

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

NEWSLETTER No. 22

August 1998

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

Dear Members,

Our aims (see page 4), revised in the light of members' suggestions, have changed just a little - I hope you approve. Thank you to those members who made thoughtful and valuable suggestions. Please let me know if you have any further questions or comments. The 'mission statement' I am recommending differs just slightly from those suggested, putting a little more emphasis on Australian plants rather than on garden design as these are not mentioned in the title 'Garden Design Study Group' (because of course we are a Study Group of ASGAP).

I hope you'll enjoy the variety of contributions to this Newsletter. I particularly liked Chris Larkin's delightful frankness and her perceptive comments in the 'short history' of her garden's development, it also provided a fascinating glimpse into the ideally ongoing cooperation between a garden owner and designer. Our book reviewers do a wonderful job for us and keep me wanting to read more. Thank you to all contributors!

NEXT MEETINGS

Please see details of these meetings in text (pages 18 - 20)

NE VIC: Sunday AUGUST 23 at Margaret Garrett's
MELBOURNE: Sunday OCTOBER 4 at Shirley Cam's
SYDNEY: Sunday NOVEMBER 16 - contact Jo Hambrett

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CORRESPONDENCE extracts

"One of the benefits of retirement, particularly for an inherently lazy person, is to ponder over subjects such as gardening - a prospect not possible at work when other tasks are constantly being presented for attention," **Geoff Simmons** Qld
(Certainly a joy of retirement - but I can't believe Geoff is inherently lazy!)

"I'm interested in coastal design, with sandy soil and estuarine influence. Mount Wellington is 10km away and part of our 'landscape' - snow holds in winter. Presently a light eucalyptus-dominated stand for canopy, with acacias, proteas and grevilleas beneath and a heathland below again. Focal point is a magnificent NSW Christmas Bush in full colour most of the year. I have to tie all these together complementing views in opposite directions to mountain and river." **Melva Truchanas** Tas
(It sounds an inspiring and ultimately very rewarding challenge, Melva.)

"This issue I have made a challenge to myself, to put into practice at least one idea from each Newsletter. Past experience has been to have a very happy reading of it all, and not really any action! The article I intend to emulate (or try to) in this issue will be 'Weekly record of the ten best plants at Killarney' by Cherree Densley. I'll no doubt have to modify it to a smaller number, but that might motivate us to expand our Australian plants. I liked your affirmative "yes" answer to "Are native flowers better than exotics?". I have fluctuated with Aust/exotics but your reply to that question is helpful to me." **Wendy Evans** NSW

"I thought you'd be interested to know that we've now resolved that incipient pond area to the west of our house. All the rubbish of blackberries and roses came out, the pond was 'neatened' up and stones put in the shallow spots, then Malcolm with some help from a friend planted the edges with indigenous species. It looks great now and we have high hopes!" **Jane Calder** Vic
(We visited Jane's garden at a re-located meeting on November 2nd last year - NL19-20. It is a wonderful mature garden with a preponderance of exotic plants.)

"I really appreciate your generous efforts in putting together the Newsletter with your provocative and stimulating inclusions to guide all of us readers on to continued design development. (Thank you Caroline!) The items I enjoy most are notes on personal experiences in growing specific plants, their joys and their weaknesses, and their value in design, be it their subtly or impact on the scene. 'Hibbertias - You light up my life' from an article by Jan Simpson in the last Newsletter, was an excellent example." **Caroline Gunter** NSW (See Caroline's note under 'Plants in design' on page 18.)

"I like the idea of designing for mess, because if you look at nature the things that clean up its mess are the animals that live in it. Branches, leaves, twigs and bark are essential; if you do not want them on traffic areas, remove them from there and place them in the garden beds. This will build up the compost layer as well as feeding the animals. A garden that looks natural will provide some interesting discoveries.

Regarding replacement plants for European plants, these lists would be beneficial, as they will show people what Australian plants can be used instead of exotics." **Neil Goldsborough** W.A.

"I have just moved from a clay-ey, shaded block in Land Cove (Sydney) to a clay-ey, shaded coastal block in Kiama ! So now not only do I have clay and shade to deal with but also sea spray! The block is

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wall-to-wall trees around the edges - which (the trees) will block a superb view. They are only smallish at the moment so we will probably take some of them out (ouch) and replant with whatever is appropriate for birds (honey and insect eaters abound) and salt and wind. What is there at the moment is mostly *Eucalyptus botryoides*, a couple of *E. oenocarpa* which we'll probably leave, two *Acacia glaucescens* (fate of one undecided), an unknown but to-be-large eucalypt. It is a very hilly site with a pole house at the side, with casuarinas and a Silky Oak which are O.K. All the others are on the flat bit at the bottom and I hope to have more sun and light at least in the morning and early afternoon.

Any suggestions? I can't believe I moved from a difficult site to one even more so, with salt and wind added - it's not directly on the sea, but only a reserve and 5 -10 minutes walk away. Help!" **Gillian Morris** NSW

(I'm a casuarina addict myself - there are hardy coastal species which don't grow huge. They tolerate salt, they moderate wind and are wonderful in design. I'd investigate the local wattles but I might be tempted to try one *Eucalyptus ficifolia* - definitely a coastal species itself. What bright ideas do members have?)

"Tomorrow (25/6/98) I shall be representing the Australian Plants Society (SGAP) at a meeting of the Olympic Co-Ordination Authority, to make proposals for their "temporary" landscaping requirements. I shall let you know the outcome." **Gordon Rowland** NSW
(Report on Gordon's meeting in next NL, I hope.)

"I'm looking forward to gaining any knowledge I can put to use to make my garden more interesting. Because of work commitments my garden consists mainly of trees and shrubs but now needs colour, nooks and crannies of interest." **Jeanette Devlin** Qld
(I like Jeanette's idea of 'nooks and crannies' - much more appealing than the usual flat or regular surfaces.)

"I am a SGAP Victoria member and have been meaning to enquire about your Study Group for quite a while. I own a mostly native nursery in Bellbrae near Torquay and have been planting a display garden. I am greatly looking forward to reading the Study Group material. I would appreciate it if you could send me the relevant information." **Dianne Clark** Vic

What is a garden?

Faisal Grant Vic

"Many would argue that a collection of Australian plants, grown without consistent reference to original (indigenous) habitat can be called a garden. But I would say that such a definition belongs to an age when specimens stripped from their landscapes ended up in desultorily-maintained suburban plots, and when natural unity was traded for artificial appearances. I think that a native garden necessarily demands a holistic view, one in other words that is inclusive, not one that isolates single features or species. I've been hoping that we are at the beginning of defining a NEW garden, a space that is, in fact, a reproduction of the wild, where the natural forces historically seen as our enemies would be accepted as fundamental to both authenticity and long-term viability.

To date I would say that most of what we call gardening has been nothing but a shameful exercise in greed and vanity. Its record has been one of displacing whole regions of the world - a sort of shuffling around of bits and pieces - while vast chunks of it, ecosystems and species, drop out of it, made extinct. Examples of unified beauty, let alone the understanding of natural forces, are exceedingly rare. Can we hope to alter this habit by inserting natives? No. It isn't enough. Landscapes will be wiped out and outdoor decoration put in their place. Whether there are a few natives or not may help maintain a bit of tough wildlife, but without a comprehensive sense of environmental stewardship, most of what we call "Nature" will disappear and Australians will have lost all chance of having true understanding for their country.

When I think of design as related to a native garden, I must not only adhere my aesthetic concept to the underlying needs of the ground, but ensure that the needs of everything I introduce to the ground are sufficiently met for the garden to reach its optimum state. Design is based primarily on the rigors of a situation. The environment is not an abstraction, but actually includes me as the single biggest instigator of change. It includes the air blowing through it, the water I use and the condition of my soil, and so on.

At the most basic level, when you put a native garden together, you realise that artificial means of maintenance are useless. A native garden should be able to survive without them. My sense of a native garden should make me feel that I am the keeper of some ground that should essentially look after itself as it has done for time immemorial. We really do have the chance to totally redefine what gardening is, but as long as we think of it only as the collecting of specimens, we will be doing all the flora of this amazing but vanishing country a regrettable disservice."

("A reproduction of the wild" - "ground that essentially looks after itself" - is this really possible in urban and suburban gardens? Is conservation of genuine ecosystems more vital?)

A MISSION STATEMENT and revised AIMS (*italics indicate additions*)

Thank you to all members who made suggestions regarding our mission statement or aims. We'd be interested to hear any further comments you have on the following.

Mission statement

The Garden Design Study Group promotes Australian plants through good garden design.

The main aims of the GDSG are to:

1. carry out theoretical & practical investigation of garden design using Australian plants.

This includes reading books and articles on garden design (with exotic plants as well as Australian plants) and having experienced speakers talk to us. A vital aspect of practical investigation is the keeping of plans and written and photographic records of examples of good garden design. A number of garden design projects are underway.

2. develop resources for people who are interested in garden design with Australian plants and liaise with other SGAP Study Groups and relevant Societies. The resources would include the outcomes of our first aim. Cataloguing of records of gardens and photographs, using a computer database, has already started and is a big job. *We'd like to encourage the development of a computer program on garden design using Australian plants instead of exotic species.*

3.(new) encourage imaginative & innovative garden designs using Australian plants, including local flora where appropriate, in gardens belonging to members of the Garden Design Study Group, other members of SGAP, and the general public.

4. encourage more & better use of Australian plants in gardens which the public can visit.

This refers to both public and private gardens. We need a wide variety of good examples of different styles of garden, ideally in such schemes as the Australia's Open Garden Scheme, to overcome many people's negative view of straggly native gardens.

5. produce four Newsletters a year & publish articles on garden design, leading to the publication of a book or booklet(s).

As you know our Newsletters are about 20 A4 pages in length and they are our main means of communication, so we rely on 'feedback'. Some members also write articles for magazines and newspapers and give talks to SGAP and other groups.

