. **Do you have any suggestions?**

.....
"What is a garden?"

Geoff Long NSW

Report of Sydney branch visit to Bolwarra February 15, 1997

Thirteen members of the GDSG took the path through the Bolwarra acre with the discussion questions (see NL 16-8) firmly before them. The day sparkled and the forest delighted us. The path made of mulch and stone with steps to assist on the hillside lead past the old drive - slowly gaining a self sown cover of fern and native sedges - down a eucalypt slope, through the fern gully into the depths of the forest and down to the creek with its pools and ferns.

Well what is a garden? We had the definition from the OED which helped us contain our discussion - *a piece of ground often enclosed where fruits, flowers, herbs or vegetables are cultivated*. It did not really apply to the acre and the intentions of the "minders". What will we call them if they are not gardeners, or are they? Has the garden concept broadened? Is cultivation essential to the concept of a garden? Perhaps makes it a garden? Well then are our National Parks by definition gardens? In fact the dictionary went on to describe - *a park or grounds ornamented with plants and trees or with other displays for public recreation*. Did the definition matter? Yes it did as it helped to explore the ideas, concepts and approach to the acre. The comparisons with orthodox definitions highlights some of the change in thinking about "the space around our houses". In other words what is being done? Why? Are there any responsibilities of the "gardeners" to the environment beyond the acre? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the approach to this one acre?

First of all we decided the acre was probably more than a piece of regenerated bushland into which a path has been "inserted". The path had been placed very purposefully or designed to take advantage of flora, topography, rocks, pools and vistas which is a classical concept. We concluded that the path was really in the European tradition. It was sympathetic and aesthetically harmonious to the "European eye". In that context it was very useful to have some critical appraisal of it - the suggestion that some of the stone edging was too fussy has already produced a rethink and removal of some of the borders. But we wondered if the forest really required to be or could be interpreted in another way than the European tradition, for example how to educate the eye to interpret or appreciate the randomness of the bush, the natural planting.

The creek continued its natural way down the gully, however an unobtrusive enhancement of a natural barrage, made of stone gathered from the banks and floor of the creek, created a larger and more splendid pool.

Strengths of the path design were that it was unobtrusive, confined compaction, restricted weeds and allowed maximum viewing of the acre with minimal disturbance to the plants or environment. The creek barrage was unobtrusive and the pool seemed to improve the scale of the water in relation to the banks and forest. The weakness from a total environment point of view was the possible disturbance to topography and habitat by the removal of stone to build the path and barrage, and possibly the removal of forest debris which was chipped and replaced. Though the munched forest debris looked tidier was this another instance of pleasing the European eye? We don't know what difference these activities have made and one contribution to knowledge could be to document the changes and their apparent effects.

The discussion helped to redefine the objective of the management of the acre. The objective became: to enhance the natural surrounds of the house in order to benefit the humans within the house and the local flora and fauna. This is achieved by improving growing conditions (with the removal of weeds and mulching), minimizing human impact yet maximizing the opportunity to experience the many aspects of the forest. Finally we decided "garden" was a continuum from the totally reconstructed landscape to regenerated bush.

Given the enormous power humans have to disrupt and destroy the natural environment, the gardener must be concerned with the responsibility to the biotic community beyond the confines of the plot. To quote Aldo Leopold, the father of the conservation movement, "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community".

A wonderful weekender for sale

Geoff & Ann Long are building a new house and have to sell 'Bolwarra', described above and visited recently by some NSW GDSG members (also see NL16-7): one acre in the sub-tropical Foxground rainforest with resident lyre-bird, Australian thrush, whip bird, cat bird, etc, and a flora list of 137 species. Geoff says special price consideration will be given to those who wish to preserve and further develop the concept of this natural habitat garden. All weather road access, and the house sounds wonderful too. Private sale, price on application.

Geoff & Ann's house in Camperdown, close to Sydney University/Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, is also now for sale. "Arguably the best house in Camperdown", to which architects and landscape architects have contributed their expertise. It will be auctioned in October if not sold previously.

Reports of S.A. branch meetings

Margaret LeeS.A.

Margaret writes: *I'm sorry this report is late but I've been somewhat distracted, as we had a fire here which demolished our back fence (brush), very large Melaleuca nesophila garden shed and contents, and my entire back garden. A useful lesson here - don't procrastinate! I'd had quotes to cut down the M. nesophila which was a temptation for the local firebugs but had not brought myself to give the word.*

It's a sad indictment of our society when we have to worry about the threat of local firebugs. I hope you have some natural regeneration in your back garden, Margaret, to give you a little encouragement. DS

On **November 2, 1996**, four members and families visited Victor Harbor. **Ian Bond** met us at Nangawooka Flora Reserve, a garden first planted in 1983, among mature eucalypts, by the Fleurieu Zonta Club and the South Coast Field Naturalists. In 1985 the Fleurieu SGAP Group joined them and the garden now contains over 1800 plants. In future it is hoped that many more local plants will be raised and planted here. It was interesting to see what was flourishing in this area and, as many of the plants were several years old, it was useful to see their mature size, shape and condition, as well as admire their flowers and foliage.

