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ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

NEWSLETTER No. 23

November 1998

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

Dear Members,

Looking back over the past year, I think our Study Group has made progress but we still have a long way to go and much to learn. Among Australian Plants Society / SGAP members generally, I am confident there is a raised awareness of garden design and its importance in creating a truly beautiful garden, often of the "I know I should design but I still 'collect' plants" variety. As long as design predominates and 'collecting' plays a subsidiary role it seems to me that this is not disastrous (I suspect we all do it to some extent!). Perhaps we could call the next level 'designing with collected plants'. However when collecting is completely dominant and design is lacking altogether it probably constitutes a missed opportunity to do justice to our wonderful plants.

Members such as Gordon Rowland and also Peter Cuneo in NSW have certainly made very significant contributions to the wider scene (see 'The Look of the Games' page 5). This also applies to our many other professional members. Any GDSG members who get the opportunity to write for or speak to the general community are spreading the message, as I sometimes do on your behalf. Those people who opened their gardens for the Open Garden Scheme, or for other community groups or visits by APS/SGAP groups, all help show what can be done. No one who does this is saying "my garden is perfect", just "my garden illustrates my enthusiasm for Australian plants". If your front garden attracts an admiring look or comment from people strolling by, that is worthwhile. Talking, discussing and reading about garden design deepen our insights. It is important that you are happy with your garden.

Over the last year or so, many people have asked me if we are going to write a book on garden design with Australian plants, based on articles and ideas which have appeared in our Newsletters. I would be very interested to hear your reactions and responses to this suggestion. Do we have sufficient material now as the basis to start thinking about a book? We would certainly need more, particularly supplementary plans. Could it be restricted to black and white, because of the additional expense of colour? We would need to consider possible sources for funding, and we could aim for the year 2000 to give us a goal for its publication. Who would the book be for? Principally APS/SGAP members or a wider audience?

NEXT MEETINGS

Please see details of these meetings on page 19

SYDNEY: Sunday NOVEMBER 15th - contact Jo Hambrett

NE VIC: Sunday NOVEMBER 22nd at the gardens of the Paynes and Hansons

MELBOURNE: Sunday DECEMBER 6th at Tony & Joy Roberts'

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CORRESPONDENCE extracts

"I have recently commenced my own business (Bernarro Gardens) which I intend to develop into a landscape maintenance and design service, focusing on the use of indigenous plants in the designs. I completed an Associate Diploma of Applied Science, Amenity Horticulture from Charles Sturt University in 1993 and am looking forward to developing my knowledge of Australian plants.

I am currently a member of the Macarthur Group of the Australian Plants Society and am interested in participating in the Garden Design Study Group, both to improve my own knowledge and pass on my own knowledge as appropriate." David Oakley NSW

I'll look forward to hearing from you, David, as your ideas develop. DS

*"I'm pleased to hear (GDSG Newsletter 22-2 in a letter from Wendy Evans) that I have inspired at least one reader to begin a weekly-flowering record from their garden. For interstate members you'll need to get hold of the 1998 SGAP Victoria Newsletters for the full listing as I started my top-10 weekly plants in January and so far have managed to list 300 plants. Some plants have started to appear twice in the lists due to there being a number of wonderful repeat-flowering plants. For example Grevillea bipinnatifida flowered fully on 21st January and again on 8th August. There hasn't been an attempt to list the length of flowering - perhaps I'll do that next year. But it is interesting to look back to see what was flowering and when. For example Eremophila alternifolia 'White' was listed as flowering in the week of 14th February and now it is still flowering, as, of course, is Brachyscome multifida." **Cherree Densley** Vic*

Congratulations on your efforts to record flowering in your garden so thoroughly, Cherree. You put me to shame! DS

*"I loved your comments on 'coping with restraints' NL 22-6. You raised so many pertinent issues, all of which I feel add to the challenge and enjoyment of gardening. In our garden, the removal of a 'tired' or not too happy' plant causes discussion - John is the cautious one and I'm the bold one (and hear hear to that too! **John** says)" **Pat Webb** Vic*

Two responses to Gillian Morris' letter (NL22-2/3) (See also **Trevor Blake's** detailed article on page 7)

"In reply to Gillian Morris who has moved to a coastal block in Kiama: Your view of the water is important, but it can be framed by trees. Balance removal of some with the need for shelter from wind for you and for your other plants. I am also a casuarina addict. Look at the reserve and see what grows locally with the plant heights you require. A couple of books I've found useful are:

"Coastal gardening in Australia" by Rodger Elliot, Lothian, 1992. Includes colour photos of gardens and some planting diagrams, as well as extensive plant lists for all situations and requirements. Mostly Australian plants.

"Seaside gardening in Australia" by Marcelle Monfries, Methuen, 1987. Introductory chapters on site analysis and design are good, and it gives details of Australian and exotic plants with their growing requirements."

Lyn Reilly Qld

"While we appreciate Gillian Morris has problems, I have always wanted to grow some of those big tropical melaleucas. I can grow some but they do not do really well. They are mostly salt and wet feet tolerant M. leucadendra, M. bracteata (in many forms, some smallish), M. viridis which has a wonderful red form, M. styphelioides, M. amentata, M. quinquenervia and the West Australians, not perhaps solid windbreaks but for a light screen that allows a view through - M. globifera (right on the beach at Cape Le Grand), M. huegelii, M. cuticularis and lots of smaller ones. Kunzea baxteri and some of the East coast banksias, B. integrifolia and B. serrata for the birds.

Barbara Buchanan for NE Vic Branch

Responses to Faisal Grant's letter (NL22-3)

Faisal Grant really made me think. Conservation of our Australian habitats is very important for me, and together with our local SGAP group we spend a fair bit of time learning about, cleaning rubbish from and promoting the remnant vegetation here in the Gold Coast and Hinterland - wallum, eucalypt "bush" and rainforest.

It seems to me that size is the key. With a large tract of land as a private "garden" it may be possible to have a self-sustaining plot. Indeed, it is documented in plans to save various endangered fauna, that they need a minimum of many hectares of natural bush. Also we have an architect friend who has done a whole development in natural bush without altering the drainage, or removing trees.

Trying to have a holistic native garden that maintains itself, on a suburban-sized block, makes me think of trying to plant a game park for elephants on a cricket field. There is surely a minimum size for sustainability, and we city dwellers must look on our "garden" more as Paul Kennedy described it in the last newsletter - "an organisation of outdoor species to delight the eyes, stimulate the intellect and enlighten the soul".

By all means let us try to grow local plants in a well-designed garden, but if we try to equate this with conservation, we will give ourselves unnecessary angst.

Lyn Reilly Qld

I read 'What is a Garden?' by Faisal Grant in NL22 and had a bit of a smile. I was wondering if Faisal was real or the article was added by Diana to try and elicit some letters from our members?

Is gardening a 'shameful exercise in greed and vanity'? Even in Faisal's context I don't think so. To suggest that a native garden 'should be able to survive without them' (artificial maintenance) is a bit naive to say the least, especially in a suburban situation. Has Faisal tried to do this? To start with, you cannot buy or propagate most indigenous species and even if you could the soil and micro climate has been altered so many times that most will not grow anyway.

The article was probably meant to read as a plea from the heart (or perhaps the soul), than a practical means to achieving a 'natural' native garden. Maybe I am wrong, it will be interesting to see what others think.

Jeff Howes NSW

We would take issue with Faisal Grant's claim that "most of gardening to date has been nothing but a shameful exercise in greed and vanity". We grant vanity plays some part viz. my old bete-noire Versailles, but mostly it is more of an honest pride in creating beauty which is the aim of most of us. Our perceptions of beauty vary widely and garden history tells us how concepts have changed and evolved in different cultures, but the aim remains. We cannot agree that a native garden should be left to look after itself. What is important is that the hand of the gardener should be invisible, so that it looks as if nature had done it. We all admitted to being compulsive gardeners, we need to be digging and weeding.

Barbara Buchanan for NE Vic Branch

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'What is a garden?' NL22-3:-1 respect Faisal Grant's opinion but, for urban and semi-urban blocks, it's pretty unrealistic. I feel indigenous gardens of Australian plants will always be rare - lovely to see but not for everyone. Yes, we must protect our genuine ecosystems most definitely, and they become more precious as the years go by.

"Hear hear" to the point Barbara Buchanan raised in NL22-5. "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." Isn't it lovely doing a morning stroll around to see what greets us each day? Our 'show plant' over the past two weeks has been Goodia lotifolia. This has grown well in our front garden near the fence line, beneath a Eucalyptus lehmannii. and has sent suckers out in several directions, now making an informal hedge and a bright yellow delight. Even when not in flower, the clover-like bluish/green leaves are good too. It does need pruning after flowering (quite drastically too).

Another Spring pleasure is coming into full bloom in several gardens, and I love brushing past it to enjoy the scent -Pmstanthera rotundifolia. **Pat Webb** Vic

Mission statement and Aims

A few comments:-

Jeff Howes NSW

~~Mission statement~~

My opinion is that the version stated in NL22 - 4, is a bit open ended -- how does good garden design promote Australian Plants and what is good garden design?

