

## ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS.



GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP  
NEWSLETTER No. 42  
May 2003

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Treasurer/Membership: Bryan Loft

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Dear Members,

Welcome to our May 2003 Newsletter. It's ten years exactly since the first GDSG Newsletter went to print. It is both a great privilege and responsibility to follow Diana as Editor and Leader of the GDSG and I shall endeavor to maintain and expand upon her vision of the past decade.

Diana's passion for Australian plants and the environment, her organizational skills and capacity for hard work as well as her sheer strength of spirit are inspirational. I join Chris Larkin and her many other well wishers in thanking her for her dedication and leadership.

On the subject of thank you, I'd like to extend mine to all the members who have sent me their best wishes and messages of support - GDSG members really are a lovely bunch (pun intended) and it's a pleasure to be involved. Please give me lots of feedback and of course, articles for future Newsletters.

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## NEXT MEETINGS

**Melbourne:** ~~Sunday May 4<sup>th</sup>~~ at John & Hilary Hirst's. 1:30pm

**N.E Victoria:** ~~Saturday May 31<sup>st</sup>~~ at van Riets Garden. 10:30am

**Sydney:** ~~Sunday August 10<sup>th</sup>~~ at Ian & Tamara Cox's. 11am

& ~~Sunday September 14<sup>th</sup>~~ Two South Coast native gardens.

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**CORRESPONDENCE extracts**

"Dear Diana, Thank you for 10 years of enriching our lives and our activities within the A.P.S. For many of us, the G.D.S.G. has made relevant our efforts to place our collected treasures into some sort of pleasing order. The group has sparked off ideas and has given us a forum in which to listen and learn.

We have been fortunate, in the North East of Victoria, to have formed a branch and I can only say that those meetings have been great fun. They stimulated much animated discussion and have been followed by more confident action in the gardens. We have then been able to subsequently see each other's efforts (the results of ideas attempted) and to solve the problems etc..

This necessitated another interest packed get together - and so it goes....

You certainly started something!

The meeting of amateurs and professionals puts more power into what we all can do in an on-going way, quite apart from the pleasure derived through meeting people who actually use Australian plants in landscape design.

I probably speak for others when I say "thank you" for making me feel that my efforts are worthwhile.

Kindest regards, **Jan Hall Vic**

Dear Jan, Thank you for your participation in the GDSDG over many years and your great contribution to its work. I think members such as yourself in NE Vic have been fortunate to have Barbara Buchanan to coordinate your Branch, and I'm sure your contribution has always been very significant too. With a smaller number of potential members to draw on for your Branch, I think you have cooperated more closely than members in the city manage to do and helped each other a lot. Very best wishes, Diana

"Dear Diana,

Congratulations on your ten years as editor of the Garden Design Study Group Newsletter. A fantastic achievement, the more so remembering your brush with death and all your time, effort and skill in creating The Australian Garden too! I am delighted Jo Hambrett has agreed to take over - an excellent choice for sure.

Since moving up here, Marie and I have joined the Great Lakes Environment Association and I have joined the APS Newcastle Group. We could show you some of the local beauty spots including our 10 hectares adjacent to Wallingat National Park. The sketch design of our sustainable house/design studio/lecture theatre/guest accommodation/ wildflower garden has just come off the drawing board, and construction of the lagoon is about to begin. We shall stock the lagoon with local fish species and hope to entice water birds to nest on the islands, safe from predators. All very exciting." **Gordon Rowland NSW**

Dear Gordon, Thank you for your help and enthusiasm especially in the early days of the Study Group. We'll look forward to seeing you when we travel north in March. Best wishes, Diana

"Dear Diana,

This is a belated wish for a happy retirement and appreciation for your leadership of the AGDSG. I have been inspired by so much in the Newsletter and have even got to implement some of the ideas. I am enjoying the book. It is a wonderful achievement." **Jennifer Borrell NSW**

Dear Jennifer, Thank you for your consistent support of the GDSDG, which I am sure Jo will continue to enjoy. Best wishes, Diana

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CONTINUED FROM NL 41

### **1800's : Self Confidence & Embellishment - 'The Golden Years'**

During the decades of the 1800's Australia lived through a remarkable series of natural and cultural events which forever defined our landscape, lifestyle and culture. Initially agricultural and pastoral expansion demanded the progressive clearing of vast tracts of forest and woodland, particularly in the more arable lands. Timbergetting progressively expanded in regional forest areas. Sheep industry established 1793 - 1810; pastoral industry 1830 - 1840; Mining for gold from 1851 similarly denuded extensive but localised areas. The introduction of the rabbit in 1859 added to the erosion problem. Rapid expansion of the wheat industry began in 1898. The 1890's saw severe national drought, extreme dust storms, resultant massive erosion followed by major firestorms then floods

Prosperity related to the Gold Rush saw the establishment and development of provincial towns and cities where the landscape of streets and parks was generally more suited to the traditions of the homelands of the itinerant miners than that of our 'sunburnt country and wide brown land'.