(A new logo Ideas can be submitted at any time. Suggestions have been to include a figure or a house.)

DESIGN

Planning ahead for temperature increase?

Geoff Simmons Qld

Amongst the many dire predictions in the modern world, climate change caused by the greenhouse effect is perhaps second to the threat of pollution. Both are inextricably linked with population growth. The predictive ability of scientists may not be endorsed by some people but wisdom would suggest that neglect by gardeners of the possibility of increased temperatures should not occur when many plants require several years to reach adult size. The rate of temperature change may vary in different regions of Australia so the means of alleviating higher temperatures may also have a degree of uncertainty.

A few factors can be suggested:

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1. Planting trees to produce shady tunnels over paths and screening over seats. The result may be a reduction of open space.
 2. Selection of plants - Australia's vast variety of plants growing in regions with high temperatures or aridity means that there is a good opportunity to select appropriate plants. There are rainforests in warmer regions to draw upon. Fortunately Australian trees are usually evergreen with mechanisms to combat harsh conditions.
 3. Seasonal growth patterns - if summers are hotter, more emphasis may be required to utilise cooler winter growing conditions. This may be especially relevant to annuals.
 4. Colours - does increased temperature mean more sunlight? If so, the choice of flower colours may be compromised. It is already apparent that flamboyant colours are better suited to tropical regions. The subtle pastel shades are better appreciated in plants grown in more temperate climes.
- The uncertainty expressed in the first part of this article opens up the question of whether present garden design should take into consideration climate change. The gardener has the present say but the future will decide.

Design principles (from John Brookes's Garden Design Book)

Jo Hambrett NSW

I looked up John Brookes's Garden Design Book for last Sunday's meeting and thought it wouldn't hurt to include some of his design principles in the Newsletter. He states:

"The character or essence of a good garden, the secret ingredient to which we respond, comes from what I call styling - it should develop from the site in which the house sits - it is the relationship of the garden to its setting both physically and intellectually that ought to pervade every aspect of the design."

Design principles:-

1. The design as a series of abstract shapes

An understanding of the ways shapes relate to each other is at the very heart of garden design; it is the underlying abstract shapes that gave a garden its visual strength. Conceive the design as a series of abstract shapes. Only later do you decide what practical form the shapes will take and start to bring together the organic and inorganic garden elements. Look first at the surrounding landscape; your composition of shapes should sit comfortably within this.

2. Manipulating the eye by visual devices

To anchor the eye in the site you will need a design that makes a strong three dimensional composition in which the elements are in scale with the boundary. Governing how the eye travels around a garden relies not only on linear (or ground patterning) devices but on focal points which punctuate the garden layout.

Thoughts arising (from the Melbourne meeting slide night)

Barbara Buchanan Vic

I was impressed by the selection of slides chosen by Peter Garnham, from the opening shot of houses perched on a hillside in Arizona (I think) where water is unavailable for gardening and the architecture of the house has to stand alone, through the street scenes there where buildings have been adapted to the surviving giant cacti, through more usual natural or man made gardens to the final shot of their shared block in the Grampians, back full circle, no gardening needed. Now the previous evening I had been discussing indigenous only gardens at the Daisy Study Group and one friend feels very strongly that we should never plant anything else, certainly not hybrids or selected forms, only what belongs naturally. To her the ideal situation is to leave all that is there and interfere as little as possible. We were interrupted by the need to attend to the rest of the meeting, but I was left with the thought that I would not know how to cope without any gardening to fill my life. Of course the problem only arises for people lucky enough to live out of town and especially if their land is comparatively unaltered, which certainly does not apply here. My weekend back in the big smoke had me wondering how I had managed to survive so many years there myself and the answer is that I gardened and latterly gardened with Australian plants.

So when those first Arizona houses were shown in all their starkness my reaction was 'how can they bear it?' and 'we may complain about water lack, but we don't know how lucky we are'. At least we have the option of trying to find a suitable garden style with minimum water use, not no water (at least in most years). And then with the final Grampians scene I wondered again how could I live if I had no garden to think about, talk about and actually work in hence I raised my query, could one be content to let things alone? I'm a compulsive gardener. Diana, one of the other co-owners of the block pointed out that although they did little in the garden now, with the full range of Grampians flora to call on there would be no real problems in being

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satisfied with local flora. While both the Snapes and the Garnhams have their city gardens to exercise minds and bodies I guess in their retreat they can escape from the gardening urge and there is no doubt they suffer from it in town, their gardens are ample evidence of that.

But for people living year round in the country, especially close to the bush, the situation is different. We took over farmland which could not be restored in what is left of our lifetimes, who knows what will come after? And who knows what exactly we should be restoring? The old-timers tell us that originally the bush was more open and it was possible to drive wagons through it. The last big fires were early in the century but there has been intermittent logging until very recently. This last summer has seen patches of brown spread across the hills, similar to but more extensive than in the '83 drought. This probably represents a natural thinning out of regrowth a gradual return to a natural 'climax', or perhaps I should have said a *progression* to a climax, because now that we have rabbits, wild pig and goats not to mention feral plants such as the blackberry, St. John's Wort and Pater-son's Curse, and not far off even the native Sweet Pittosporum, nothing can ever be exactly the same.

Thus I cannot feel too guilty about using plants from all over Australia (if they will grow) in following my need to be growing and planting, hoping that I will make a place of serenity and beauty. I try to avoid known potential weeds and I try to grow local plants, but they are strangely difficult, apart from the trees, and at once the awkward question pops up, just where are the boundaries of local? We have an indigenous form of *GreviHeaalpina* on our block but only a few miles away in almost any direction there are different forms, such as the Warbies form. A few miles up the 15 Mile Creek and the vegetation becomes very wet sclerophyll. What was here before clearing?

Coping with constraints

Diana Snape Vic

Frequently when I read advice on garden design I get the impression that the writer is picturing an empty block of land, probably in the middle of beautiful countryside or else in an attractive suburban area. The spirit or 'genius' of the place ('genius loci') is a very friendly genius you'd be only too happy to consult. In the country there will usually be space to work with and within, but in the suburbs many of us move into a house in an established neighbourhood and start work on an old garden, in among other houses and gardens which may not provide a 'spirit' we respond to with enthusiasm. We're lucky if Australian plants predominate in the garden we inherit, or in neighbouring gardens. (This is also true for the country of course, but I think the 'borrowed landscape' is likely to be more appealing and further away.)

So I think most of us work under constraints of one kind or another. We are familiar with the recognized constraints of climate and soil but there are many others just as important in terms of design, especially for a small suburban block. Here are a few questions I'd welcome your comments on;

- Can we carry out significant changes in soil level or use of large rocks if neighbouring blocks are obviously as flat as a pancake? (Or vice versa)
- If your area has no rocks but the neighbours have, should you follow their example?
- If all the other gardens in the street are exotic do we have just Australian plants if this is what we want? After all indigenous plants were here first and relate to the original 'spirit of the place'. (I say yes, in the hope of influencing some of the neighbours, but this may take time!)
- Would it be better to have a mixture of Australian and exotic plants, to blend a little with the neighbouring gardens? Can we find the true 'genius loci' in these circumstances? Is there one?
- How thoroughly can and should you screen off neighbouring properties to isolate yours? Should we use similar fencing materials to theirs - e.g. stone/brick/timber/brush - wherever bearable?

A similar range of questions arise for any existing garden:

- If there are fences or screens between your garden and the neighbours', can you just ignore their garden in your design? What about that large exotic tree you can't but help see over the fence, which is a magnificent eye-catching orange-red in autumn?
- How hard-hearted/firm should we be in retaining existing plants? Should our design start from those (particularly trees) we carefully select from among them, or should it be produced without reference to any of them so we are really starting from scratch (and some or all trees have to go)?
- Should Australian plants always be given priority over exotic plants for retention, or does this depend on the design as it is gradually implemented?
- If you feel a 'genius loci' has already been created for the garden, based on the use of Australian plants, should you stay with it or can you go against it? (e.g. you might want to use similar indigenous plants

but in a formal rather than a naturalistic way.) How do you identify an appropriate 'spirit of the place'?

Renovating an existing garden gives us an excellent opportunity to remove plants which are already there but appear unsuitable either in terms of the overall design or their state of health. It helps when you haven't planted them yourself! I know I'm still frequently too faint hearted to take out plants promptly when they do not grow well, because I hope they will suddenly 'take off' - they almost never do. So I think unhealthy plants or those in entirely the wrong position should not be a constraint in a new garden - I think it is best to get rid of them and design on as clear a canvas as possible!! On the other hand, an appealing plant or group of plants already there may have a beneficial influence your design.

GARDENS

Quotes about gardens

Shirley Pipitone ACT

An interesting quotation I found: "A garden is man's idealised view of the world; and because most men are representative of the society of which they are a part, it follows that fashionable gardens of any community and any period betray the dream world which is the period's ideal." (Derek Clifford, '*A History of Garden Design*', 1963). From my recent wanderings through regular garden centres, the most common Australian dream world seems to involve formal gardens with low Box hedges! Maybe if we are very persistent, we will eventually have some impact on this peculiar dream world. Personally, I can't think of a worse nightmare than clipping neat square edges.

And another quotation about the aim of garden design: "to create a work of art that is aesthetically pleasing to all the senses, is functional, and is harmonious with the physical environment in which it must survive." I would add being harmonious with the cultural environment as well. Box hedges may be harmonious with straight line streetscapes but they are not in harmony with our natural environment or the Australian casual lifestyle.

The one I like is this: "An organization of outdoor species to delight the eyes, stimulate the intellect and enlighten the soul." **Paul Kennedy Vic**

A short history of my garden's development

Chris Larkin Vic

My husband Bill and I have lived here on this wonderfully warm north-facing hillside for approximately 16 years. In the last 10 years we have designed and built a house (2 years in construction) and torn down the old shack we lived in for 8 years. One year after moving into the new house there was some talk of upgrading our old car; I opted for a garden instead. In reality this meant that the old car had to last us another 5 years!