Perhaps it could read: The Garden Design Study Group promotes the use of Australian plants through providing garden design theory and examples.

Members' responses to Jeff's suggestion? DS

~~Aims~~

Items 1, 2, 4 and 5 are fine

Item 3 - I have some difficulty with this one. Does garden design always need to be imaginative and innovative and if so, what are the definitions of these terms? If we adopt these terms does it have the possibility of implying those of us who are not imaginative or innovative need not join?

~~Logo~~

Incorporating a built object into the logo is a great idea. The design will need to be undertaken by someone more in touch with their right side of the brain than me I'm afraid.

Item 3 -1 think almost all garden design with Australian plants is imaginative or innovative by its very nature, as there is little out there already to copy (other than the 'bush' itself). Unlike design with exotic plants where there are so many well established examples (though rarely imaginative or innovative), we need to have a certain amount of vision. So oddly in some ways this may be an advantage rather than a disadvantage. DS

Pat Webb Vic

I was most interested to read the Mission statement and revised Aims of the Group - No. 4 - encouraging more and better use of Australian plants in gardens which the public can visit. My own comment - I'm always sad to see Australian plant gardens started in a public area with little maintenance follow-up. All gardens need TLC, pruning and replanting from time to time.

I agree completely, Pat. This has always concerned me too. It's great to initiate such a garden but the challenge lies in the maintenance and TLC. DS

Re a new logo -1 think the current design is charming as it is! Keep it simple.

Joyce Edgerton NSW

Twenty-five thousand potted trees and shrubs and over one thousand bedding plants are to be installed at the Sydney 2000 Olympics to create a unique 'Look of the Games'.

The 'Look of the Games' and how best to achieve it was discussed at a recent workshop chaired by the Olympic Coordination Authority (OCA) and attended by a team from the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) and representatives of key landscape and horticulture bodies.

After discussing environmental issues and the logistics of growing, delivering and installing the required number of selected species, the main item on the agenda was plant selection: trees and shrubs for indoor display, trees and shrubs for outdoor display and bedding plants for massed display and for floral Olympic rings. The chairman invited nominations, starting with indoor trees and shrubs.

One of the participants promptly nominated citrus trees and several other exotics. As representative of the Australian Plants Society (formerly the Society for Growing Australian Plants) I countered that many Australian plants, rainforest plants in particular, are ideally suited to indoor as well as outdoor display and we should seize this opportunity to showcase the best and most beautiful of the continent's twenty-five thousand species, both indoors and out. To my delight the majority of participants thought likewise and the species list began to assume an Australian character.

Time was running short and in the end it fell to me to complete the tree and shrub lists over the next few days. These have since been included in the documentation sent to interested growers, who are free to propose additional species if they wish.

When proposals for bedding plants were sought, most of us were prepared to concede a place to exotics. That was until **Peter Cuneo**, horticultural development officer at the Royal Botanic Gardens, gave an account of the spectacular springtime displays of Australian bedding plants at Mount Annan. After much discussion his proposal that Australian plants be specified for bedding displays won overwhelming approval with scarcely a word of dissent.

With the permanent landscaping already settled at about 95 percent Australian, an authentic Australian 'Look of the Games' now seems almost certain.

That's excellent news, Gordon! Congratulations to you and also Peter Cuneo for such a very significant achievement. I'm sure it's worth all the time and work you must have put into it.

DESIGN

Are there formal elements in your garden?

Diana Snape Vic

A challenge I keep coming back to is to identify how much 'formality' we introduce into our garden designs using Australian plants, and how this 'formality' can overlap or else be teased apart from the informal or naturalistic elements. I think the latter can be 'played off' against the former and often benefit from the contrast.

In the original classification of the GDSG, printed in NL2- 2, we said:-

" FORMAL GARDENS

This category is one of symmetry and repetition of forms. The formal style is disciplined, powerful and obvious, frequently complementing strong architectural features such as historical buildings and monuments.

Key words: geometric, symmetrical, ordered, regular, planned, proportioned, repetitive, patterned, controlled, rigid, maintained, manicured.

General characteristics:

- Definite patterning occurs in both plan and detail.
- There is usually one "ideal" viewing point.
- Proportions are usually classic yet need not be."

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A garden incorporating all of the above is very easy to identify, and for many people epitomizes 'good' design. For one with none of those characteristics the opposite is probably true. However I think many of our gardens do have some formal elements. Looking for the above criteria in my own garden (most of which would then need further qualification, e.g. plants softening straight line edges), I could identify:-

- Straight line edges to drive and front paths - geometric; obvious; regular
- Brick paving - ordered; regular; detailed patterning
- Rows of shrubs on side boundaries - ordered; regular; repetitive; maintained
- Use of containers - geometric; symmetrical; ordered; proportioned
- Significant use of eucalypt trunks - repetition of forms; planned; patterned
- Some pruning - disciplined; ordered; controlled; maintained (I stop short of manicured)
- Curved edges of paths and beds but not geometric circles or ovals - patterning in plan
- Consideration of proportions of plants, including their heights - proportioned
- Repetition of certain species or types of plants singly or in combination - repetitive; patterned

Overall however it is NOT disciplined, powerful and obvious, NOR symmetrical, rigid and manicured. There is NOT one 'ideal' viewing point - the garden has evolved to give pleasing views from all windows and from several points within the garden. There are just some formal aspects which I think remain subordinate to the more naturalistic ones but still do play a significant part. It's intriguing that most visitors see it as a 'bush garden', which I don't!

Is a new term needed?

Geoff Simmons Qld

A garden can be defined briefly as a plant/object construction within a defined area.

Because of encroaching suburbia, threat of pollution and growth of exotic weeds, many communities have initiated projects aimed at restoring some semblance of what occurred before these troubles. In the main this requires cleaning up pollution, eradicating weeds and planting species indigenous to the site in question. Existing native plants may be left *in situ* and part of the area may not require to be disturbed. Another feature may be that boundaries are poorly defined. In other words this does not satisfy the criterion for a garden although human intervention has occurred. In fact many of the participants would be horrified if these areas were designated gardens. Terms such as wilderness, natural, ecological, environmental area may be preferred.

The question is what term can be used to describe such areas? Is a term necessary or can "place name - environmental park" satisfy the concept of the rehabilitation of an area. ? Lastly does such an Australian plant community modified by people come within the scope of the Garden Design Study Group?

Editor's comment: An interesting question, Geoff. I think it certainly does come within the scope of the Garden Design Study Group if people are planting or working with an awareness of design elements in what they are doing and it is not completely random. Such projects are becoming very common and our early term 'naturalistic garden' could still be relevant. What scale area are you picturing? DS

Gardening urges - in the DNA?

Cherree Densley Vic

I, too, like Barbara Buchanan in NL 22-5 in "Thoughts arising . . ." couldn't cope in my life (albeit very busy at times) without any gardening. It is the need to garden which is akin to a drug-induced condition, that is the activity that I have returned to again and again throughout my life. Even when renting houses I gardened, and even in the knowledge that my efforts would be unfulfilled when I moved on. My mother is still an active and creative gardener at 85 as was her mother and her mother before her and probably even further back through the generations. It's in the DNA didn't you know??

But it is a different scene on my bush block with its 187 acres of dry sclerophyll forest where I have no urge whatsoever to even pick a flower or a leaf. However, now that I am building a house there on half a cleared acre, I am in a true dilemma. Will I allow the natural bush to grow back around the house - it has started already With thousands of little seedlings appearing - or will I 'control' the plants with some pruning here and there, some wire guards to protect plants from the kangaroos, or some re-arranging of plants here and there to satisfy my "gardening urges"? No, I'll be strong - my bush block will stay untouched - except to keep out the non-indigenous, and I'll keep my gardening activities to home. Wish me luck!!

Your bush block can be your 'natural garden', Cherree. DS

Containers in garden design

Diana Snape Vic

In the September Newsletter of the 'Australian Plants for Containers' Study Group, Pat Webb outlined some of the reasons for growing plants in containers - their suitability close to the house, the mobility of containers ('like pictures in the house'), the ability to grow 'difficult' plants. The first two of these, and several others, are

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related directly to garden design in which plants in containers can play a valuable role. Pat asked me to write a short article for her Newsletter on the above topic, so I'm including it here too.

A container is often a small formal structure which can be an echo of the house (or other building) in the garden scene. There are many different types of containers - barrels (or half barrels), pots of all shapes and sizes. They may be of more natural materials such as terracotta, ranging from low bowls to tall pipes, or else highly glazed pots in white, black or bright colours. Logs or old tree stumps give a quite different look, much more of the garden than of the house. Containers are likely to provide a link between the house and the garden which can be sympathetic to either but rarely to both equally. They can deliberately provide strong contrast with either.