In the 1870's Von Mueller initially planted Blue Gums throughout the streets of Melbourne but these were replaced by Elms not twenty years later. In the temperate regions, towns generally used the Planes, Pin Oaks and Elms (1880's) to replace the natural Eucalyptus and Acacia species that were not generally appreciated perhaps because of their sheer volume and quantity - "familiarity breeds contempt"

Along the coastal regions Oxley (1823) and Cunningham (1827) had introduced the dramatic upright forms of the local pines Kauri, Hoop, Bunya and Norfolk as well as spreading Figs. These species were used to create visually significant avenues that persist in many cities and towns today. In Sydney, Moreton Bay and Port Jackson Figs were planted in Hyde Park (1862), Macquarie Street (1870) and Centennial Park (1896).

In the more arid western areas, some natural species were used such as Sugar Gums, Red River Gums, Casuarina and White Cedar but more often the Pinus, Schinus and even Prunus were used. Other species were imported by the '49'ers' the gold miners from California, China and other world regions - most notably the Athel Pine, Camphor Laurel and the Willow.

In the subtropical /tropical regions where the deciduous temperate species would not tolerate the climate, local rainforest species together with a range of exotic flowering and fruiting trees began to be used. Brisbane's hilly inner suburbs are a good example - weatherboard 'houses on stilts' with verandas and tin roofs flashing in the gullies among paw paw, mango, and banana trees, or set on hilltops among the original gums and hoop pines. This unique Queensland character provided a truly climate responsive and comfortable environment for living. Perhaps the 'Queenslander' is the only really distinctive Australian suburban form.

During the nineteenth century the Australian Flora received far more horticultural attention in Britain than in its native land. Amazingly, in the 1870's Eucalyptus were fashionable bedding and pot plants in the gardens of Britain.

### **1900 - 1910 : New Era / Nationalism / Growth**

The decade spanning the turn of the century saw the first surge of nationalism engendered by the process of Federation. The first distinctive Australian house and decoration style began to emerge

characterised by the use of native flora and fauna as a strong design influence.

The garden city movement of Europe was transferred to Australia and new suburbs like Burwood in Sydney, Hawthorne in Melbourne, Mitcham in Adelaide and Oxley in Brisbane were planned and developed. For the first time the tenements and row houses of inner Sydney and Melbourne were replaced by residential expansion on the edge of the developing city centres, enabled by the introduction of the automobile which broke the tyranny of distance. The 'Federation style' became enshrined in homes in these new suburbs. The concept of the "Great Australian Dream" to own our own \_ acre block of land and build a house and garden was born, unwittingly commencing the urban sprawl we know well today.

The characteristic 'Federation' ornamentation of wrought iron, stained glass, glazed tiles, plaster work, wallpaper and fabrics used the bold forms and colours of Waratah, Flannel Rower, Wattle and the Eucalypt to great effect to create this uniquely Australian style. These natural elements, together with the influence of the international art nouveau style which swept the world at the time, partially replaced the traditional, conservative and classical forms which until then, had typified the strong British and European influence. Perhaps for the first time we as a nation began to demonstrate the individualism and uniqueness, even a certain degree of larrikinism that is our birthright.

In the streets and gardens a mix of natural and exotic species were used to create formal gardens with a strong 'cottage' and seasonal emphasis. Perhaps Australia's most representative and pure Federation streetscape is preserved along the Appian Way in Burwood, Sydney. *Lophostemon confertus*, Brush box, is used as the street tree but these majestic specimens have been regularly lamed' by canopy pruning to create a stylised but never the less shady and inviting setting for the dramatic roof lines, verandahs, hedges and gardens typical of the era

*Two major Australian parklands initially established in the mid 1800's demonstrate the growing recognition and use of native rather than exotic flora in urban landscape during this period of nationalism.*

With the establishment of the Commonwealth, Melbourne became the temporary Federal capital and this influenced the continuing development of the Royal Botanic Gardens. Significantly, all thirty-five commemorative trees planted by important people from 1851 were exotic species. In 1920, Edward, Prince of Wales planted a *Stenocarpus sinuatus* commencing an almost unbroken use of native species to the present day.