We then visited the Church garden which Ian has transformed from a neglected wasteland to a most attractive area, with plants sensitively chosen to complement each other with contrasting colours and foliage and of a scale to suit their position. Paving has been sited to provide a pleasant, shady, clean and dry spot to congregate and a mix of Australian and exotic species have been blended carefully together. A great deal of subdivision and planting has taken place at Victor Harbor recently, some of it using Australian species which contrast with the quick-fix palms & petunias.

(Ian has kindly provided a plan of the Church garden, shown on page 11, and also a description.)

March 8, 1997

We had a very happy meeting with good attendance on a beautiful day. Members discussed some design

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principles and how they applied to their own experience.

It was suggested that we ascertain computer software design packages available which can be used in garden design and have examples available at the Conference. Janet Fisher mentioned one called "Rex 96" and Margie Barnett has "Grow What Where" which lists Australian plants in categories. Margaret Lee mentioned a course run by the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE which uses "Landcadd Site Designer". If you have experience of others, please let us have a brief description.

The growers have advised that the data base of plants available at plant sales, with descriptions and preferred growing conditions, will be available at the next plant sale if a new computer is purchased in time. It was, so we had our data base with its search facilities up and running at the plant sale, and it was a great success.

Next meeting - Sunday July 6: 11 a.m. at the home of Janet Fisher of 1 John Fisher Drive, Torrens Park. At this meeting we will discuss site analysis. ~~Please advise me if able to attend or not.~~

We are trying to prepare a list of gardens which would be useful to visit. If you can suggest any, please let me know.

Victorian meetings

NE Victoria Branch

Next meeting - Sunday May 25: 11 a.m. at Paul & Barbara Kennedy's, . Members of this branch please phone to say whether you can come.

Melbourne meetings

April 6, 1997 at Joan Barrett's place

Report by **Diana Snape**

Joan posed several practical questions for our garden visit:-

1. Re "sunken" area in front garden - where do I go from here? Currently it serves little purpose except as a **space** (and a seed bed!).

Apart from three *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* (Yellow Gum) and screening shrubs on the side boundaries, Joan's front garden is characterised by a delightful combination of small shrubs and herbaceous plants. Her "sunken" area is an approximately circular space of 3 metres or so diameter, defined by a semi-circular bluestone wall (two stones high) set into the east-west slope of the block. It was agreed that this "sunken" area is very attractive just as it is and the space is in pleasing proportion to the area of the front garden. Small plants such as wahlenbergias and daisies soften stone edges and it's mainly the wahlenbergias that seed in the gravel (not really 'weeds!'). However if Joan wanted to do something more (maybe to encourage her to sit there more often), one idea was to introduce a birdbath close to one end of the low wall between the sunken area and a path leading around the side.

2. Re screening shrubs west of sunken area - should I remove *Baeckea virgata*?

The *B. virgata* in question is a pendent form instead of what I think of as the more normal upright form. It's an attractive shrub and is still doing a good screening job; no-one thought it should be removed. Different ways of pruning it were discussed, possibly to accentuate its weeping form. *B. virgata* generally responds well even to severe pruning.

3. Any hints on pruning eucalypts would be handy!

The *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* in question had two strong and quite low side branches - almost trunks - of which one was heading for a powerline. This could eventually become a problem. It was thought that it would be better to remove this one major branch now while the tree is still young and should readily readjust.

Saturday evening May 10 (just past)- Diana Snape's at 8 pm, Neil Marriott's talk.

I'm sorry we had to change the date for this meeting from May 3 but we notified all Victorian members as quickly as possible. It was bad luck that the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Cranbourne and we had organized functions for the same night without realizing it, as many of our members wished to attend both. Notifications of both meetings came out at almost the same time and the GDSG supports the work of the RBG Cranbourne. Fortunately Neil Marriott was able and willing to come on the following Saturday night instead.

On Tuesday May 6 I spoke to Caulfield SGAP Group & on Friday May 16 I'll be talking to Maroondah Group. I'm sure GDSG members from other District Groups would be welcome. I'd encourage Study Group members to talk to their groups about garden design if asked. Slides are available from the slide bank.

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Next meeting - Sun June 1: 2 p.m. at Doug McIver's: Alison
Payne & Doug will demonstrate (and help us with) the use of computer garden design programs. It should be fascinating - you can check your planting ideas before you actually lift a spade. Bring along this NL for discussion too in case we have time. As always phone Doug if you're planning to come.