A pot may be used to grow a single plant, highlighting its attractive form (and probably foliage), or two or three plants together to create a miniature garden. In either case design aspects such as choosing the degree of symmetry or asymmetry are important. The single plant may be pruned to a spherical or other defined shape, allowed to run riot, or somewhere in between. Choosing the plants to combine in a miniature garden is a delight, similar to designing a much larger one but very much more focussed. Proportions, size and colour of foliage, relationship to the container, all register. Then the placing of the container in the garden has practical implications - mainly ease of watering but also sunlight - as well as aesthetic. Having it close to the house (as part of the 'transition zone') or possibly close to a pool seems more natural. Among smaller or more delicate plants a container will tend to be a focal point for its bulk and/or height.

If you introduce a number of containers and plants into the garden, there are new elements to consider - the inter-relationship of the containers and plants to each other as well as to their surroundings. An extremely formal example would be a row of similar pots with similar plants (nowadays often dwarf Lilly Pillies). A reduced version of this, just a pair, appeals to me more, as does repetition at focal points. At the other extreme though a scattering of pots in the garden without any planning doesn't appeal to me either. There are so many possible combinations it's difficult to generalize. An odd number of containers? Not necessarily. With variations in sizes of both containers and plants, an even number of containers can look good too. Just a few examples of arrangements:- a small bank ranging from low pots in the front to tall ones at the back; a cluster of pots of similar sizes with just one very large or tall one; a group of pots here and a couple of 'outliers' over there; and so on. With variations possible in both container and plant sizes, and then the number of containers, the scope for design is tremendous.

I haven't said anything about using pots for those 'difficult to grow' plants - probably not really the subject of design but sheer indulgence! (I'm joking - I know this is important for research purposes or the wish to achieve a particular desired effect.) Their inclusion reminds us of the versatility of containers, which can be moved to try different conditions, brought out to a conspicuous position when a plant is blooming, or replaced in times of disaster. Designing with containers enables this to be done with 'difficult to grow' plants as well as the more reliable ones which can occupy more permanent positions.

GARDENS

A salt lashed garden

Trevor Blake Vic

"HELP" called Gillian Morris, a NSW coastal gardener. It sounded pretty desperate with the howling salt-laden winds covering every surface of the plants with a greasy coating and all the house's windows copping it too of course. The burning that becomes apparent a few weeks later is an indicator of the severity of those unforgiving onshore winds. Plants that the eons have failed to select in the evolutionary shakeout will shed their leaves or eventually wither and croak, so for many plants that are planted with the best of design reasons they are simply not suitable where airborne salt is a problem. Despair not, there are plenty of things that the good old Aussie gardener can do - plant the whole joint with buffalo grass or kykuyu and put your feet up on the verandah rail and sip another sherry. "Not a good suggestion" did I hear you say? OK, then let's try and grow something a little taller, the ubiquitous Aggie (Agapanthus) or Coprosma (Shiny-leaf) - they'll surely do the trick. Still no deal? - fussy person! Why did you move from that lovely garden in Lane Cove to the salt lashed south coast? It looks as though we had better delve further into this coastal salt business, but before I do I must relate a little story.

Some years ago a group of us bought a parcel of land adjoining the coast which was lashed from two directions by salt laden winds. We camped on this block, 5 acres of which was natural vegetation and the other 5 was cleared farmland. The farmland of course was the only place suitable for camping. We

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experienced and witnessed over the years tents being literally blown inside out; horizontal rain; rabbit devastation of anything we planted; our nearby neighbour's liquid cow poop flowing copiously across the block; the water-table rising 10cm above ground level; and our massive plantings disappearing under the most luxuriant growth of phalaris and fog grass.

On our second planting attempt, after the rabbit invasion and a decent fencing of the 5 acres, our dear neighbour who had begun to take quite an interest in these quaint city folk, leaned on our gate one morning and kindly informed us that the only plants we would be able to grow would be "Shinyleaves" - hence my eagerness to pass on this gem of information. We overcame all of these problems and planted 8,500 native plants (mostly indigenous) in our enclosure. Today, some 20 years later, we camp in total shelter in a paradise of birds and other wildlife.

If there is a problem of airborne salt then it is very useful to know just how strong that exposure really is. A site that is several streets back has some protection from the full frontal blast that accompanies a churning sea and driving onshore wind. So too does the site that is in the lee of a headland or behind some screening trees or hedge, even though it is right on the beachfront. Good measures to gauge this exposure are to ascertain whether you are in direct line with the destructive wind that whips up fine spray which drifts like clouds over the coast, or look at your house or car windows. If they are heavily coated with a greasy film directly after a storm, then you are probably in what I regard as a front line site and your selection of plants will be a little restricted until you create some shelter. Once this is achieved the whole scene changes and the choice is much wider. It is interesting to note that rain accompanying these storms can lessen the damage by washing off the salt.

Let's consider this a little further. If, for instance, eucalyptus species are found right down near the water's edge, these trees would be getting some kind of shelter as I have never known or observed any species of euc. that is able to withstand the "full frontal" for prolonged periods, even species that originate from coastal areas. Plants in this situation usually show burning of the leaves and eventually die back and finally succumb. Observe the frontal dune situation for a moment. The species that are close to the sea and growing on this dune are limited, stunted in growth and are often washed by waves or even destroyed by them. Behind this primary dune grow a greater range of plants and their height is significantly increased, particularly in the swales (less salt-air exposure). Headlands are frequently very exposed sites, plants are stunted, dense and form a closed canopy, restricting wind damage, and the range of species again is relatively small. Quite often one side of the site is more protected than the other; this then reflects the direction of the damaging winds.

I have noticed an interesting situation develop on the Victorian south-west coast where a garden 50 metres from the shore, facing the damaging easterlies on that coast, suddenly becomes fully exposed due to the removal of a line of giant Monterey Cypress. This line of dense trees, totally out of place in the area, was demolished in one enlightened move, deflecting the salt winds up and over the overlooking gardens. The coastal form of *Eucalyptus viminalis* which becomes dwarfed, stunted and regularly burnt had grown into much taller handsome trees in the protection and now it will be interesting to see how they fare. The rest of the garden has been able to grow quite a wide range of plants, still originating from coastal provenances however. Some years ago several more of these environmental abominations were removed from a nearby block causing a number of plant deaths as the garden adjusted to the new level of exposure.

Assuming that the salt exposure is the severest kind and a rich and varied garden is desired, it is now important to observe the local plants and find out the names of the species that are growing in similar situations. Sure, if you have reference books on your area, consult them, or collect a small specimen and ask SGAP members for some help. If you are lucky enough to have an indigenous nursery in the area, consult them. I would regard a nursery that is growing plants from coastal provenances to be of great value as I would feel assured of sound knowledge and plants that originate from areas that experience the sorts of conditions with which you have to contend. The reason I say this is that some species that grow naturally by the coast can also be widespread and so may not be able to withstand the rigours you require of them. There are now a wide range of publications that list species and discuss the coastal situation. Use them, but do not rely on them altogether on the degree of windborne salt hardness, I see in one publication a list that includes *Acacia longifolia*, *Banksia marginata* and several species of eucalypts. These I regard as highly doubtful frontliners.

You will have noted that I have placed the emphasis on indigenous plants. I regard it as essential that the quality of an area is preserved at all costs. This means then that a percentage of local plants should be replanted or, if the area has been totally changed, it is even more critical and some of these too should be of tree stature. One of our aims in creating a native or mixed garden should be to improve the natural balance of the area, thus reaping the benefits of the local wildlife.

Perhaps at this stage a few books could be mentioned - add to the list so we can build up a good reference.

- 'Coastal Gardening in Australia' Elliot (Lothian)
- 'Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants' Vol. 1 Elliotts Jones (Lothian)
- 'Beach Plants of S. E Australia' Carolin & Clarke (Sainty & Assoc.)
- 'Grow What Where' Aust. Plant Study Group (Nelson)

Creating a dense hedge for protection will certainly allow most plants to be grown successfully but, if a view is to be preserved as a high priority, then looking through trunks is usually more attractive than the broad open vista - debatable of course. This will mean a subsequent reduction in your choice of species. The second line group of plants will be ones that are universally regarded as airborne salt tolerant with the usual preferences for soil types etc.

A friend in South Australia had a combination of salt exposure and heavy limestone. The combination of shallow calcareous soils and the salt air limited his choice to a dozen or so plants, so he turned it into a grey garden with *Atriplex*, *Poa*, *Rhagodia*, *Leucophyta*, *Correa*, *Spinifex* and *Swainsona* - the effect was pretty dramatic.

Margaret Garrett's new garden - using the criteria of the three Rs

Barbara Buchanan Vic for NE Vic Branch

The idea was to try to assess this garden using the criteria of the three Rs. It was not as straightforward as might be supposed.

Ratios. There is an intrusive fence dividing up the front area at ground level while the remnant grey (?) box trees unite both sections overhead. The shape behind the fence is awkward for practical site reasons. It has a central grass area broken by specimen trees set in little raised beds (this also occurs outside the fence) and beds around the perimeter. The beds along the boundary are of a decent width, but the others are too narrow to look good or work well. The other front area is better but still not satisfying as it stands; the back garden is broken by old aviaries but when some of these are removed a balance will be restored.