Similarly, principal plantings in Centennial Park, Sydney by Charles Moore (1887 - 1896) were basically exotic pines and deciduous trees; under Joseph Maiden (1896 - 1924) there was a strong bias toward native species as well as *Phoenix canariensis*. After this period the major structure planting remained largely untouched and the park experienced a series of cycles of neglect and development primarily establishing gardens and shrubbery of exotic and native species.

The process of converting Australia to a 'tropical oasis' by the use of palms (*Phoenix*, *Livistonia* and *Washingtonia*) became widespread early in the century and continues to this day. In fact the established Moreton Bay Figs along Macquarie Street Sydney were replaced by *Phoenix canariensis* after only twenty years of growth.

## **A Garden to commemorate the Centenary of Federation.** Robert Griffin

To celebrate the Centenary of Federation the Historic Houses Trust of NSW initiated a competition for the design of a new garden within the grounds of Government House Sydney. The introduction of contemporary landscape design into the garden whilst respecting the integrity of historic elements recognizes that Government House is not a museum "frozen in time" but a working house where ongoing and future development of the garden and grounds must be of the highest standard and, ideally, showcase the best of NSW landscape and garden design. The Competition Brief encouraged the development of project teams with an interdisciplinary approach to develop a garden design that demonstrated the best of contemporary landscape design, horticultural skill and environmental art. The term "garden" was used in the widest sense and may include any form of landscape or environmental art. Room 4.1.3. [ Vladimir Sitta, Richard Weller, Nathan Greenhill & Tom Griffiths ] was selected from five second stage applicants to undertake redesign of the south eastern garden area. Their design was considered strongly symbolic and resolves the tensions between two major compartments of the gardens - the formal Eastern Terrace and the "pleasure garden" to be reinstated on the Western Terrace.

Room 4.1.3. designed the "Garden of Australian Dreams" at the National Museum in Canberra and has been short-listed in the international competition for a memorial garden to the victims of the attack on the Pentagon Sept. 11 2001.

## **Geelong's 21<sup>st</sup>. Century Gardens .** John Arnott. [ Director G.B.G.]

In 2000 the City of Geelong committed \$2.1 million towards the construction of the 21<sup>st</sup>. Century Garden. It was opened in Sept. 2002. The new garden, designed by Chris Dance gives a strong and dramatic sense of arrival for visitors. Modern material and landscape elements such as the ornamental fence and sculptures are in startling contrast to the layout of the original 19<sup>th</sup> century style garden that is concealed behind this contemporary hillside development "...a celebration of contemporary design, local ecology, the seaside environment, the commitment of Friends and staff and the place of the Wathurong people."

The Plantings:

### **The Regional Gardens**

Perhaps the most important aspect of the entrance garden design is to showcase the indigenous regional flora through the architectural planters that line the entrance is approached.

The 13 boat shaped beds, planted out with indigenous native grasses and lilies, sits comfortably within the Eastern Park landscape which itself has retained remnant native grasses in the understorey - Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*), Wallaby Grasses (*Austrodanthonia ssp.*) and Spear Grasses (*Austrostipa ssp.*).

**Native Lilies***Patersonia occidentalis**P.fragilis***Wallaby Grasses***Austrodanthonia racemosa**A.genticulata**A.setacea**Axaespitosa***Spear Grasses***Austrostipa mollis**Ascabra ssp. Falcate**A.semibarbata elegantissima***Tussock Grasses***Poa siebierana**P.poiiformis***Sedges***Car ex tasmanica**Isolepis nodosa***Entrance Landscape**

The planting in this area needed to complement the strong landscape elements of the grand steps, boat bow, ornamental fence and arbor sculptures. Imposing plants with strong architectural form, setting the scene for the collections within the garden itself were selected.