Seven years ago when the original part of the garden on the south side of the house was started I knew nothing about Australian plants. When Roger Stone submitted a plan and quoted for the job his plant knowledge was possibly the single deciding factor in Bill and myself choosing him to carry out the work. We wanted someone with the horticultural knowledge of Australian plants, which we recognized that we lacked, to create a beautiful garden. From the start, I now realise, I saw successful garden design largely in terms of successful landscaping.

The garden has always been mine although there has been plenty of discussion between Bill and myself before final decisions have been made. For the first year after the first stage of the garden was completed I 'observed' the garden closely. I didn't know what anything would grow to look like, i.e. size and shape. I had no idea when the different plants would flower or what coloured flowers they would produce. I did try to learn plant names but I was too frightened of my own ignorance to think of joining a SGAP group immediately.

From this highly successful beginning, thanks to Roger, I eventually began to tentatively extend the garden by myself. By this time the existing garden had begun to speak to me, to suggest that a certain move in a certain direction would enhance the garden and enable it to flow onto the hillside instead of ending abruptly. After putting in two new beds I agonized, listened to the opinions of friends, talked to Bill and visited gardens. I thought, thought, thought and strained to visualize until eventually I arrived at a master plan for the entire hillside on the south side of the house. This plan has been largely adhered to with only relatively minor modifications, some of which are still going on. I just can't stop fine tuning it, but then I guess that's what hands on gardening is all about.

The garden on the north side of the house was developed in two stages, with a two year separation. The first section was a relatively small amount of garden and pathway directly in front of the house. The second stage of development, completed in 1997, was extensive. It commenced with a drot (similar machine to a bulldozer) moving soil, redesigning driveways and digging a hole for a big pond. Apart from the rather major contribution, as it turned out, made by the drot operator, the main structural elements - terracing with

rocks and sleepers, ponds, pathways and plantings - are due to Roger's skills and gifts. I worked alongside the team and feel that I made a very real contribution in labour as well as in decision making, particularly with respect to the placement of plants (the part I liked best).

Over the years I have learnt a vast amount from Roger, from SGAP, from reading, observing and doing. I am lost in admiration for the person or persons who can create a beautiful garden; there is just so much involved in getting it right, or at least in approaching some ideal vision. Skills (e.g. paving and sleeper walls) and knowledge (e.g. of plants) are essential but so too is a sensitivity conveyed through the garden design that amount to an aesthetic for the garden. This sensitivity is connected to such things as the placement of rocks, the shaping of garden beds and pathways, and the selection and positioning of plants.

There are whole sections of this garden (south side mainly) that I have made the lion's share of decisions about, although I must admit I have dragged Roger up the hill on many, many occasions to test out a theory with him, or to show him something or to ask his opinion on something. However the future success of the garden in the sections Roger has been responsible for establishing, as well as those I have developed, will rely mainly on my plant knowledge and 'plantscaping' abilities. I am the day-to-day gardener who tends the plants and must make decisions about removing and replacing them. It is this choice of plants, always in relation to other plants and the environment, that will continue to shape a truly beautiful garden.

Albury/Wodonga Garden Visits during SGAP Vic Regional meeting, March 98.

Barbara Buchanan Vic

As many ordinary members had come from Melbourne in a bus for the weekend we had the luxury of travelling to the various gardens by bus while the committee was in session. The weather was still hot and dry - it was one of the driest periods on record in the area and some of the gardens were showing the stress, being designed to rely on natural rainfall. It was very interesting to compare the various styles and auras of the gardens.

- The first was a very new, very open garden, still with a lot of lawn and the maker's aim is to have a 'traditional' style garden with Australian plants. These are all in defined garden beds and trimmed and shaped to fit in with surrounding gardens. I have a sneaking suspicion that if the gardener's love affair with Australian plants continues this may well relax, but currently it is a statement that one can have a semi-formal garden with natives and if it develops along the same lines could be a showpiece for this use of them.
- The next garden was on a steep hillside, developed after the maker read John Hunt's book and before the local SGAP started when Australian plants were in limited supply and had to be home propagated from seed or cuttings. The hillside is channelled to carry water in a zigzag from top to bottom, even the street gutter is diverted, and the spaces between channels planted so that no plant is far from where the water runs. A bluish, 60cm *Poa* from Thredbo is used to line the drive and fill corners. A whole clump of *Casuarinas* fills one area, there are small *Eucalypts* which have been coppiced to keep them within their space, and a natural mix of shrubs right down the hill. The garden has recently taken second place to the rebuilding of the house and perhaps will be rejuvenated soon, and it was showing signs of the stress of the season; nevertheless it has a relaxing atmosphere, a feel of the bush.
- The third garden was a flat acre block in an outer area of large blocks. The first plantings included Australian and exotics, largely trees, as boundary screens. The later plantings are more Australian and include smaller plants and some use of raised mounds. The predominant feel is shade and space, very welcome on such a warm day, a simple, uncluttered feel.
- The fourth garden is only a quarter acre in size, but what a lot has been packed into that space. It was not surprising to learn that it had won an award in a local municipal competition. The block has an unusual configuration and areas are developed quite differently. Large rocks give interest to the drive strip, often a problem spot, and overlooked by the house is a small rainforest area, looking very lush and inviting especially as the fountain was playing. Everywhere there are pots of 'fusspots' in wonderful health and wide variety. The small back yard is fairly filled with indigenous trees which blend with a park beyond and this yard is usually full of gymnastic equipment for the children. Small but very special.
- The final garden was a collector's garden and it was hard to look for the bones because of the great variety of wonderful unusual plants looking perfectly at home. The stage was set by a *Eucalyptus erythrocorys* on the front fence line. The back was divided into rooms with the larger shrubs along the boundaries, open space just left inside. The swimming pool almost disappeared. Another wonderful experience.

The Albury-Wodonga group had been very worried that with the adverse season their gardens would lack interest. They need not have been. It was the most gardens I have seen in a concentrated session. They did their makers credit individually, but as a display of the range of mood that can be created with Australian plants I found it both fascinating and inspiring.

'Rodger and his Band from Downunder' : California/Arizona Garden Tour

Friends of Cranbourne Botanic Garden, March/April 1998

John Armstrong Vic (one of the Band)

67 gardens, nurseries, parks, forests and deserts in 25 days was a wonderful feast. Small appetizers, hardly bigger than an average living room, so packed with plants it was like wandering through a jungle, and yet there was room for imaginative use of garden seats, pools, fountains and pots, together with a productive apple orchard (well, three trees). While a similar sized garden offered tiers of succulents and Californian plants up a very steep slope behind a San Francisco terrace house and was a great contrast of colours, forms and textures when viewed from the balcony.

Other small gardens provided us with surprise contrasts between formality and wild nature together with wonderful use of 'found' objects, creating an amused laugh or stunned amazement. Perhaps the most spectacular and interesting small garden was the Valentine garden, a minimal water use garden designed by Isabel Green. The garden was designed to be looked down on from the first floor terrace and formed a tapestry or carpet, mainly of succulents or small plants no higher than a few centimetres arranged in patterns of contrasting colours, forms and textures. This was enhanced by the great attention to detail of the lighting, the design of the taps, and the wonderful pottery hose receptacles ... food for thought for our dry climate.

These gardens were contrasted with the larger 'old Estate' Descanso, Huntington, Lotusland and Filoli gardens where acres of formal gardens seemed to go on endlessly all beautifully kept by teams of 'friends', and the delightful Botanic Gardens at Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, Strybing (San Francisco), Berkeley, Davis, Tilden, Rancho Santa Ana, Phoenix, Tucson and Boyce Thompson, with their great displays of Californian plants in a wild meadow setting. Many of these gardens had a significant collection of Australian plants and often we saw a Grass-tree or Doryanthes lily in flower among banksias, eucalypts and grevilleas.

.....
The Sonoran desert near Tucson, wondrous at sunset with the majestic tall Saguaro 'Cacti' dotting the hillsides, gave us another dimension to the tour. Then there were all the nurseries from 6 to 170 acres with their never-ending rows of plants, including some Australians which do well in their similar climate.

The last morning we were fortunate enough to have time to visit Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural desert camp 'Taliesin West', a marvellous exercise in environmental building in the stony Arizona desert. The beautiful use of the land form and space to provide a summer school and residence ... quite an experience to walk through ... why aren't there more like this - after all it was built more than 60 years ago?

But perhaps the best was a visit to the garden designed by Thomas Church in the late 1940s, one hailed as the best garden of its time, about two acres in the centre of a family ranch on a hilltop (overlooking an arm of San Francisco bay some miles away). The swimming pool echoing the shape of the bay in the distance, the minimal use of plant varieties, the sweeping lawns and wonderful pavements contained by a very low meandering hedge all embracing the house and pool - the simplicity absolutely stunning.

There was much more ... Rodger and Gwen (Elliot) did a marvellous job and we formed a great group of 8, known as 'Rodger and his Band from Downunder'. Luckily no one asked us to play!

Australia's Open Garden Scheme

It's good to hear that gardens of two Sydney members will be open as part of the Open Garden Scheme this year. One is **Gordon Rowland's garden on 3rd and 4th October**, the other **Jo Hambrett's garden "Yanderra" on 17th & 18th October**. Jo is leader of the Sydney Branch of the Study Group and Gordon was the original Sydney leader. I'm sure both will have the support of Sydney GDSG members.

Another indigenous garden designed by Gordon will also be Open as part of the Scheme. The book listing Open Gardens will be coming out in August, so that will give all details.

GDSG members Melbourne gardens in the Scheme are listed in NL 21-8. I hope members in all States will try to visit gardens where use of Australian plants is mentioned under a special category.