There was **repetition** - of golden rounded diosma - scattered through the front area. There are also numerous arches and pairs of conifers. The important ingredient, the dominant eucalypts, are a successful uniting theme and Margaret has put in a dozen or more *E. citriodora* (as she said, they were there, ready to go in), but there will be a lovely grove one day which will contrast with the existing box. There is a distinct feeling of bitterness about much of the planting which seems to disappear around the wide beds of the perimeter, which contain quite a few Australian plants. Is it just my prejudices showing? I don't really think so. I think it is because the plants have grown into each other, and because there is a similarity of leaf and form.

Rest. There is provision for sitting in the enclosed front garden. In the outer front garden there are two log seats, one at either end of the front fence, exposed to all the passing traffic and not really looking back into the garden. We doubted one would ever be tempted to sit there. Altogether a greatly over-complicated garden.

Having tried to stick to the Rs we felt a lot of explanation and extension is needed. The previous owner had been ill for some years and we have had the drought and an exotic garden tends to go to pieces over winter. I am sure this would be better in spring, so the present result is probably not her ideal either.

The problems go deeper. I think she read the garden books and did as they suggested without a real feel for what she was about. The block is an acre in size but has been divided up in an incredibly complicated way, especially the front areas, without to my mind *creating garden rooms* with their own space and 'walls'. *Avoid straight lines unless in a very formal garden* has been taken to heart with sinuous wavy edges to the borders in the front enclosure exaggerated by the starkness of the broken rock used to outline them with nothing spilling down over (at this time of year) to soften them. *If the area is flat create your own changes in level* has resulted in a few steps, an inch or two in height, being scattered around without the rounding and mounding we are familiar with. The flatness on both ends of the steps is not in itself wrong; it would be great if the difference in height showed in the overall effect but it is only seen when one looks at where to place one's feet. Given the existing trees it would have been impossible to do more, but it would have been better to leave alone. Similarly the tiny beds around the specimen trees are raised, usually with split pine edging, unsoftened. This may have been done to enable the small plants there to survive, but just adds to the awkward appearance of these trees.

Use pairs of plants to frame views has been carried out with pairs of conifers everywhere. One pair frames the door out of the front enclosure and sits obtrusively high over the fence level, but there is no distant view through any pairs that I saw, yet Mount Buffalo is visible out the front. Equally irritating to us were arches everywhere, leading nowhere in particular. Margaret will put some to good use to grow her beans. I had sometimes wished for an arch or two to grow climbers on, but I have been restrained by not yet having worked out how to place them. I will be doubly careful now. To me this was the lesson of the garden - there but for the grace of God go I, doing the right things in the wrong way just because I want to do them. I like to

think the original gardener would have amended and adapted if she had kept her health. No matter how much one reads and knows in theory it does not guarantee a beautiful garden. Some people have the eye and create beauty instinctively whether or not they have read a word on design. Most of us muddle along, constantly having to adapt and alter especially as the garden grows. At least it keeps us off the streets.

From the owner's (and future designer's) point of view

Margaret Garrett Vic

In the early days of the GDSG a lot of time was spent on theoretical concepts of garden styles, vocabulary, etc. At the time I didn't see its relevance for amateur gardeners but since the formation of the NE Branch where we meet quarterly at different members' homes with garden inspections, I crave some framework and language of critique in the interests of objectivity.

When Diana wrote her 3Rs of garden design (NL21 -5), I was impressed that here was a simple tool of analysis that could be applied to any garden and would draw criticism away from personal taste, gut reaction and intuition. As individuals we all have these reactions but as a Study Group I think objectivity should be our prime aim and I believe that study of gardens, Australian and exotic, in Australia and overseas, through books and travel is the best way to build up a body of knowledge that will lead to more good design using Australian plants. If we are to do this well we need the appropriate tools of analysis.

The garden at my new residence was designed by a nursery person who dabbled in garden design. I suggested at our last meeting that the group try to analyse this garden according to the 3Rs and test Diana's hypothesis. Although on the day we were a small group, analysis of the garden was a difficult task and finally abandoned. People didn't want to be confined to the set parameters of 3Rs and we differed on what constituted garden style and individual taste. Some ugly distracters seemed to consume peoples' minds and so cloud their view of the basic structure and shape of the garden itself, which is at the foot of the Warby Range and built around the remnants of the indigenous forest.

Still wishing to test the veracity of the 3Rs I decided to do it myself, so here it is.

Ratio:- The ratio of paths to beds is uncomfortable, there is too much gravel to green and the disproportions are exacerbated by the number of low (below 20cm) plants with bare earth between on either side of the path so that the plants almost intrude on the gravel. Dramatic paths lead to small visual rewards. So many flat plants make the flat land look flatter.

Repetition:- There are repetitions but mainly bulbs yet not in sufficient density to be a cottage style. However themes are repeated. Arches of creepers, pairs of plants to highlight entrances are repeated time and again, colour is repeated using clumps of same colour but different plants. The arches are too small to be a stand alone feature but too tall for the small plants around them. This repetition becomes tedious unlike a bank of interlocking plants that enjoy the close living. Small conifers are repeated throughout and stand proud like sentinels threatening their smaller neighbours (these conifers are already turning into mulch). Every tree has a small flower bed surrounding it.

Rest:- It is not a restful garden, more a Jack Russell garden - always busy, no chance to stop and rest the senses, it's up and on with the next thrill. Because the ratios are out ones eyes are up, down, here, there never time to stop. Your vision is driven through an arch with the expectation of a change or a rest but instead there is more activity.

I can see now that it is a collectors garden. There are many rare and expensive bulbs that you only buy one of. You are expected to walk around the paths admiring individual plants. It started as a native garden and the outer arms have harmonious ratios with quiet, restful areas and sensitive groupings of plants. I can now see what changes I want to make to slow things down, using the existing shape to create restful outdoor rooms, to give height to the garden with plantings and to encourage birds back with nesting and nectar bushes. I think the exercise was worthwhile - it has consolidated my thoughts and shown me the way to shape the garden to my needs without destroying the work that has already been done.

Shirley Cam's garden - a personal view

Joan Barrett Vic

Shirley Cam's hilltop garden in Sylvan has been open to the public on many occasions. This year it became part of the Open Garden Scheme and a week before the Opening the Melbourne Group of the GDSG went along on a visit. Truth to tell, I had some misgivings. I'm a one-eyed advocate of Australian plants and this was a "blended" garden, wasn't it?

I need not have worried. The wide roadside frontage is planted to complement existing local eucalypts and enhance the groundflora to maintain the appearance of remnant bushland - a bush garden by design! But a glance over the low wire fence and one is transfixed by the fluttering creamy flowers of *Cornus alba*. Here is a garden full of rare and unusual exotic species chosen with skill and care by Shirley's late son and his partner; it surrounds the house and gradually merges on the lower slopes with the Australian garden.

I do not now recall how this blending of "ours and theirs" or "foreigners and residents" occurred. But I do remember looking back over my shoulder at a group of brilliantly flowering waratahs and noting behind them an equally vibrant rhododendron. Somehow here there seemed to be plenty of sky and space to share!

Shirley told us that when she acquired this property 10 years ago, the lower rear section was covered with environmental weeds and other rubbish. Here the Australian garden as we see it today was to evolve, bit by bit, as she cleared the land and hacked the paths and steps from the steep north-easterly slope. The rich volcanic soil enabled her to grow a wide range of species, including many from the Stirling Range in WA. The health and vigour of such plants as darwinias, dryandras and eremeas is quite striking. Shirley attributes this, in part at least, to constant pruning and a certain intolerance on her part towards plants that perform badly!

Perhaps on account of being from this part of the west myself, my attention was drawn to actinodiums clustering near a tap while *Hardenbergia comptoniana* was rambling in a corner and a *Pimelea rosea* was showing off as usual - all this and the beautiful view of river flats below. I must admit other States were represented - a group of doryanthes looked 'architectural' in a suitable position elsewhere. What treasure is to be found in this garden.

Taking the above into account, it is hard for some of us to think of design - and we're a GDSG after all! Perhaps I could say this is a bush garden in the semi-formal manner, which ties in aptly with the exotic garden above. And while on the subject of blending . . . in discussion immediately following our walk, **Roger Stone** remarked that blended gardens promote interest in the use of Australian plants in garden design among those gardeners who would normally only consider exotics (See Mission Statement NL 22). In a subsequent conversation with Shirley, she told me she had just been visited by a local Garden Club and quoted one of the members saying on the way out "I've never been interested in natives before - but I am now!" For those of us already interested, such a visit can only enthuse us further. Thank you, Shirley!

Comments by Shirley Cam

When the 1.5 acre property was bought, large, mature trees such as Copper Beech, Pin Oak, Golden Elm and Tulip Tree were already established. There are also handsome Australian trees such as the Norfolk Island Pine, *Araucaria heterophylla* and Myrtle Beech, *Nothofagus cunninghamii* which give the garden its framework.