Mauritius Hemp	<i>Furcraeafoetida</i>
Taiwanese Sago Palm	<i>Cycas taitungensis</i>
Queensland Bottle Tree	<i>Brachychiton rupestris</i>
Grass Trees	<i>Xanthorrhoea johnstonii</i>
Coast Banksia	<i>Banksia integrifolia</i>
Everlasting Daisy	<i>Hrysocephalum apiculatum</i>

## Dianella Rock Garden

The area represents the important research role a botanic garden fulfils. Botanist Geoff Can is undertaking the taxonomy of this important and diverse group of plants. There are 40 documented species of Dianella but Carr's research indicates that this is not truly representative. He believes there are well over 100 species and this collection is intended to support his research as well as displaying the diversity of Dianella.

## Indigenous Plant Beds

To date no public garden has displayed the flora of the Geelong region. The collections will focus broadly on coastal plants, the Grassy Ecosystems and the Heathlands associated with the Brisbane Ranges and the Anglesea Heath for example the endemic and rare Anglesea Grevillea (*Grevillea infecunda*) and the Golden Grevillea (*G.chryophea*).

Austral Grass Tree	<i>Xaniorrhoea australis</i>
Common Everlasting	<i>Chrysocephalum</i> <i>Apiculatum</i>
Sticky Everlasting	<i>Bracteantha viscosa</i>
Chamomile Sunray	<i>Rhodanthe</i> <i>anthemoides</i>

## Gardening in Geelong

This collection will serve to educate local visitors by displaying indigenous, native and exotic plants that are considered suitable for Geelong gardens. The plants do not require much watering, do not have environmental weed potential, may encourage local wildlife and are functional and attractive across a range of applications.

## Central Australian Flora

The plants here are all from Central Australia and include a number of endemics - the Central Australian Cabbage Palm [ *Livistonia mariaej* and the MacDonnell Ranges Macrozamia *f* *Macrozamia macdonnellii*

## Gondwana Plants

This theme was included in the design due to three imposing specimens of Bunya Pine [*Araucaria bidwillii*] retained from the original planting. Visitors can see a number of classic Gondwana plant families in this area.

## Arid Plants

This bed features plants from arid zones of the world - cacti from the Americas, succulents from South Africa and the arid flora of Central Australia.



*If any members have seen any of the above gardens, your thoughts and comments would be much appreciated. Ed.*

**A Small Landscape with Great Meaning.** Torquill Canning.  
The Port Arthur Memorial.

The language of commemoration takes many forms; among them prose poetry, music film art architecture and landscape architecture. Public memorials are a symbolic form of collective memory, physical reminders of how a community once felt. At the Port Arthur Memorial site planting has not been relegated to its usual decorative role, here plants with their power to give atmosphere, will ultimately make the Memorial mysterious and historically ambiguous. The planting, all indigenous to S.E. Tasmania, will evolve, die off and regenerate, changing the Memorial's appearance over time. Meanwhile, the structural elements, the remains of the Broad Arrow Café and a Reflecting Pool will cement it in one part of history. The Memorial is a small landscape with great meaning set within the context of a culturally historic landscape; management of this site is an ongoing challenge for the Management Authority.

*Unfortunately I can't include a photo of the Memorial. Ed*

**Gardens of the Imagination.** John Taylor. 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual National Conference A.G.H.S.

The theme was "Gardens of the Imagination" but the nine papers were really about garden design, gardens in art and architecture and the links and the tensions between nature [wilderness] and cultivated landscapes [gardens]. One wondered whether.... we had wandered into the wrong room and joined a meeting of the Wilderness Society. [*How marvelous that gardens and wilderness are talked about at the same conference - the ringing in of the 21<sup>st</sup> C. garden?. Ed*]

Daniel Thomas' talk was about nature as a garden, retaining and enjoying the wilderness, and not wanting to tame it at all.

Jerry de Gryse and Peter Adams both spoke about wilderness, its psychological qualities and its importance to our occupation of the planet.

Native plants and landscapes received more attention in the remaining papers.

Christopher Vernon described architect Marion Mahony Griffin's and Hardy Wilson's visits to Tasmania and their interest in native plants and vegetation whilst Ann Neale spoke about native plants in the designs of Edward La Trobe Bateman - a series of which were re-used in The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardening. Glenda King's paper showed how Tasmania's native plants have inspired craft workers for two centuries.

## Principles of Pruning.

Many Australian Natives and Proteaceae grow into large, straggly, extremely woody plants if left untended. This growth habit is suitable in some landscaping situations where the plant is used as a screen, eg on roadsides and central highway strips. However, in a commercial plantation where we require plants to be productive and compact we need to develop strategies to manage plant growth.