BOOKS**'The Book of Garden Design'** by John Brookes (Macmillan 1991)**Shirley Pipitone** ACTCategorising Australian Plants

In the last Newsletter, I revised 'The Book of Garden Design' by John Brookes. I found the most interesting concept in the book to be the way he categorises plants for the purpose of designing with them. His categories are very much for aesthetic purposes rather than practical design uses such as shade, windbreak or screen.

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Brookes describes five key plant categories: the specials, the skeletons, the decoratives, the pretties and the infill. In this article, I will describe the categories according to Brookes, and I will give a few examples of Australian plants in each category. In a further article, I plan to consider whether these categories are relevant to Australian plants in Australian style gardens. I'm not sure about this myself yet, so I welcome any debate. All page references are to Brookes' book.

• 'Specials'

These are "the star performers that form focal points for the garden's design and are crucial to the direction of the eye within and around the site" (p.114).

The key features of specials are:

- they have architectural value, i.e. a good outline
- they perform all year round
- they are dominant
- there should probably be only a few of them
- there will be a special or specials for the whole garden, and also specials for each planting area, which relate to the main specials.

What plants are NOT 'specials'? If you think a plant is 'special' because of their flowers or any other temporary feature, then they certainly are special to you, but not in this garden design context. They are probably your favourite decorative plant. Most correas are a good example of non-specials. But banksias could be specials on the basis of their foliage, their old flower heads or their form, because these features are striking and there all year round.

Plants with architectural value include most eucalypts, trees or shrubs with a weeping form (eg *Baeckea linifolia*), palms, cycads or large spiky things. The special in a tiny courtyard could be a clump of *Lomandra*, repeated in the main garden space. *Grevillea endlicheriana* is a lovely medium-sized special because of its form and soft foliage. To be dominant, specials need to be visible. Often this means spacing them apart at least a little from other plants. Or maybe they stand out because of sheer size, especially height. They may dominate the garden or balance another feature. Ground cover specials (e.g. *Acacia cognata* 'Green Mist') probably often act to balance or set off another feature, while still being special in themselves.

• 'Skeleton' planting

These plants make up the year-round green framework for the garden as a whole and for sections within the garden. Brookes emphasises that skeleton planting determines what the garden will look like in winter, an important consideration with deciduous plants. Key characteristics are:

- good evergreen foliage
- winter interest
- positioned for viewing from the house (because that's where you would be in a northern hemisphere winter or in places like Canberra)
- provide screening from wind or for privacy, and perhaps provide an enclosure.

In the northern hemisphere, the skeletons will be hedging plants such as holly, yew and juniper, and winter performers for their flowers, berries, ostentatious seeds or dramatic stems.

With Australian plants, skeleton planting is still needed to define the shape of the garden or its sections. Repetition of the same or similar types of foliage gives a strong framework, e.g. a screen of *Acacia boormannii*. A row of plants of similar height will provide a stronger framework than a row of plants of very different sizes all mixed up. Plants with similar foliage colour can also define a curve as your eye will follow the line of colour standing out from other greens. Plants with very fussy or very distinctive foliage may not make good skeleton plants because individual plants may capture too much attention.

Skeleton plants may have beautiful flowers as a bonus extra, but their foliage is the most important characteristic and they must not look 'dog-eared out of season' (p. 127).

• 'Decoratives'

I think this category is self-evident, but often we want to put our special-to-us decoratives into the 'specials' category, or into the 'pretties'.

Decoratives are shrubs displayed in front of or alongside the skeleton planting to provide colour to lighten up the skeleton framework. Decoratives often still have a structural function, but their main purpose is to decorate, using their:-

- flowers (colour and quality)
- attractive foliage
- overall shape.

It is obvious they will be plants you like. Some climbers come into this decorative category (eg *Sollya heterophylla*) and so do tall grasses. A few of my favourite decoratives are *Grevillea* 'Dargan Hill' (for its shape and foliage colour), most correas, croweas, *Eriostemon myoporoides* and *Scaevola humilis*.

• 'Pretties'

These are the perennials for flower and foliage interest in spring and summer. Because many of them die down in winter, they have no permanent structural role in the garden. Small ground-cover plants might be planned in with the pretties. *Brachyscomes*, *Craspedia* sp. and *Wahlenbergia communis* are some of my favourites.

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• 'Infill'

Infill plantings are the transitory splashes of colour as the seasons change, and the invaluable gap-fillers for new schemes. Infill planting has a more random quality than the other categories, and includes plants such as bulbs, annuals and self-seeding plants. Their display may be short-lived but seasonal, they may provide ground cover, or they may be cheeky self-seeders such as *Bracteantha bracteata*. Pots also have great infill potential.

In new gardens, fast-growing acacias can be used as large gap-fillers, and *Myoporum parvifolium* as fast temporary groundcover.

Editor's apology for two typos in Shirley's first review (NL 21 - 9). The book is divided into nine chapters (not 'decided!'). The other was an omitted 'not', i.e. "Brookes does not appear to be aware of the current resurgence of interest in Australian plant gardens". You probably picked them up - somehow I missed them.

Creating a Native Garden for Birds by **Frances Hutchison** (Simon & Schuster 1990) from the Mount Annan Botanic Garden Native Plant Series, in collaboration with the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney. It is the first of a series of books on native plants published by the Gardens. **Doug McIver Vic**

This book has far wider application than first impressions might suggest - we are all involved in the on-going activity of creating a garden, and most native plant enthusiasts would readily agree that gardens and birds are inevitably inter-related, so this book focuses directly on our key interest, creating an Australian garden.

This small book of 176 pages is crammed with practical advice and information, concisely and clearly written. It discusses garden design, soil considerations, advice on plant selection, how to plant, plant recommendations, and advice specific to the requirements of birds. Topics include The Natural Garden, Open Areas and Low Plants, Basic Shrubs for Backgrounds, Thickets, Shelter and Underplanting, Vines, Trees for Birds, Bird Reference List, Human Contact, Predators and Poisons and Community Planting.

I recommend it - I haven't been able to find it in a bookshop but it is listed on the Vic SGAP mail order list.

Recording Gardens - A Guide to Measuring and Recording Gardens by **Richard Ratcliffe** (Mulini Press in association with the Australian Garden History Society) **Doug McIver Vic**

Richard Ratcliffe is an architect and a landscape architect. He is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects and a foundation member of the Australian Garden History Society. As a member of the AGHS he has been involved with other volunteers in recording historic gardens, and found it helpful to run occasional workshops on recording gardens, to improve the quality of the records produced. *Recording Gardens* is a natural outcome of this activity.

Anyone who wants to make a record of a garden will find this book very helpful, but it won't make the task quick and easy. It will take time and care, and this book is encouraging in that it shows that special skills and equipment are not essential - time and care are enough.

Recording Gardens is a useful and practical guide, well written, and with a touch of humour to lighten a task which must be taken seriously to be successful. The art of measuring a garden is explained in easy to understand terms. It explains how to draw a plan and enter on it the trees and plants as well as features such as steps, walls, and seats. The 16 A4 pages include a number of sketches illustrating the techniques to be used, and includes several examples of completed garden plans.

Recording Gardens is a joint AGHS/Mulini Press publication and is available for \$5.00 (plus \$1.50 for postage and packing) through Mulini Press, P.O. Box 82, Jamison Centre, A.C.T. 2614.

Second Nature by **Michael Pollan** (Delta 1991)

Jo Hambrett NSW

I thought members might be interested in an abridged form of the "Garden Ethic" which appears in Michael Pollan's book "Second Nature".

1. An ethic based on the garden gives local answers. "Consult the genius of the place in all". The (good) gardener accepts this advice.
2. Although a garden is frankly anthropocentric the gardener recognises he is dependent for his health and survival on many other forms of life, the gardener cultivates wildness carefully and respectfully in

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full recognition of its mystery.

3. The gardener tends not to be romantic (*not sure I agree on this one! JH*) about nature, he's seen her ruin his plans too many times, he has learned to live with her ambiguities.

4. He doesn't take it for granted that man's impact on nature will always be negative.

5. The gardener doesn't feel that by virtue of the fact that he changes nature he is somehow outside of it. He looks and sees that human hopes and desires are by now part and parcel of the landscape.

6. The skill and interest of the gardener lie in determining what does and does not go in a particular place. How much is too much? What suits this land? How can we get what we want while nature goes about getting what she wants?

7. The good gardener commonly borrows his methods, if not his goals, from nature herself. In the end she will let us know what does and doesn't work.

8. If nature is one necessary source of instruction for a garden ethic, culture is the other. Civilization may be part of our problem with respect to nature but there will be no solution without it.

9. The gardener in nature is that most artificial of creatures, a civilized human being - in control of his appetites, solicitous of nature, selfconscious and responsible, mindful of the past and the future and at ease with the fundamental ambiguity of his predicament - which is that though he lives in nature he is no longer strictly of nature.

P.S. I use the above when my husband starts complaining about the nursery bills! And he thinks I just like planting things, huh!!

MAGAZINES

Diana Snape Vic

An apology

The attribution by '*Landscape Australia*' Vol. 20 No. 1 that was reported in NL 21-11 should have read that Taylor and Cullity with Paul Thompson had received the Landscape Excellence Award for the Australian Garden at the Cranbourne Botanic Garden. My apologies to Paul for following the wording of the incorrect '*Landscape Australia*' attribution, that Taylor and Cullity Pty Ltd had received the Award, to which I *atf\$e&* that "Paul Thompson is a key member of the team involved in this exciting project".

In '*Landscape Australia*' Vol. 20 No. 2 (1998), there is an article by David Beardsell on 'Improving the quality of native trees for the landscape industry'. He writes about the variability within an individual species of eucalyptus, for example. This can relate to different methods of propagation, different subspecies or origin of seed, and different vigour of growth. As one example, at least four different subspecies of *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* are known, of which *E. leucoxylon* ssp. *megalocarpa* is considered an 'elite' native tree, with its smooth, attractive vertical trunk, dense rounded canopy and large red flowers.