Paths are surfaced with Lilydale toppings (pale coloured, crushed rock), which gives a good contrast and definition to the garden beds. In choosing plants, Australian grasses are used in many instances to edge planted areas while considerable thought has also been given to colour combinations, foliage, textures and form.

The garden attracts a wide variety of native birds and butterflies because of the range of plants grown which supply nectar, seed and nesting sites. The many native grasses attract the finches such as the Red-browed Finch or Firetail. Unfortunately the ground-dwelling birds, including Yellow Robins, are threatened by the presence of wandering cats.

Preparing your new garden

Gordon Rowland NSW

One of Gordon's articles from his series for the 'Inner Western Suburbs Courier'.

If you have plans for a new garden make sure you eliminate perennial weeds such as couch grass, kikuyu, oxalis, paspalum and sorrel, before preparing the soil for planting. Do this by hand or with chemicals, or by a combination of both. One way of suppressing large areas of weeds is to use thick layers of newspapers or a commercial weed suppressant such as Maccaferri Terramat, Rheem Weed Stop or Sarlon Weed Control Mat.

The Bradley Method is one manual method of weed control, developed for use in natural bushland. It involves minimal disturbance to the soil and is rather slow and labour-intensive. It is described in detail in Joan Bradley's book *'Bringing back the Bush'* published by Lansdowne Press. Although Joan discouraged the use of herbicides and other chemicals, this was probably due to lack of suitable products in the 1960s and 1970s when she was refining her manual approach.

Since then the development of biodegradable (non-residual) herbicides such as glyphosate has changed this situation. Glyphosate is usually sold under a trade name such as 'Roundup' or 'Zero', and is neutralised on contact with the soil. Glyphosate should be used only during the growing season, preferably in the morning when transpiration is at its peak, when the plants are not stressed (through drought for example) and never on a windy day. Be meticulous in following the manufacturer's instructions.

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A 'Field Guide to Weeds in Australia' published by Inkata Press is helpful for weed identification. After you have definitely removed weeds and before you start planting you may need to control erosion, especially if your garden is on a slope. Use Jute, Sarlon Polymesh or Seasonmaker Environmat, or an organic mulch about 50 to 75 mm (2 to 3 inches) thick. Logs or heavy branches can also be used, placed across a slope and secured with rocks or pegs.

Soils should always contain a fair proportion of organic matter or humus to aid in moisture retention and to provide nutrients. As sandy soils dry out quickly and are often low in humus and nutrients, they benefit from the addition of well-rotted cow or horse manure, garden compost or leaf mould. This may be incorporated into the soil before planting or used as a mulch. Clay soils also benefit from the addition of organic matter, and are easier to work if you dig in some gypsum too. Do not attempt this when the soil is very wet.

Good drainage is important for the majority of Australian plants. One method of improving drainage, especially useful in heavy soils, is to raise the planting beds about 100 to 200 mm (4 to 8 inches) using topsoil excavated for pathways or from elsewhere on site. Another method is to shape the soil profile by creating a series of mounds and channels or retention basins using the existing soil (and soil from elsewhere on site, if available). Planting is confined to the mounds, while excess rainfall is retained in the depressions and absorbed by roots through capillary action.

After preparation of the planting beds, though before planting, place mulch to a depth of about 50 mm, keeping it well clear of stems when planting takes place. Use organic materials such as native leaf litter and tree loppings processed through a chipper. Never use mulch containing camphor laurel, coral tree, poplar, privet, willow or noxious weeds!

Gordon's advice (no short cuts and prepare thoroughly first!) applies also of course to the renewal or restoration of a section of an old garden. DS

"Reaping the rewards" from an article by FleurKreel in The Australian Financial Review magazine 5/98
sent to me by **Jeff Howes** NSW

This article details the popularity of gardening and its values to health (and real estate). There are significant health benefits even after only one hour of active gardening per week, compared with none at all. However there are now changing attitudes and 'market shift' in what 'gardening' actually means.

92% of Australian households possess some type of garden and 70% of people positively enjoy gardening, while only 3% of Australians refuse to garden. Gardening always shows up in the top three among lifestyle choices. An important element in becoming a gardener is exposure to a garden and gardening as a child. Only 1% of those who garden as adults did not discover gardening when young, while 86% of those who gardened in their youth remain gardeners as adults. However there are now changes in the way gardening is being carried out, with more reliance on service industries. The comment is made that currently "We're not handing down a tot of gardening knowledge to future generations".

Editor's thoughts.

This last comment (as it applies to gardens of exotic plants) and those last statistics taken together are interesting. I think it has been likely to date that most gardeners largely continued to garden in the tradition of their parents or their parents' generation. It would be pleasing to see the introduction of Australian plants into this cycle and in fact there may be a higher chance of this with less reliance on the knowledge of the previous generation. Elsewhere in the article there is mention of 'increasing environmental awareness and concern among the Australian public'. We can hope that this will increasingly be translated into home gardens and be linked to growing Australian (and particularly indigenous) plants. If gardening "has the potential to improve the environment, is good for the soul, and is a family activity" it has a lot going for it!

A personal comment on a 'surreal garden' - Geoff Simmons' note NL22-p13/14. **Barbara Buchanan** Vic

I would have said a surreal garden, such as the cacti in John Armstrong's slides, would get very boring, even irritating to live with, while not denying the tremendous first impact. However having seen Linda Floyd's garden I have thought again. It is subtle, full of detail and I gather still evolving. It is a clever turning to good account the limitations of the situation. I would be proud to create it and I don't think the enjoyment would pall.

Australia's Open Garden Scheme

This year the proportion of Victorian gardens in the Scheme listed as having Australian plants as a special interest has increased to 8%. Shirley Cam's garden was not included in this specialty list because she has both exotic and Australian plants - the latter in a superb garden (see page 10). Having both present is very good for attracting new devotees! If her garden had been included it would make it 9%. So far four GDSG members in Victoria have had their 'open' weekends. The number of visitors has been high and their response most enthusiastic and positive, so I'm sure it is worth making the effort to take part in the Scheme.

I haven't checked the statistics for the other States (members in other States might like to do this for us). Although the Scheme started off as Victoria's Open Garden Scheme, I remember in past years other States such as South Australia and Tasmania in particular having a high proportion of gardens featuring Australian plants.

Fiona Hall's Fern Garden at Canberra's National Gallery of Australia

Following comments from Geoff Simmons in NL22-13 on 'unorthodox creativity', **Colleen Keena** (Qld) has sent me a copy of a fascinating review by Peter Ward in the *Weekend Australian*, July 11-12, on Architecture and design. The review analyses one particular garden in terms of sculpture or landscape architecture, and from this article I have extracted the following segments. This garden is described as>

"Fiona Hall's ambitious Fern Garden project at Canberra's National Gallery of Australia. This Fern Garden incorporates tree ferns, curving pathways, water ladders, fountains, benches, lighting and wrought iron, ... in a small courtyard about 30 sq m. ... High blank walls make the courtyard a white rectangular enclosure penetrated on one side by a stairway from the pavilion's foyer, which overlooks the garden, and at another point by a narrow passage leading in.

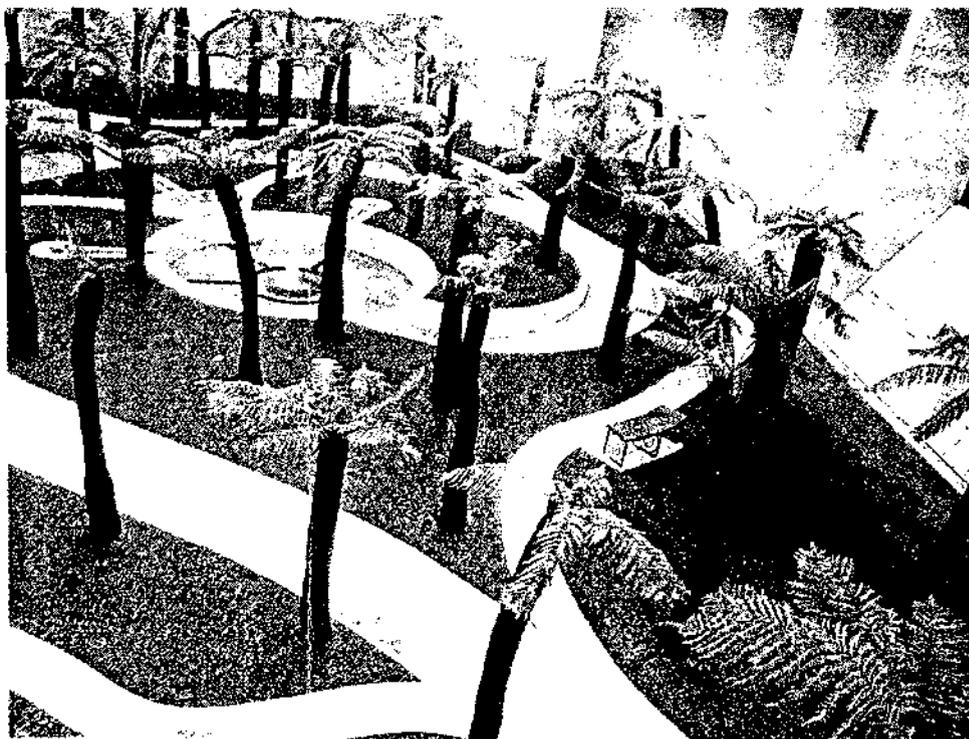
In this, on a bed of brown mulch, stand 58 mature *Dicksonia antarctica* tree ferns, each measuring about 2.6m in height. In time (frosts permitting) their fronds will form a contiguous high green canopy.