### *Why do we prune?*

- **To control growth and develop a suitable shape**

Managing the shape of the plant ensures that each plant has sufficient space to grow, and enables easy access of machinery and personnel between rows. A good pruning programme also restricts plant height, thus making picking easier.

- **To encourage flower production**

In plants grown for commercial flower production, flowers are most commonly produced on current season's growth. Annual pruning stimulates production of new, flower - bearing growth. Exceptions are some proteas, banksias and waratahs where the flower-bearing stem grows for 2 seasons before flowering. Pruning strategies for these must be adjusted to avoid removing seemingly unproductive stems which would produce flowers in the following year.

- **To promote plant health**

An open canopy allows free air movement and light penetration which discourages pests and diseases. If chemical sprays must be applied they are more evenly distributed throughout an open canopy. New growth from the centre of the plant following picking or pruning is stimulated by free movement of light and air, and vigorous, healthy growth is encouraged.

- **To remove diseased or damaged branches**

Shoots that have been broken by machinery or damaged by wind, frost, or hail are removed to encourage new growth to replace the damaged portions. Branches with pests or disease damage are also removed to reduce the risk of the infection spreading.

- **To rejuvenate old, unproductive plants**

Plants vary in their response to severe pruning, which can be used to stimulate new productive growth. The best response comes from those plants with a thickened stem base, known as a lignotuber. Old, woody stems of these plants can be cut off at the base, resulting in young vigorous regrowth from the lignotuber.

### *How do plants grow?*

Shoot growth starts from growth buds, which are essentially compact, miniature stems. These buds can occur:

- > on the tip of the shoot (**terminal buds**), and their growth results in elongation of an existing stem.
- > on the sides of the shoot, generally in the fork where the leaf meets the stem (**lateral buds, or axillary buds**). Growth from lateral buds produces new shoots at an angle to the main stem.
- >• on other parts of the plant (**adventitious buds**), generally mature stems and roots, often as a response to injury, such as occurs in pruning. Not all plants are capable of producing adventitious buds.

### *What techniques do we use?*

Three techniques are used in structuring and controlling plant growth.

- **Pinching**

The soft growing tip is pinched out between thumb and forefinger. This stops the shoot from growing longer and encourages side shoots to grow from the lateral buds of the uppermost mature leaves. Pinching is used widely to encourage branching of young plants for increased complexity.

- **Heading cut** (heading, heading back, cutting back)

Pruning to shorten branches is done using the heading cut. The top portion of the shoot is removed, and side shoots grow from the lateral buds on the shoot portion remaining, thus increasing plant complexity. In commercial flower production the picking cut is a heading cut, and the side shoots form the next season's flowering stems. A heading cut which removes less than a third of the shoot generally results in many short side shoots. A heading cut which removes more than 2/3 of the stem generally results in production of few, very vigorous side shoots.

- **Thinning cut** (thinning, thinning out)

The thinning cut removes the entire stem at its point of origin. Thinning is done to reduce the canopy and does not result in a growth response. Thinning is done to remove old, unproductive stems and reduce competition within the plant. Light and air penetration within the plant are improved following thinning.

***When do we prune?***

As mentioned before, the picking cut is a pruning cut, and is, therefore, applied at the time of flowering. Regrowth following picking forms the next season's harvest. If necessary, a clean-up prune is applied after harvesting is finished. The shape of the plant is assessed and altered if deemed necessary. Branches blocking light and air movement through the plant, or trailing on the ground are removed with thinning cuts. The number of bearers is assessed and adjusted to balance vegetative and reproductive growth.

If pruning is done to correct or rejuvenate plant growth, it is best done in late winter. Pruning before spring growth starts takes advantage of the naturally vigorous growth occurring at this time of year. Pruning in mid-late summer can retard plant growth.

***What is the ideal shape for commercial production?***

Complex for maximum productivity.

Clear base for weed control

Picking at waist height from a mature plant

Open canopy for light and air

With the vast range of products grown in the Wildflower industry of Australia it is impossible to design a single pruning strategy which will apply to all plants. Developing pruning strategies requires a simple knowledge of the plant's growth, based on observations. You must have clear in your mind what you are trying to achieve by pruning, and some knowledge of what the plant is capable of. The flow chart leads through the questions and options, and gives broad indications of what actions to take.