At the last NE Vic Branch meeting, someone commented on the difficulty of designing with any precision when there is still so much variability in the results we obtain with an individual species. We're used to coping with it - adjusting our design - but won't it be nice when there is more consistency?

'Home Beautiful' July 1998

This issue of the magazine contains an excellent 4-page article ('Back to the natives' by Paul Urquhart) on **Jeff Howe's** garden in Sydney. One catch of our Newsletter being quarterly is that many things happen in between NL so it's difficult to be up-to-date with everything.

In the introduction, the writer says: "The new style of Australian garden is less about the bush and more about the garden. It combines sound design ideas and a better selection of plants. . . . Like any good garden, Jeff's is divided into areas dedicated to different uses. There's an entrance garden, a sunny winter courtyard and a shady summer garden cooled by trees, dense plantings and rainforest plants. As a member of the Design Study Group of the Society for Growing Australian Plants, Jeff is interested in using natives in the same way as others use exotic plants."

The wide ranging but detailed text and beautiful accompanying photographs provide an inspirational and practical approach for any gardener.

'Australian Horticulture' May-June 1998

It's encouraging to see in this issue a number of articles on Australian native plants, including:

- *Rhododendron lochiaie* and *Ft. notiale* by Roger Spencer
- 'Attracting birds with little-known natives' by Denise Cauchi
- *Eriostemon australasius* by Brian Faulkner

- Towards a fertilizer program for all Australian native plants' by Kevin Handreck
- a review of a book on Riceflower *Ozothamnus* (syn. *Helichrysum*) *diosmifolius* by Julie Lake
- the genus *Eucryphia* by John Stowar

The editor Anita Boucher entitles her editorial "Hands off Burnley College". I hadn't realized Burnley was under such threat, with the possible loss of 12 of the 67 Burnley staff - almost 20%!

'Australian Horticulture' June-July 98

An article by Helen Moody on 'propagation for revegetation' gives details of some of the problems faced by nurseries supplying such plants. There's a strong need for more forward planning by those who order plants, particularly in large numbers, to give longer lead times to the growers who are producing them. GDSG member **Kate Malfroy** at Jamberoo Native Nursery is one of the growers interviewed for this article, which I found a salutary reminder of all the work involved and the enthusiasm necessary. Congratulations on your work, Kate!

Kate describes her particular/personal/specific area of interest and expertise as Illawarra and Sydney region plant designs, especially revegetation projects - small to large scale.

This issue also includes a farewell to the late Len Butt, a former Queensland SGAF member, a co-founder of the Palm and Cycad Society of Australia and (as reported) leader of the Cycad Study Group of SGAP for 15 years.

DESIGN IDEAS

Grass, or not? ("Have grass, will gravel")

Grahame Durbidge NSW

After a decade of looking at grass struggle to survive/thrive in the backyard, I killed it off completely. Those beautiful Australian eucalypts which for me make the garden Australian are incompatible with grass of the running kind. *Themeda australis* clumps; it is compatible.

Lawn as we know it from the English countryside has finally been banished from the backyard. You have to cover the earth with something to replace the grass, otherwise the first shower of rain will result in erosion. What to cover it with? I used 6mm gravel dust (it came in a grey shade, but I'd have preferred light pink) - a bit 'glary' in full summer sun but, since fast growing eucalypts throw lots of shade, it's not a big issue. Leaves, twigs and gumnuts, the 'leaf carpet', are O.K. by me and you can rake when you feel like it instead of mowing when you have to. The gravel never needs watering, weeding or fertilizing, only an occasional spray with Roundup.

The reason it took so long to make the conversion (grass to gravel) is mainly because most influences, like reading about gardens, seeing gardens and thinking about the loss of that 'green carpet', make you uncertain. The thing that needs to be maintained in garden design terms is 'open space' because a strong feature of the lawn is the role it plays as a clear level area.

I have kept a 3m diameter circular area as a 'luxury patch' to lie upon on hot summer evenings!

'Covering the ground'

Wendy & David Evans NSW

In response to your request for comments on 'covering the ground':- We value leaf litter (leaf carpet) and to supplement our own natural supply (which is rather scant) we occasionally gather some from gutters around our district. (We keep an eye open for banked up drains etc!) The visual result is soft and pleasing; rain or hand watering is more effective, and the texture of our soil gradually improves - earth worms are plentiful and seem to enjoy it. The main challenge is to keep up the supply.

A bridge between art and bush, or unorthodox creativity?

Geoff Simmons Qld

Is garden designing a form of art? If so, one expression of reality will be the transfer of aspects of the Australian environment to the creation of gardens. There is a precedent for this, as aboriginal paintings use a stylised art form to represent fauna and legends. Strangely flora does not appear to be so treated - perhaps it is not publicised as much. The frequent use of terms such as rain-forest and bush by Australian gardeners illustrates bridging from a raw country reality to contrived garden situations. Such terms reflect the generality of many garden designs and are applied by many SGAP members.

Representational garden design offers quite a lot of scope for creativity but what in Australian garden design is the equivalent of abstract art or cubism or any of the more unorthodox approaches to ornamental areas? Are there any gardeners with unusual viewpoints expressed in their creations? In a continent with many weird and wonderful plants and animals, could one expect corresponding innovation and imaginative results in some of our gardens? Perhaps a cunningly conceived planting of grass-tree species would produce a surrealist vision.

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Many Victorian members (and some from interstate) will have enjoyed the opportunity at the Seminar weekend held in Melbourne last year to visit the one example I know of an unorthodox or surreal garden of Australian plants - that of Linda Floyd. There are brief references to Linda's garden in NL19-9 & NL20-3 - we must write it up more fully for members who have not had the chance to see it.

Maybe we are too constrained by what the neighbours might think, or by the sort of conservatism that holds us to old and familiar painting styles or music rather than the modern and avante-garde. DS

PLANTS in DESIGN

Suggestions for planting Gloria Thomlinson's garden
(NE Victoria Branch meeting)

Glenda Datson NSW

We were asked to design a new look for the front garden of Gloria Thomlinson's Shepparton home - a town garden facing a service road and a busy highway.

I have used a predominantly grey-green, burgundy, white and mauve colour scheme.

For the screen planting on the road verge (under power lines) I suggest the following (for poor soil, low maintenance):

- *Acacia iteaphyllia* (upright & weeping forms)
- *Leptospermum* 'Copper Glow'
- *Kunzea ericoides*
- *Callistemon* 'Burgundy'
- * *Baeckea linifolia*
- *Grevillea tongifolia* or *G. asplenifolia*
- *Banksia ericifolia* 'Burgundy'

These will give grey or grey-green foliage in the main with white or burgundy flowers (except acacias). Some species may need a light prune to keep down after several years. The colours will blend with those chosen for the front garden and will also provide seed, nectar and insects for birdlife. They should be planted in staggered blocks of 3s, 5s and 7s with an odd one species here and there, and with lower varieties planted near access path to bridge.

For the front garden I have chosen colours to blend with the house, which is dark clinker brick. They will also blend with the road screen. I have decided Gloria should be daring and should include topiarized plants in the design. Other plants are mostly rounded and shapely. Because I didn't take the front garden dimensions I'm afraid I am unable to include a design with numbers of plants but the theme could use:-

- *Agonis flexuosa* 'After Dark' (burgundy), grown as a tree or clipped to size
- *Syzygium luehmannii* (purple) clipped into a cone (say two of these of different heights when grown to a satisfactory stage)
- *Westringia brevifolia* 'Raleighii' (grey/mauve)
- *Westringia fruticosa* (grey/white)
- *Syzygium* 'Aussie Compact' (pink berries)
- *Thryptomene baeckeacea* (pink)
- *Thryptomene* 'Super Nova' (white)
- *Eriostemon myoporoides* long leaf (white)
- *Eriostemon verrucosus* 'pink' available from Goldfields Revegetation, Bendigo (put in pots)
- *Verticordia plumosa* (mauve/pink)(in pots)
- *Grevillea quercifolia* (mauve)
- *Grevillea lavandulacea* Tanundra' (grey/pink)
- *Crowea* sp. (pink, white)
- *Leptospermum* 'Pacific Beauty' or 'Cardwell' (white)

Colour scheme garden with a flurry of white

Jan Hall Vic

This suggestion is to use the colour scheme of yellow-gold and white, including shades of cream, green and some silver-leaved plants. Green-foliaged plants which have whitish stems pick up others with silver leaves. Other new growth, stems, leaves and flowers display a touch of red. *Leptospermum* 'Copper Glow' uses foliage colour to pick up this detail.

I can also picture a piece of garden art set in a drift of tufting and mat plants with several dark low shrubs

against the clinker brick wall.

Out on the nature strip this theme could be continued with group plantings using the same and related shrubs.

The flurry of white inspiration came from a patch of our garden where *Grevillea glabrata*, in full bloom with graceful arching stems of white, combined with *Acacia acinacea* also displaying arching stems of blossom. Underneath were a couple of *Phebalium* and *Correa reflexa* var. *nummulariifolia*. Later, *Leptospermum flavescens* 'Cardwell' was a flurry of white underplanted with *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* and *Conostylis* sp. *Baeckea*, *Melaleuca*, *Scaevola* & the self-seeders come out in summer. Now in autumn more wattles, correas and *Melaleuca* 'Golden Gem' are part of the theme. Many more come to mind which could be used in this region to provide colour and interest all year.

We will now attempt to put them together in a pleasing manner using a basic plan. However it is inevitable that much refining and choice of species will happen at planting time. Already Gloria has made a feature of another plant *Adenanthos argyrea* with its lovely silver foliage.

As requested (NL21-3) I have included my expected heights of plants. Some of these can be controlled by pruning of course.