Beneath this, visitors enter through a low, wrought-iron gate and take a spiralling pathway made of smooth quartz and silica river pebbles set edgewise together in a technique calle *krokalia* in the Greek Dodecanese Islands, where it is widely used, often in pavements and floors of great beauty.

The main path leads to the garden's heart, a sunken *krokalia*-based fountain whose circle of inward falling waters, about a metre high, recalls the stamens of a eucalyptus bud with its cap removed."

The article goes on to discuss the many different symbolic aspects of the garden, for example the spiralling pathways symbolic of an opening fern frond and the inclusion of Aboriginal names for the fern together with the language group to which it belongs in nine granite pavers. The garden is seen in conjunction with other works of art by Fiona Hall in different media, in which she explores "the boundary between the ordering of nature and the natural order" as the gallery puts it.

Have any GDSG members see this Fern Garden yet?



COMPUTER PROGRAMS

Aussie landscape (computer) programs

I sent the following email to **Brian Walters** at Australian Plants Online (APOL):

"The ASGAP Garden Design Study Group has been looking for an Aussie landscaping computer program which includes details of Australian plants, but so far without success. Even if programs currently available can handle southern-hemisphere seasons or northerly sunshine conditions, the lack of information about our native plants may be a sad reflection of the lack of interest among too many of our landscape architects and professional garden designers. Or perhaps it is merely that all such programs seem to be derived from overseas! So we would also like to know whether any such Aussie landscaping computer programs do exist."

There were 3 responses to this request:

•1 *Grow it Gold* is the only Australian landscaping and information program that I am aware of. It costs around the \$100 and is available from Innovative Thinking Software based at Tamworth, NSW and compiled by the owner Brian Rondel. Well worth a look. Hope this helps you in your search. Sharlene

* 2 From Tim Langdon, Director, Native Knowledge Pty Ltd

Our locally produced CD-ROM might be worth taking a look at. Our new *Native Australian Tree Index Visual Encyclopaedia (NATIVE)* is an interactive computer software program which has been designed to provide the user with information on a wide range of native plants. This very innovative program is simple to use and is of great use for those with little knowledge of native plants right through to those who make their living from propagating native plants. Australia's floral diversity will become glaringly apparent to the users of this wonderful resource tool. It contains:

- * Colour photographs of plants in their mature state and/or in flower.
- * A selection filter which enables even those with little knowledge of native plants to make an accurate plant selection.
- * The details function gives a visual display of the criteria of the plant selected,
- * It produces a colour fact sheet with helpful information that can be printed.
- * A notes function which enables the user to store additional information of a specific plant.
- * It creates lists of plants by botanical name, common name and by the photo reference number.
- * The program can be customised with the users details and logo.
- * The software engine enables plant information to be updated and amended to suit a particular region.
- * The software engine enables the user to add new species and to delete species that are not required.

Ideal for use by anyone interested in Australian native plants.

The NATIVE CD-ROM is now available for \$245.00 a copy (RRP) and is available by posting a cheque to Native Knowledge Pty Ltd c/- Unit 6, 15 Marine Parade St. Kilda. Vic 3182

•3 From John Wrigley, Horticultural Consultant and co-author of '*Australian Native Plants*' (first published 1979 by Collins), PO Box 1639 Coffs Harbour, NSW

In response to your enquiry in the APOL newsletter re a computer program on Australian Plants, there is one being prepared.

I am involved with a design program featuring mainly Australian plants. It will contain about 2000 native species and about 1000 exotics that are in common use in Australia. Every species will have at least one photograph, mostly several. It will also cover pests and diseases. As well as plants and their descriptions, it will allow viewers to design their own garden and view the effect in 3D. Murray Fagg will be providing most of the photographs.

I have almost completed my part in the project which has included the selection of plants and their description but at this stage I am not sure when the final CD will be released - probably early next year. I will keep you posted.

BOOKS

See pages 3 & 9 for some book titles on coastal gardening. Please let me know of any others.

The book reviewed by Doug McIver Vic in NL22-11, *Recording Gardens - A Guide to Measuring and Recording Gardens* by **Richard Rat cliff e**, was published this year (1998). A reminder that it can be

obtained from Mulini Press, P.O. Box 82, Jamison Centre, A.C.T. 2614 for \$5.00 plus \$1.50 for postage and packing.

Doug tells me that another book by the same author (plus three other authors) *Measure for Measure: a practical guide for recording buildings and landscapes*, was published in 1990.

MAGAZINES

In '*Landscape Australia*' 3 - 98, p251 there is an excellent article by **Paul Thompson** on 'Designing with wetland and water plants'. This follows another article by Victoria Sharp on 'From drain to park; Kangaroo Wetlands Park'.

DESIGN IDEAS

Lighting in the garden

Diana Snape Vic

The following are some of our main observations and conclusions from our August evening meeting at John Armstrong's place-

- Glare must be avoided

I like the definition that glare is "the enemy of good lighting; it's light wasted". As well as its being unpleasant to have light in one's eyes, glare leads to excessive contrast between light and dark areas. Floodlighting using 500W seemed excessive and unsubtle, with crude and uncontrolled glare at the light source, and 150W seemed to offer a much better option. Softer more yellow lights were generally preferred.

- Hiding or screening the light source is important

This is difficult especially with floodlighting or any strong lighting, but necessary to achieve perfect or even satisfactory lighting from both (opposite) directions simultaneously, if the intended effect is 'overall moonlight', it's much easier to hide the main light source if the garden scene is being viewed from one direction only.

The purpose of lighting in the garden needs to be assessed

Do we want the lights for walking through the garden, for which low down-lighting may be best, or for viewing the garden from inside (the preferred option on this cold, wet night!)? These purposes may be in conflict, e.g. to light visitors' path to the front door and then to look back out into the garden.

- Combining lighting effects in John's front garden

(Gentle) floodlighting as general area lighting on the foreground and midground of the garden scene, with a spot light up-lighting the trunk and branches of a eucalypt in the background, created a superb picture with a great 3-D effect of plants in the landscape. The floodlighting we had was too strong and was too visible from the side (entrance) path, but it showed up beautifully the forms and leaf textures of a variety of shrubs with the eucalypt as a wonderful focal point at the back. Evenly lit areas balanced well with smaller darker areas without excessive contrast, producing a subtle & interesting effect. Light levels were not too perfectly even, which can result in too flat and bland a picture with a poor perception of depth. Shadows contribute interest.

- Lighting at ground level

Again softer yellow lights were preferred for path lighting, especially for a set of steps. It was thought that these required adequate lighting (side-lighting or down-lighting), but excessive contrast was not helpful. Lighting may also be inadequate due to excessive light spacing. Later inside there was discussion about low lights for path lighting. One suggestion was for flare paths with low voltage cylinders beside the path, but otherwise there was no real enthusiasm for any lights currently available in Australia. (*Please tell us if you know of some.*) Lights tucked behind foliage (which backlit the interesting foliage) or in a corner of a low wall were effective.

- Accent or feature lighting - has much potential

Special effects were obtained in John's garden with uplighting through many individual plants (not all at the same time):- the fronds of a tree-fern using a low light concealed behind its trunk; a tall umbrella-shaped dodonaea; the corky trunk of *Casuarina torulosa*; the feltly underleaves of *Banksiamarginata*, and a very tall Chef's Cap Correa; and a coppiced *Eucalyptus polybractea*. In addition to plants, accent or feature lighting of structures such as buildings and sculptures, and water features, would be worth considering.

References 'Landscape Australia' 3-96, p250 & 'Landscape Australia' 4-96, p363

Quote - The art of lighting lies in providing richness, contrast and the sense of a secure environment.'

Choice of light source : lighting colour scheme needs to be cohesive.

Summary of light sources:

High pressure sodium - orange glow; useful for some floodlighting; expensive

Mercury vapour - colour rendering poor, considered 'old technology'

Metal halide - colour rendering good to excellent, considered newer technology; commonly used in floodlighting, light source small so better for optical control; seems the best

Induction - colour rendering good; 'new technology'; very expensive

Plants (depending on species) can be affected by light levels from 11 lux up, containing red & far-red frequencies, if all growing conditions are favourable (including temperatures above 10 degrees celsius).