Sun July 6 - no meeting

Sun August 3 - Linda Floyd's in addition to or as an alternative to a week night meeting in early August at which Simon Close will talk, with slides, about sculpture in the garden. Margarete Lee is starting to organize this special meeting so contact Margarete to indicate interest.

Sept 6 & 7 - SEMINAR WEEKEND- REGISTER NOW! See details below and on last page.

1997 ASGAP Conference in Adelaide, late September to early October (so no October meeting)

Sun Nov 2 - to be decided

Next Sydney meeting

Sunday July 20 - possibly a 'garden crawl' from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Please contact Jo Hambrett

if you'd like to add your garden to those already offered for visiting, or if you'd like to join the 'crawl'. I hope to be there.

I'll be speaking to SGAP NSW on Friday July 18 at the Ermington Community Hall, River Rd, Ermington, 7.30 p.m.

On Friday August 8, I'll be talking to the NSW Central Coast Group. I hope I'll see GDSG members at these meetings.

Wildflower Society of Western Australia - Spring Fling

Sunday September 14: 9.30 am - 4 pm. Perry House (71 Oceanic Drive, Floreat Park) - Bold Park

This special event is being held to display the activities of both the Wildflower Society and Birds Australia (formerly the RAOU) and provide members of the public with a wide variety of information about local flora and birds.

There will be displays, demonstrations and guided walks through Bold Park and Perry Lakes.

There will also be activities for children - a real family outing. Light refreshments will be available.

New members

A very warm welcome to the following new members.

Dave Bright

Maree Burgoyne

Daniel Cole

Brendan Cranney

Pam Eames

Brenton Isted

Bonny Reichelt

Greg Varady-Szabo

Taresa Yates

The Seminar in September should be inspiring. On Saturday morning, speakers will be concentrating on principles of design. On Sunday morning, the emphasis will be on a practical approach to garden design. We have now confirmed almost all our speakers and the/re a very talented group. The afternoon garden visits will include some very special and different small gardens in the inner suburbs not far from Burnley. In plant content they range from largely Australian to largely exotic and each is worth seeing for its design interest. Details will be sent to you following receipt of your registration form including, if you request it, a list of accommodation available close to Burnley.

PLEASE SEND YOUR REGISTRATION FORM IN PROMPTLY - WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Although we're not financially driven it's good to have a healthy bank balance. On behalf of all members I'd like to thank our treasurer Peter Garnham for his continuing work through this financial year. Peter also keeps track of our membership (not such an easy task as you might think), assisted by Linda Floyd who manages to extract those lists, labels, etc. from her computer. I appreciate the efforts of all members who play a part, however small, in participating in the work of the Study Group. A special thanks to all those who have contributed to this NL, or previous ones. My apologies to members whose letters or articles I have not yet acknowledged - life is busy and I'm behind schedule. The August Newsletter will probably run a little late too, as I'll be away during June and July (heading north again).

PLEASE REMEMBER IT'S RENEWAL TIME - PETER IS LOOKING FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU.

I hope you enjoy a good autumn rainfall. Best wishes from

Giana

A.S.G.A.P. GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP**Membership Renewal Form: Financial Year 1997/8**

[Please print details]

Surname _____ First name _____

Address _____ Post code _____

Please complete *if any changes*:- Phone No. _____ Fax No. _____Professional qualifications and/or expertise related to Garden Design: _____

Do you wish to have your name put on a referral list for enquirers seeking professional garden design advice? _____

Annual Subscription \$20 Overseas members; \$5 Concession for pensioners or full-time students;
\$10 (This covers up to two members at the same address.)

Enclosed is a cheque/money order for \$.....being the full / concessional* membership subscription for the 1997/8 financial year. (*My concessional category is.....)

Signed.....

Date...../...../.....

- Please return this form with your subscription to: Peter Garnham,
- Subscriptions will be acknowledged in the next Newsletter. Please let us know if you would like a receipt.

SGAP VIC WEEKEND MEETING - GARDEN DESIGN SEMINAR - 6 & 7 SEPT. 1997**Hosted by the GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP**

To: Peter Garnham (Treasurer)

Inquiries: Peter Garnham
Diana Snape**No. Saturday** **No. Sunday** **No. billets** (limited no. available)

_____ Lunch \$5 _____ Lunch \$5 _____ Friday

_____ Dinner \$20 _____ Vegetarian preferred _____ Saturday

_____ Other fixed expenses (all participants) \$12

- I enclose registration cheque payable to the ASGAP Garden Design Study Group for \$ _____
- Reservations close 1st August 1997. Earlier return of this form will be appreciated.
- On receipt of your registration form, details will be sent to you.

Surname _____ First name _____

Address _____ Post code _____

Phone No. _____ Fax No. _____

Plants for sale / display? Would you like to offer plants for sale or a display at the Seminar?.....