Thank you Glenda and Jan for the experience and thought which have gone into your plant lists, and Jan for the detailed list (page 16) and plan on page 17. DS

'Flurry of white plants' - hardy

Jan Hall Vic

Agonis parviceps

Angophora hispida

Baeckea Clarence River; *B. densifolia*; *B. virgata* - forms

Clematis glycinoides, *C. aristata*, *C. microphylla*

Grevillea glabrata, *G. brevicuspis*, *G. anethifolius*

Grevillea vestita, *G. 'White Wings'*, *G. curviloba*, etc

Hypocalymma angustifolium - white

Kunzea ambigua prostrate, *K. ericoides* 'White Lace'

Leptospermum flavescens Cardwell, L 'Pacific Beauty' and other tea trees

Melaleuca linariifolia - dwarf forms; *M. thymifolia* 'White Lace'; *M. trychostachya* - red tips

Phebalium lamprophyllum

Thryptomene saxicola 'Super nova'

Various daisies

Experiences with conifers

Rosemary Verbeeten Tas

In reply to the article by Barbara Buchanan (NL20-10) I grow a number of conifers in the garden. The climate in the northern part of Tasmania where I live is described as maritime, cold winters and mild summers (-5° - 33/34° C). Until we came to live here 3¹ 12 years ago, I had never grown Australian conifers in my garden.

I have planted a hedge of *Gallitris rhomboidea* along one boundary fence and found them slow to begin with. They are in their third year now and just reaching one metre in height. I brought them from Forestry in paper pot trays.

I have *CaWtris oblonga* (now an endangered plant in the wild) planted, with other trees along another side fence to form a privacy screen. Again it is a slow grower but very rewarding for its blue-green foliage.

Podocarpus lawrencei and *Athrotaxis cupressoides* are planted along the south side of the house. I kept them in pots for 18 months but decided they would do better in the ground and they have. *Microcachrys tetragona* is grown beneath them as a ground cover.

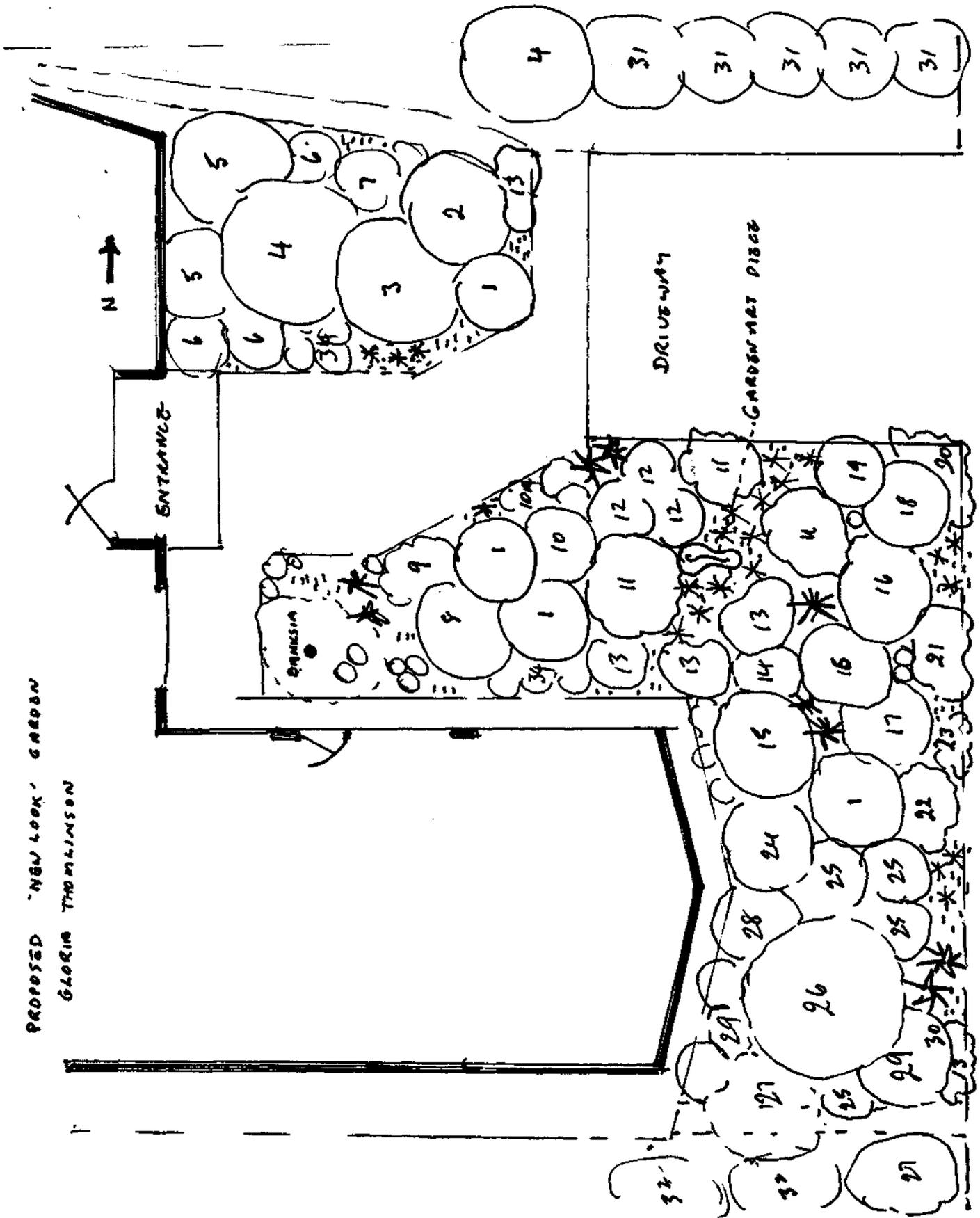
Phyllocladus aspleniifolius did not survive the dry summer. *Diselma archeri* is a new addition. I intend to keep that one as a pot plant. *Microstrobis fitzgeraldii* has been growing successfully for 18 months in a pot. They are both kept on the cool protected side of the house out of the afternoon sun.

I am finding they are all slow growers, but with well composted soil, mulch and blood & bone they are quite easy to grow and very rewarding. The blood & bone I find essential for deterring rabbits.

Conifers are readily available through nurseries or SGAP plant sales in Tasmania.

CODE	Species suggestion	Colour	Season
JANDSIGN.XLS(line 1)			
"Patanga"			
Yarrawonga 3730			
057) 44 1140			
WHITE & YELLOW GARDEN			
CODE	Species suggestion	Colour	Season
1	Leptospermum flavescens 'Cardwell' 1m	White	Spr
2	Melaleuca 'Golden Gem' (foliage) 2m x 3m or PRUNE	White	Sum
3	Acacia conferta (Green fol., Autumn flwr. form) 1.5-2m	Gold	A - W - Spr
4	Leptospermum 'Copper Sheen' (foliage) 1m	White	A - W - Spr
5	Baeckea densifolia 1.5m	White	Sum - A
6	Correas LOW	White & Yellow	A - W
7	Phebalium squamulosum ssp argenteum 1m	Gold	Spr
	& Phebalium glandulosum 50cm	Gold	Spr
8	Melaleuca citrina/M. urceolata 1-1.5m	Yellow	Late Spr
9	Melaleuca blaeriifolia 1m	Green	Late Spr
10	Hypocalymna xanthopetalum 0.5-1m	Yellow	Spr
11	Thryptomene saxicola 'Supa Nova' 1m	White	Early Spr
12	Banksia 'Coastal Cushions' or other 'baby' Banksias	Yellow/Orange/Red	W
13	Senna aciphylla 'Cassia' 60cm	Yellow	W - Spr
14	Acacia ulicifolia var Brownei 0.5-1m	Cream	A
15	Baecka 'Clarence River' 2m	White	Sum
16	Grevillea brevicuspis 1m	White	Spr
17	Grevillea A. Jubilee 1m	Gold - Red	W - Spr
18	Acacia cognata 'Green Mist' (foliage) 60cm	Yellow	Spr
19	Baeckea virgata 'mini' 60cm	White	Sum
20	Persoonia oxycoccoides PROS.	Yellow	Spr - A
21	Acacia cardiophylla 'White Lace' PROS	Yellow	Spr
22	Acacia ambligona prostrate PROS	Yellow	Spr
23	Eremophila Glabra - prostrate "	Yellow	A - W - Spr
	" " 1m (Grey foliage - yellow form)		
24	Isopogon anethifolius 1m	Yellow - Red	Spr
25	Phebalium forms - squaumulosum/glandulosum 1m	Green - Yellow	Spr
26	Grevillea glabrata 2 x 3m	White	Spr
27	Acacia acinacea - small form 1-2m	Yellow	W - Spr
28	Senna artemisioides / S. australis 1-2m	Yellow	W - Spr
29	Correa glabra 1-1.5	Yellow	A - W
30	Grevillea lanigera - Yellow flowered form 1-2	Yellow	W - Spr
31	Eremophila Glabra - silver leaf, green flowers 1m	Green	A - W - Spr
32	Eremophila Maculata 'Winter Gold' 1m	Gold	W
33	Melaleuca huegellii PRUNE 1.5-3m	White	Sum
34	Stenanthemum scortechini (Cryptandra) 60cm	White	W
35	Conostylis candicans / craspedia sp. (foliage)	Yellow	Spr
36	Anogozanthos 'Bush Gold' 1m	Pale Gold	Spr - Sum
Ground Covers			
37	Chrysocephalum apiculatum forms	Yellow	Spr
38	Pultenaea pedunculata Gold	Yellow	Spr-Sum-A
39	Scaevola Albida White	White	Sum - A
Self seeding - here & there			
40	Bracteantha bracteata	Yelw - Crm - White	S-A-W-Spr
41	Hibiscus trionum	Cream	Sum - A
42	Isotoma anethifolius	White	Sum - A

PROPOSED 'NEW LOOK' GARDEN
GLORIA THOMPSON



THOMPSON

NATURE STRIP

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Small eucalypts

To add to the list of eucalypts for year-round flowering which appeared in a previous newsletter - *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* "Rosea" was listed for one month, June I think. I have two young trees, one which flowers from September to January, and the other from April to July. Great value! **Shirley Pipitone** ACT

In respect to the small eucalypts listed in the last Newsletter, seed of the following is available from:

E flindersii- Kennedy's

E stricta - Albury/Wodonga SGAP members

E moorei- Wangaratta SGAP member

I also have *E polybractea*, *E, multicaulis* and *E. gregsoniana* growing but they have not reached the flowering stage yet. **Paul Kennedy** Vic

A special plant

Caroline Gunter NSW

Monika Herrmann's list of Tough plants for dry conditions' in the last Newsletter (21-15) suggested a plant I love to use, *Grevillea endlicheriana*. It has fine grey foliage, discrete pink/grey blossoms on nodding stems right through winter followed by purple seed capsules. It grows into a rounded shrub of about 1.5m. The plant doesn't look unsightly when picked for vases or when pruned if necessary to shape. Its softness makes it a useful contrast in an all 'Bush Garden' and teams well with *G. arenaria* and *G. longifolia*. It also is a very happy inclusion in a 'Cottage Garden', where it grows well with Lavenders, Roses, Nasturtiums, Salvias and bulbs. To hear it classified as tough/drought resistant simply adds to its charms.