'Landscape Australia' 1-97 P41 described and showed pictures of a fascinating small private garden featuring light from fibre-optic light sources, sound and mist.

Width of paths

Geoff Simmons Qld

Typically books on landscaping advocate wide paths (1.5 or more metres) but why should this be applied to private gardens? The vision of 2, 3 or 4 persons walking line abreast sounds like an army parade rather than a leisurely look at native plants. If several people are walking along a narrow path and one of these sees an interesting plant, the others turn side on and bunch around the object of curiosity. Anyone who goes on a bush excursion will notice this happening.

Another point to consider is that a wide path occupies a disproportionate area of the limited space in a private garden in suburbia. It also involves a greater amount of material whether gravel, bark or solid paving. This can be expensive and sometimes needs more upkeep in respect to weed growth.

If one looks at bushland where animals such as wallabies wander, narrow paths can be seen through the bushes and trees. Thus this typifies a feature that can be used in Australian garden design.

As has been noted in GDSG Newsletters from time to time, space or empty areas are an important part of a garden, particularly an Australian garden. To cater for this aspect of design, bulges or larger areas can be used between stretches of narrow path to relieve the monotony and afford another parameter for innovation in planting.

The spill-over of shrubs or overhead merging of tree canopies may also be a factor in determining what width of path is used.

Grass or not in open areas

Pat Webb Vic

I was interested in **Grahame Durbidge's** comments from NSW (NL22-13). We have no lawn now in our front garden but keep quite a large informal green area in the back (it never gets any water except rain). We have numerous comments by visitors and friends about their enjoyment of the contrast between the two. I also realise we will have to sell this place someday and one does need to think of the resale value. I think I shall have to prune the front garden fairly drastically and open up some areas before selling. It is a known fact that the garden makes an enormous contribution to selling a property. I do enjoy the front bushy garden with its open sandy/gravel areas, but I know some of our neighbours find it 'curious'.

I must away to 'spot plant' twenty or so *Brachyscome multifida* plants in the front garden for my summer colour.

PLANTS in DESIGN

Local plants and the ERIN database

If you want to know what plants are local to your area, **Colleen Keena** Qld tells me about the *Species Mapper*, showing occurrence by geographic region. This uses the ERIN database which covers the whole of Australia. You click on the State & then the area you are interested in to zoom in - for example Brisbane has 21 pages. Alternatively if you click on a species name it shows the herbarium records for that species.

Are any other members using this database?

URL:<http://www.environment.gov.au/search/mapperf.html> (Now what does that all mean?)

Last modified: 13 September 1996

Native plants to integrate with exotic trees and shrubs

Colleen Keena reminds me that in their book '*Native Gardens: how to create an Australian landscape*' (Nelson 1983), on pages 158 & 159, Bill Molyneux & Ross Macdonald list native plants to integrate with exotic trees and shrubs. These plants as well as integrating with exotic plants can also be possible replacements for them.

Colleen adds to the list from this book her suggestions for replacements for alder, birch, etc:- *Acacia fimbriata*, *Melaleuca leucadendron*, *M. quinquinervia* & *Callistemon salignus*.

The fashion-fad for all-white gardens has come and gone, but perhaps I'm a late starter. As SGAP members may recall I have taken over another half acre of one of our paddocks to extend my plantings - again - and over the past three years have been planting this out with 100% Australian plants surrounding a wetlands. When the GDSG visited a few years ago now, this area was in its infancy with the general concept of interconnecting and wandering pathways laid out and most garden beds had skeleton planting. Well, the area has really come on and is basically coming into early childhood (I used to teach Human Development) with many plants flowering fully for the first time. In general I usually position my plant purchases (bought at random and when they appeal to me in nurseries or from plant sales, or when they are ready from cutting grown material collected from meeting nights or whatever) with several things in mind - their estimated height and width, their foliage and flowers must contrast with their neighbours (for example never two greys together or two spiky things or two hakeas together) and with a mind to their cultural conditions (for example if a plant requires better drainage or doesn't mind dry shade).

Against all the principles of garden design, I load up the wheelbarrow and with spade and bucket attached, trundle around to 'see what will look good where'. But I must have been distracted somewhat when I planted the south-western end of one of the pathways because this week four plants, all with white flowers, matured into prominence at the same time. The effect is very beautiful, so instead of being an accidental and haphazard planting, I'm claiming to have designed the whole thing!! Looking good are:-

Agonis parviceps - a really beautiful white floriferous form about 2.5m with flowers along a good metre of this length;

Pimelea nivea - even the stems and backs of the leaves are pure white and there are probably 70 heads of flowers out at present;

Thryptomene saxicola 'Cape Naturaliste' - abot 1.5m across and so thickly covered with flowers that it looks like snow over the top;

Chamelaucium ciliata is also in full flower.

An extra bonus is the great foliage plant *Leucophyta brownii* which blends them all together with its stunning long silvery stems on a dense rounded shape.

All up, I think the effect will be long lasting for probably four weeks. From past experiences, the pimelea throws out side flowers when the terminal flower fades not once, but twice lasting almost right through to the summer. This particular form of agonis species is colourful for many weeks.

(You can't pretend that you don't design for much longer, Cherree! DS)

Using the smaller eucalypts in designing our gardens

Diana Snape Vic

This article is based on a talk I gave, illustrated with slides, at the Small Ornamental Eucalypts Seminar presented by SGAP Warrnambool and District and SGAP Hamilton together with SGAP Vic Inc (now Australian Plants ...)on 13/9/98.

Introduction

Most of us want at least one eucalypt in our garden, even a small garden. It's important to recognize its size and picture how it will look to the best advantage of both the tree and the garden. For many years, eucalypts planted in gardens were too large for their position - often spectacularly so - usually through lack of knowledge, inconsistency of tree heights, or sheer optimism. A tree which grew 8-10m high was called a 'small' tree. The Garden Design Study Group now defines a small tree as one whose height is limited to 6m. However this restricts the selection to slender-trunked trees, often with multiple trunks, such as mallees, or shrub-like trees, and availability of many of these is still a problem. If a more traditional tree with one definite solid trunk is wanted, a 'medium' tree - slightly taller (possibly back to 8m or even 10m) but still slender - may be necessary; however not the 12-16m of a *Eucalyptus nicholii*.

There are many different and key roles that eucalypts in general, including smaller eucalypts, can play in garden design. Trees give height to a garden and also define its volume or space, so it is important that the scale or proportions (ratios) are appropriate. A double storey house can 'afford' to have taller eucalypts than a single storey. The area of the block influences the size of suitable trees and their distancing from the house and boundaries (ratios again). Eucalypts provide a canopy and overstorey, important for partial shade and for birds and insects.

Around the border of the property, or a part of it, they can define the edge, be a screen or a high or lower hedge for wind protection or privacy. Two irregular 'rows' or plantings may be used for this, possibly in conjunction with shrubby eucalypts or other shrubs for a denser screen, giving a greater feeling of shelter and enclosure. Alternatively gaps in the planting may keep vistas clear for 'borrowed landscape'. On northern and western borders trees can provide shade. Border planting can be trickier in a small suburban

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block where consideration of neighbours' sunlight is important.

If possible it is good to use indigenous eucalypts, to help cater for indigenous wildlife and be true to the 'spirit of the place'. In areas of mallees this is ideal, but in areas of natural tall forest where there are no local smaller eucalypts it is a problem! Popular indigenous trees (which can vary widely in size) include *E. fasciculosa* (S.A. Pink Gum), *E. haemastoma* in Sydney, and in Melbourne *E. leucoxyloides*. These can be smallish (some forms, and the others at least for a while).

Grouping of eucalypts

Repetition of one species rather than 'one of this, one of that' results in a natural and more restful effect, and there will still be a certain amount of variation between individual trees. However a 'collection' is helped by having a background of only one or two main species repeated. Including trees of the same species at different ages is also visually natural. Of course a number of species we would love to grow in a group may not be easy to grow successfully (e.g. *E. s&pulcralis*).

Irregular spacing within groups increases the natural effect. You've probably heard of Edna Walling's 'bag of potatoes' method - throwing the appropriate number of potatoes backwards over one's shoulder for a random distribution. The positions could be close or more spread out, a few or many, and it's important to look from a number of angles before planting. Between scattered plantings there can be meandering pathways. The spacing of eucalypts contributes form and structure to a garden - this is also true for shadows and reflections which produce changing patterns. The spacing may be vertical as well as horizontal, e.g. the layered effect of *E. caesia* and the shrub-like *E. coccifera* in front.

Close planting or coppicing: Close planting of smaller eucalypts can produce a grove. Coppicing by cutting back to ground level every two or three years to produce several trunks from one lignotuber is a special technique used with some eucalypts. It enables us to retain and enjoy the juvenile foliage-

The formal use of eucalypts - planting in geometric straight or curved lines, or in pairs - is not common, particularly for smaller eucalypts. It has been used effectively for tall trees with straight trunks, as in Macquarie University in Sydney. There can be a certain satisfaction in seeing order and 'control', especially close to a building which usually has a degree of formality. Alternatively a formal setting could be used in conjunction with more natural planting design. Formal use is tricky if tree shapes are irregular, but such trees have their own charm - leaning or even prostrate (usually caused more by their environment than their genes).

Some uses of individual trees

- Just one eucalypt (and its shadow or reflection) can contribute form and structure to a garden
- A eucalypt can be grown as a 'specimen' tree, for its form or any of its decorative features
- It can define a small area, provide shade and a feeling of shelter
- It can provide a focal point at the end of a path, the back of a garden, or a bend in a path
- Placed in the foreground or beside a gateway it frames the garden and gives it depth
- Textural contrast with rock(s) and, in a similar way, distract from or soften buildings

Decorative features:-

- trunks & branches - patterns giving vertical element; shape, colour, pattern, bark
- as part of a garden bed (either as a shrub or smaller tree)
- foliage & leaf litter (leaf carpet) - colour & texture
- flowers, buds & fruit

SNIPPETS

In NL22-15 I was impressed with the 'Flurry of white plants - hardy' by **Jan Hall**. From experience they all would be suitable to grow in Sydney, with a bit of care, except for possibly *Agonis parviceps* and *Angophora hispida*. **Jeff Howes** NSW

I thought this was a 'sign of the times' for Australian plants in Garden Design:-

Newcastle's leading Nursery (Heritage Gardens) has arranged its plants according to height (i.e. the height the plant can be expected to grow). All shrubs have been fully integrated. In this arrangement every plant is judged on its credentials and not whether it is Australian or exotic. Much garden design and indeed gardens themselves at this present time seem to reflect this integration. **Grahame Durbidge** NSW

One of my special favourites, and another 'toughie', is *Austromyrtus dulcis* (Midgen Berry). It is a low, spreading shrub which seems to tolerate and grow well in a very wide range of conditions. It makes an excellent groundcover, not prostrate but up to 0.3 or 0.4m. It can sucker a little, but can readily be pruned if required and in my experience is never a nuisance. The foliage is always attractive, with reddish tips. The

small white flowers are not as significant as the foliage. They're followed by little lilac berries in winter which are pretty but also small; I believe they're edible -1 haven't tried them yet. I think *Austromyrtus dulcis* could be treated formally to make a lovely low hedge. DS

MEETINGS

Melbourne meetings

Report of meeting held on Sunday August 2 at John Armstrong's
- see 'Lighting in the garden', page 15

Report of meeting held on Sunday October 4 at Shirley Cam's
- see Joan Barrett's personal view, page 10

Shirley's garden was in the Open Garden Scheme the following weekend and was looking wonderful. John's garden was open that actual weekend (Oct 3,4) and looked great through August to October.

Next meetings last for this year: Sunday December 6 at Tony & Joy Roberts' place.

An end of year 'get together' to see Tony & Joy's long-awaited new house and picture their future garden at 'Noorumboon'.

If you possibly can, come about **12 noon** with a picnic lunch as an 'end of year' extra to celebrate the completion of Joy & Tony's house. Families are welcome. Please BYO chair and picnic lunch. After lunch (2 p.m. or so) we'll enjoy looking at the site of the new garden (and letting our imaginations run wild?). Please ring Diana or tell her during November so we know about how many people to expect for this special meeting.

First meeting next year Sunday February 7 at 1.45 for 2 p.m. at Doug & Margaret McIver's place.

Focus - treatment of open areas in small (0.1 ha) gardens - replacing grass. A practical design topic. Maureen & Geoff Short are considering a similar design question in their garden. Please let Diana know in January if you can come, so we have an idea of numbers.

Sydney Branch meeting

Next meeting Sunday November 15 - Christmas drinks at a garden to be advised.

Please phone Jo Hambrett to indicate whether you can come and for details.

NE Vic Branch

Report of meeting held August 23 at Margaret Garrett's south of Wangaratta

Barbara Buchanan Vic for NE Vic Branch

Report on visit to Margaret Garrett's new garden: See page 9

Solving a problem

Regarding **Jan Hall's** kitchen view/pool cover problem, **Gloria Thomlinson** had a further idea which made a lot of sense. She suggested a row, curved if possible, of *Rhagodia nutans* at the edge of the built up deck, kept trimmed as the curve in the garden is, which should come to such a height as to hide the cover when one is sitting inside the house, and which should blend with the colour of the cover so as to make it less conspicuous when standing.

It was decided to discontinue sending notices about our meetings and to rely on the main NL of the GDG which always includes information and arrives just prior to our meetings. We would like members to notify the host(ess) when they plan to attend.

The next meeting will be Nov 22 at the gardens of the Paynes and Hansons when they are open as part of the Open Garden Scheme. It will just involve being present at the same time, not any formal meeting. We will meet at 11am at Paynes' and at 2pm at Hansons'

BYO lunch and thermos. Probably one car from Wang area and one from Shep way going down for the day, with some people staying overnight.

Those who missed the meeting ring Barbara about car pooling.

S.A. Branch

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

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FINANCIAL STATEMENT - Quarter ending 30/9/98

Receipts

Subscriptions	2625.00
Newsletter sales	10.00
Donations	<u>15.00</u>
	<u>£650.00</u>
Balance in bank (30/9/98)	2895.48
Cheques and cash in hand	<u>270.00</u>
<u>Total current funds (30/9/98)</u>	<u>£3165.48</u>

Expenses

Photocopying	254.90
Postage	139.25
State Gov. Credit Tax	<u>0.54</u>
	<u>£394.69</u>

MEMBERSHIP

1998/99subscriptions- Vic72; NSW64; S.A. 13; Qld 12; Tas7; WA 7; ACT 6. Total 181
(Total membership over 200 as one subscription can cover two members)

New members

A warm welcome to the following new members of the Study Group. We hope you enjoy your membership.

Elaine & Ron Jell

David Oakley

Linda Parlane

Pat Webb

Membership renewals

My apologies to any members who had sent in their subscription but whose names weren't included in the last Newsletter.

Ingrid Adler, Margie & Geoff Barnett, John & Christine Beasley, Carol Bentley, Elizabeth Brett, Maree Burgoyne, Dianne Clark, Michael & Sally Cook, Janice Creasey, Peter Cuneo, Gillian Davies, Cherree Densley, Jeanette Devlin, Kay Dempsey, Joyce Edgerton, Christine & Angeto Gaiardo, Margaret Garrett, Ronald Gornall, Mary Graham, Marilyn Gray, Majella Hedger, Ann & John Houseman, Bev Kapernick, Colleen & Geoff Keena, Paul & Barbara Kennedy, Rosemary Manion, Rhys & Julie McGregor, Allan & Judy McKechnie, Helen Morrow, Iris Mullins, Erica Nathan, Gary & Katherine Pedersen, Ian Percy, Jonathan & Georgina Perse, Frances Rein, Stefanie Rennick, Janet Schapper, Geoff & Maureen Short, Margaret Stanton, Stuart Taylor, Gloria Thomlinson, Jane Weyand, Robert Willson, Taresa Yates, Frederick Young. SGAP Armidale, SGAP Foothills, SGAP Geelong, SGAP Maroondah, SGAP Canberra, SGAP Qld, SGAP Vic.

Reminder: Please always let us know of any changes to your address or phone number, or email.

In many (most?) places spring has been even more magnificent than usual this year, though often with erratic and unexpected timing of flowering. I almost convince myself that flowers and colour are relatively unimportant in a garden until spring happens and then I'm 'bowled over' again. However spring lasts for long enough - we're lucky in Australia that every season has its plants featuring flowers among those key plants which are more important in the garden for their lovely foliage or interesting form.

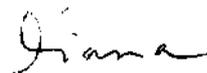
I think uncertainty (not just of flowering) is one of the factors we must learn to live with when designing with Australian plants in our Australian climate. When I gave the talk on designing with small eucalypts, the discussion afterwards centred on this uncertainty, for example the reliability of small eucalypts in terms of consistent size, consistent performance, healthy growth and survival. Obviously climate and soil type play a major part, with a number of less obvious factors contributing.

When a eucalyptus species such as *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* occurs naturally in different areas, with consistently different sizes or forms, ideally it should be labelled as such in the nursery (i.e. the area from which it comes should be given, with more detailed information), so the gardener or designer can select it with some confidence. If we know the potential size range and if we think it is worthwhile, we can even choose to design for the short term knowing that in 10 or 20 years a eucalypt will probably have grown too large. Another option for some eucalypts is coppicing (NL20-17).

Uncertainty applies to other genera too of course. I've recently bought a wattle, *Acacia covenyi* (one of many 'Blue-bushes'). The Encyclopaedia gives its height range as 2 - 10m and describes it as a 'medium shrub to small tree'. Hoping it will grow to about 6m (a small tree by GDSG definition), I wait with interest!

Enjoy summer and, I hope, some holidays. I'd love to hear from you over summer. (Contributions to the February NL, including plans, designs and photographs, are very welcome by early January.)

Best wishes



Diana