(Brian is currently trying to espalier a plant of *Grevillea endlicheriana* as a fine screen in front of a fence and so far it's looking beautiful. We saw an attractive hedge of it in Newcastle Botanic Gardens.

I must admit I had some difficulty typing in those Lavenders, etc. DS)

Please let us know about some of your favourite plants for garden design, either as individuals or in groups.

SNIPPETS

Margarete Lee Vic has sent me a pamphlet concerning a Melbourne company called Creative Personal Design Pty. Ltd., established by Carole Pemberton to support the creative and design skills of Australian artists. The company provides a liaison between clients and a wide range of fine artists specializing in exterior design. An excellent concept! Contact Margarete or me if you'd like to know more.

Karen & Geoff Russell (Vic) are experimenting with growing correas and *Epacris longiflora* espaliered to a side fence in one of those narrow areas many of us have. It will be fascinating to see how well it goes, and to hear of any other member's success with similar experiments.

Another suggestion I heard recently was to grow *Correocalycina* close to *Grevillea oleoides*. The correa will scramble up through the grevillea and they flower together to great effect. There are probably many plant combinations which could be tried like this.

I've been told a recommended method for 'cleaning up' tufted grasses such as poas. Cutting back may be a problem in terms of timing and (especially if you have a large number) time required, and few of us are prepared to risk burning it. Instead you can use a rake to remove old dead sections which will just come away. I'll be trying it with my poas when they look as though they need it.

(Actually from last year) The wattles are wonderful this year. On the way home, I think near Swanpool, was a magnificent big *Acacia dealbata* (or *A. mearnsii*) in full flower, overhanging an oil drum / letter box painted a matching gold. It was superb. **Barbara Buchanan** Vic

(From this year) I'd suggest *Acacia spectabilis* (Mudgee Wattle) as a substitute for Silver Birch. In southern Queensland we saw areas of these elegant small trees (in bud, not flower) and with their silver-white trunks they looked breath-taking. I prefer them as small trees rather than shrubs. DS

"I took some slides today of a beautiful 'row' of in^ibarks down Ferntree Gully Rd (in Melbourne) with their very black trunks. These are beaut trees especially at^he moment. However most *E caesioides* around our area aren't looking too good. I noticed a *Grevillea* 'Pink Surprise' in Toorak Road (although it has finished with its best flush of flowers for the time being)." **Nicky Rose** Vic

A few plant ideas from the NE Vic Branch meeting at Jan Hall's:-

- the slender, beautiful, pendent grey foliated *Acacia pendulate* replace Silver Birch
- *Melaleuca huegelii* - very small, fine leaves; responds well to pruning, could give a conifer-like effect
- *Melaleuca violacea* - shaped by light pruning to a lovely prostrate or low 'Japanese' style shrub
- a very pleasing kidney-shaped natural grassland area, outlined by gravel paths on three sides and by low grass on the other

MEETINGS

Melbourne meetings

Report of evening meeting held on Sunday May 3 at Diana & Brian Snape's. This was a members' slide night looking at varying aspects of design (not just gardens). I'm sure everyone there would have had their 'favourite' slides, but the following general comments are intended to be a reminder of the stimulating variety that we enjoyed. (See also **Barbara Buchanan's** article on page 5.) Thank you to those members who brought slides along (we had to save some for next time!) and to those kind people who brought 'a plate' for a wonderful supper.

- Peter Garnham began with slides of superb 'natural gardens' in Tasmania, some featuring attractive berries. There were also designed Tasmanian gardens such as that of GDSG member Lindsay Campbell (see NL18-6). From northern Tasmania we saw the very formal pleached 'pear walk' with its colourful borders. In contrast, the natural gardens of the Grampians in Victoria. Travelling further afield, in Santa Fe in the southern USA, slides showed adobe houses blending perfectly with their desert landscape. (Barbara's article on page 5 expands on some relevant ideas.)

- Marilyn Gray's slides showed the evolution of Karwarra gardens at Kalorama, from a slow and inauspicious start, then progressing more rapidly under the guidance and following the design of Kath Deery. The garden was developed one area at a time. It was fascinating to see this pictorial record of one of our important public gardens of Australian plants. The continuing strong influence of Kath Deery's initial vision and plans (not drawn on paper) are still being followed today; vista and the series of pools and waterway are still there. Discussion followed on the archival preservation of slides.

- Paul Thompson showed a stimulating selection of slides. His first slide was of wonderful groupings of mature plantings designed by Grace Fraser which have survived in Royal Park. He also showed images from Tasmania, some with a humorous approach. Then the Japanese Garden at Cowra, designed in traditional mode and maintained in immaculate condition. A number of slides of the Esso Atrium Garden illustrated the designer's use of ferns and palms with running water; Paul stressed the need for adequate maintenance. One exquisite slide (not taken there, & shown just because Paul liked it) showed an abstract structure with reeds, water and light.

- John Armstrong's slides, taken recently in the USA, ranged from the truly beautiful to the bizarre. Many showed combinations of hard surfaces - pavements and walls - of intriguing variety. Memorable architecture, including that of Frank Lloyd Wright and Thomas Church, was seen in its relationship to natural or created gardens. Lotusland and Filoli are spectacular gardens, but some of the most memorable slides were of very small gardens, particularly a stunning dry area garden designed by Isabel Green. (See John's article on page 9)

- Diana Snape also showed both natural and created gardens; a group illustrated the effect of introducing a path into a landscape of groundcover or low plants. One slide reflected the tranquil effect of broadscale horizontal lines of reeds, water, grass & distant low hills. Others looked at trees - individual, coppiced or grouped - and there were a few examples of furniture and sculpture.

- Linda Floyd's slides showed the dramatic effects of light and shadows, first on the large leaves of individual plants, then (more subtle) on a fence and, on a large scale, on hillsides.

- Bryan Loft brought prints of design in New Caledonia, featuring the striking and appealing use of cycads, palms and formally rounded shrubs.

I'm looking forward to seeing Roger Stone's and Mary Graham's slides next time!

Diana Snape

Report of meeting & visit to Chris Larkin's garden Sunday June 7 **Diana Snape** Vic

A wintry day failed to detract in any way from the beauty of Chris's garden, which covers an impressive area of just over one acre situated in the foothills of the Dandenongs (see her 'brief history' of the garden on page 7). Despite cold wet weather we were lucky enough to be able to tour the garden between showers. The block slopes quite steeply down to the north, with extensive views including distant mountains. Looking down from the entrance garden, my first main impressions were of the two interconnected pools acting as a focal point at a lower level in front of the house, linked visually to a neighbour's dam at a lower level again;

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and the wonderful health and vigour of all the plants. Chris attributed the vitality of her plants to the good soil, its disturbance as levels were changed, good drainage because of the slope, sufficient water retention with mulching, and full northern sun. I have never seen such a variety of healthy plants - I'm sure she has green fingers and thumbs too.

A path curves down through the garden, settled into the slope and crossing between the pools, to the very bottom of the block where there is a wetter area on one side. The intermediate level and adjacent layered beds were created by a great deal of soil and fill moving, which took away the extreme slope. The pools at this intermediate level with their rocks and pebbles were quite recently finished and planted out but already look very established and natural. The low section of this garden and the top section at the 'back' of the house (nearer the street) are the two newest areas that Chris has worked on. It will be fascinating to watch these evolve over the next few years to blend in with the already mature areas of the garden.

The main trees are eucalypts and casuarinas, restricted and placed carefully so the view and sun are not blocked. There are very many different species of shrubs of all sizes, with much repetition too, especially of plants with distinctive form and/or foliage. Plants growing near to each other are often linked by their foliage type or colour. It is a most attractive garden to see in winter (and in spring flowers and their colour would be a bonus). There are numerous groundcovers hugging the soil or rocks, such as *Pultenaea pedunculata* spreading over several square metres and a wonderful specimen of *Kennedia microphylla*.

At the 'back' of the house is an older enclosed 'courtyard' area where a small waterfall spills over hidden rocks into a pool. At a higher level behind and above the waterfall Chris has shaped a number of rounded beds with a continuous grassed area remaining to provide wide walkways. This part of the garden is still being extended, and sufficient work and enjoyment for a lifetime could be found in the challenge.

Next meetings:

Sunday August 2, 7.45 for 8pm at John Armstrong's, looking at lighting in the garden. There'll be a report in the next NL. John's garden is in the Open Garden Scheme on October 4. (We've timed things badly because that's the date of our next meeting).

Sunday October 4, 2pm at Shirley Cam's

Shirley's garden will be in the Open Garden Scheme the following weekend and it should be looking wonderful. Please ring Diana Snape _____ to say whether you can come. (You may be able to fit in a visit to John Armstrong's garden on the way there or back.)

Sunday December 6, at Tony & Joy Roberts'. An end of year 'get together' to see Tony & Joy's long-awaited new house and picture their future garden. If possible, come at **11.30 a.m.** with a picnic lunch. After lunch (**2p.m.** or so) we'll enjoy looking at the site of the new garden (and letting our imaginations run wild?). Further details in the November NL. Again please ring me _____ so we know about how many people to expect for a special meeting.

Sydney Branch meeting

Report of Sydney Branch May meeting

Jo Hambrett NSW

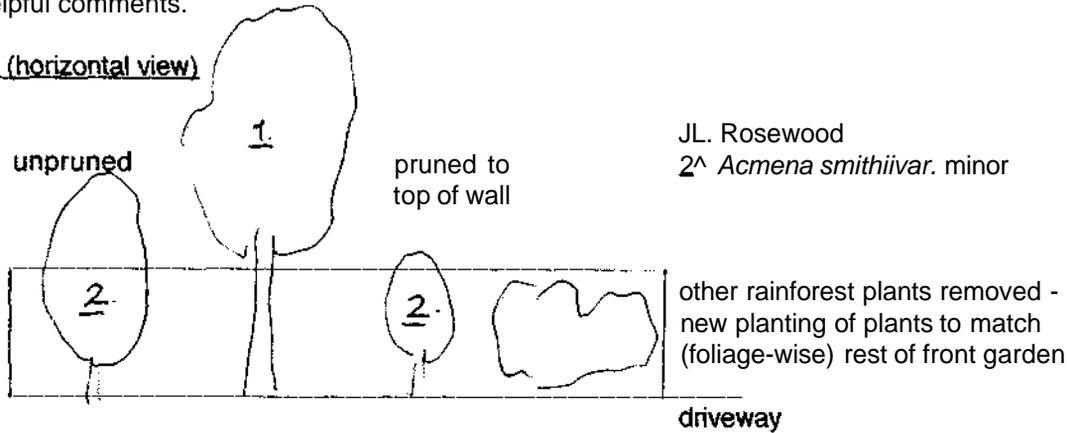
Sydney turned on her best autumnal weather for our visit to Jeff Howes' garden. The afternoon was well supported by members and, led by Jeff, they enjoyed a lively discussion on certain parts of the garden design. Not happy with us simply admiring his beautifully maintained and disgustingly healthy plants he was determined to elicit our opinions on the things in his garden that were bugging him! Such as . . . does that dark, glossy-leaved rainforest tree (*Dysoxylum fraserianum* or Rosewood) 'work' as the accent plant against the courtyard wall (facing the street) - did it 'go' with the dominant tree in the front yard, a beautiful lemon-scented gum, and did it 'go' with the predominantly dry sclerophyll 'feel' of the area (persoonias, grasses, lomandras, etc)? Opinions ranged from the "off with its head" group through to that less bent on horticide, who wanted to trim and fiddle and see, to those who liked it just the way it was!

We then moved to the courtyard to have Jeff fire more questions at us and the lively discussion was barely interrupted by afternoon tea - needless to say we didn't make it to the back garden. The simple questions that Jeff put to us enabled us to focus on some of the many element of garden design - form (shape, colour, texture), function, maintenance and so on and, as Danie Ondinea said, made us think on our feet, a skill often needed by professional landscape designers. Thank you Jeff for allowing us to hone our observational and design skills in your beautiful spaces.

On a fine and sunny afternoon, a lively discussion was held at my place by 20 GDSG members. This was a result of my asking everyone to be "brutally honest" and say what they thought about the design of my garden and courtyard (we never did get to the backyard). Most of the discussion centred around the blocking out by trees and shrubs of available sunlight and the negative effect of a young 4m tall, glossy-leaved rainforest plant *Dysoxylum fraseranum* (Rosewood) together with *Acmena smithii* var minor. Discussion also centred around what would replace them if they were removed.

From a garden design aspect many ideas and concepts were discussed in relation to a purely Australian plant suburban garden. What will be removed, pruned, etc could be the subject of another garden visit in the year 2000. At this stage I have pruned off half the lower branches from that Rosewood. What a difference - it is remarkable! I have pruned one *Acmena smithii* to the top of the wall and removed other rainforest plants, which I am replacing by plants to match (foliage wise) the rest of the front garden. Thanks to all for the varied and helpful comments.

Sketch (horizontal view)



Next meeting Sunday November 14 - please phone Jo Hambrett to indicate whether you can come and for details.

NE Vic Branch

Next meeting Sunday August 23 at Margaret Garrett's at 10.30 a.m. fo 11 a.m. start Please phone Margaret or Barbara Buchanan if you need directions.

S.A. Branch

Please contact Margie Barnett if you have any suggestions for future meetings.

MEMBERSHIP & TREASURER'S REPORT

Peter Garnham

FINANCIAL STATEMENT - Quarter ending 30/6/98

Receipts

Subscriptions	995.00
Interest	— .55
	<u>\$995.55</u>

Expenses

Photocopying Newsletter	235.15
Postage & Photocopying - NSW Branch	— 58.50
	<u>\$293.65</u>

Balance in bank (30/6/98) \$2785.17

MEMBERSHIP

1998/99 Subscriptions - Approx. 130 paid as at 1/8/98

A reminder: 1998/99 subscriptions became due on 1/7/98

- Please let us know if you have sent in your subscription and your name isn't in the list on page 22.
- If you forgot to renew after the last Newsletter, please do it straight away now to ensure your continuing receipt of the Newsletter. Remember to let us know any changes in address or phone number and, if you're on email, that too.

New members

A warm welcome to the following new members of the Study Group.

We hope you enjoy your membership.

Jeanette Devlin
Vanessa Kerr
Alex Mackenzie
Christine Proud
Kris Schaffer
Maureen & Norman Webb

Membership renewals

Thank you to all those members who have renewed promptly. We really appreciate it!

Ian Abbottsmith, Karin Andersson, Maxine Armitage, Joan Barrett, Michael Bates, Ted Belcher, Trevor & Beryl Blake, Shirley Bloomfield, Ian Bond, Jennifer Borrell, Dave Bright, Leeanne Brockway, Barbara Buchanan, Mark Burns, Jane Calder, Lindsay Campbell, Wendy Cannon, Shirley Cam, Jennifer Clancy, Matthew Collins, Ian & Tamara Cox, Rosemary Cumming, Mary & Brian Dacy, Glenda & Bernard Datson, Jennifer Davidson, Arthur Dench, Betty Denton, Catherine & Jeremy Drew, Laurie Dunn, Grahame Durbidge, Rodger & Gwen Elliot, Vanessa Elwell-Gavins, Wendy & David Evans, Peter Feige, Theresa & Len Feile, Stephen Fielke, Janet Fisher, Shirley Fisher, Linda Floyd, Gloria Freeman, Barrie Gallacher, Wilma & Peter Garnham, Wendy Geale, Neil Goldsborough, Faisal Grant, Caroline Gunter, Jan Hall, Jo Hambrett, Beverley Hanson, Leanne Harper, Kathleen (Kay) Harries, Lindy Harris, Robyn Hartley, Anthony Heawood, Monika Herrmann, Nick Hockey, John Hoile, Jeffery Howes, Judith Hunt, Margaret Ingall, Greg Ingerson, Brenton Isted, Barry Jahnke, Mark James, Lyn Johnson, Julie Jones, Allan & Helen Joyce, Judith & Morton Kaveney, Catherine King, Pamela King, John Knight, Faleiry Koczkar, Nadia Lalak, Chris Larkin, Jennie Lawrence, Margaret Lee, Margarete Lee, Nicole Lenffer, Bryan Loft, Ann & Geoffrey Long, Kate Malfroy, Margaret & Doug McIver, Ron & Pat McKeown, Grant Molyneux, Gillian Morris, Deidre Morton, Penny Munro, Anne Neild, Danie Ondinea, Dorothy Parris, Thelma & Don Peterson, Shirley Pipitone, Michele Pymble, Lynette & Peter Reilly, Pam Renouf, Tony & Joy Roberts, Nicky Rose, Gordon Rowland, Karen & Geoff Russell, Gwen Sanders, Peter Shannon, Geoffrey Simmons, Ross Smyth-Kirk, Diana Snape, Elspeth Swan, Stephen Thomas, Philip Tow, Melva Truchanas, Gregory Varady-Szabo, Rosemary Verbeeten, Jim & Pat Watson, Maureen & Norman Webb, Merele Webb, Carol Wilmink, Spencer Wilson, Tim Wilson, Rudy & Debbie Youssef, Alik Zouliou.

SGAP Keilor Plains Group, SGAP S.A. Region, SGAP Tas, Wildflower Society of W.A.

Australian National BG Library

Changes of address

Greg Ingerson
Morton & Judith Kaveney
Geoffrey & Ann Long
Gillian Morris & Geof Hawke

Quite a few members have told me that, when reading a NL, they often feel like responding to points or questions raised. So my suggestion is - don't hold back! Have a note pad at hand, and jot down a quick response while the impulse lasts. I really like to get short notes as well as longer contributions.

Now the hours of daylight are lengthening and temperatures here in Melbourne are beginning to rise to an encouraging level, it's lovely to see the promise of spring beginning in the garden - flower buds and leaf tips getting ready for action. However I think over the winter months is probably the best time to assess our gardens for their design, with particular reference to the 'specials' and 'skeleton' planting (see Shirley Pipitone's book review on page 9). In spring it may be too easy to be diverted by 'decoratives' or 'pretties' which charm their way into counteracting one's firm design, instead of just complementing it.

It's worth noting that the *Australian Plants for Containers* Study Group now has a new leader - Pat Webb

I suspect the use of containers is increasing with higher density housing of different categories - it can be garden design on a small scale. Contact Pat if you're interested and also let me know your thoughts on the use of containers in garden design. I know I've softened over the years and use more containers because of their flexibility.

Enjoy spring in your garden, or travelling in the countryside. Best wishes



Diana Snape