Audrey Gerber

**How does the plant grow normally?**

OBSERVATION/ INFORMATION FROM BOOKS / ASK SOMEONE

**How to find out:**

**Is this what I want?**

Yes

No

**ACTION:**  
Manage plant health.

**What do I want?**

**CONSIDER:**

Plant size

Plant shape

Density

**Bigger?**

Smaller?

**ACTION:**  
*Young plants:*  
severe pruning to encourage vigorous new growth

*Mature plants:*  
light pruning only to control shape.

**ACTION:**  
Severe repeated pruning will restrict growth of young and old plants.

**More upright?**

**More spread?**

**ACTION:**  
Remove outer branches and branches growing horizontally, using "thinning cuts".

**ACTION:**  
Remove upright branches with "thinning cuts". Encourage horizontal growth by "heading back" to outward facing buds.

More stems?

Fewer stems?

**ACTION:**  
Prune using "heading cuts" to encourage production of multiple lateral shoots.

**ACTION:**  
Prune using "thinning cuts" to reduce the number of stems and discourage growth of new lateral stems.

*/ thought Michele 's letter [ below] fitted in very nicely with Audrey's article. Ed.*

"On the 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb I attended a short course at Kuringai Community College called "The Art of Pruning". The presenter was a delightful French Canadian who, in her previous job in Montreal had been sent to Japan twice to study Japanese gardening methods, especially pruning. I think the Japanese gardening principles can certainly be applied to Australian native gardens and she recommended a book called *Tree Pruning* by Alex I Shigo which looks interesting although I haven't bought it yet. She also subscribes to an American publication called "Journal of Japanese Gardening"- [www.rotheien.com](http://www.rotheien.com).

*Continuing with our theme of Asian gardens is Nicky Rose's correspondence*

### **Indian Garden - "A Spiritual Garden"**

The following article has been taken from the leaflet promoting the Indian Garden at Floriade 2002 in Holland. Ancient wisdom states that God created the five elements ie fire, air, earth, water and space and based on these, the whole of creation. These elements find their correlation in the five senses through which we observe and enjoy this creation ie the senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. A garden should ideally be a place of rest for these senses. For this purpose it should have a nice landscape for sight, sweet smelling flowers for smell, sweet tasting fruits to taste, a nice location where the winds are generally kind in providing soothing sounds in trees and places with soft earth and grass to feel and soothe the body. In all a place where the body can feel relaxed and rejuvenated. A relaxed body will normally lead to a happy and relaxed state of mind. In such a state it is easier to withdraw the mind from the senses and by meditation of what is real and what is unreal come to discover the presence of that EVER-PRESENT, EVER-LIVING ONE GOD within. A garden should therefore be a place where one can feel oneness and a sense of belonging with Nature and God and be inspired to rejoice in God's Creation and one's part in it, thereby rejuvenating not only the body but more importantly the spirit also. The Indian garden attempts to create for you just such a garden and emphasizes the spiritual aspect by imbibing the known holy forms of ancient living gods and goddesses including the most compassionate Buddha - the Enlightened One. Come, Enter, Soothe your senses, remember the holy ones and rest your body and soul.

**Growing Green Strategy** Diana Snape Vic. From an article by R. Millar "The Age".

Melbourne City Council is developing a 50 yr. plan to counter drought and global warming. The Growing Green strategy proposes to extend native plantings across Melbourne. This will involve replacing dying European trees with Australian trees better suited to local conditions. It also proposes that grassed areas in some parks be allowed to brown over summer. Last year the council spent almost \$1 million on water - "Melbourne is not London. We have to stop wasting energy trying to turn Melbourne into a place it will never be, we need to start to make Melb. Australian, I'd like to hear indigenous birds singing on my way to work " The move to a more indigenous environment would not happen overnight. Some designated heritage listed spaces would remain European, others would be a mixture and some would be made fully indigenous. Community consultation found strong support for a mixture of native and exotic flora.

# Snowgrass and spinifex tussocks

The great Australian suburban dream is alive and well in the brave new suburban expanses that now surround Mount Annan Botanic Garden. For most people, the concept of grasses in the landscape is limited to lawn, which is worshipped with lavish amounts of water and fertiliser. True status is owning a cylinder mower allowing you to perfectly manicure your lawn to bowling green perfection.

Development work is still continuing on the holy grail of an ecologically appropriate Australian native lawn, but surely there is a place for native grasses in our urban landscapes.

Grasses are one of the great ecological success stories in Australia, readily adapting as the continent became progressively drier and now occurring in virtually all vegetation types.

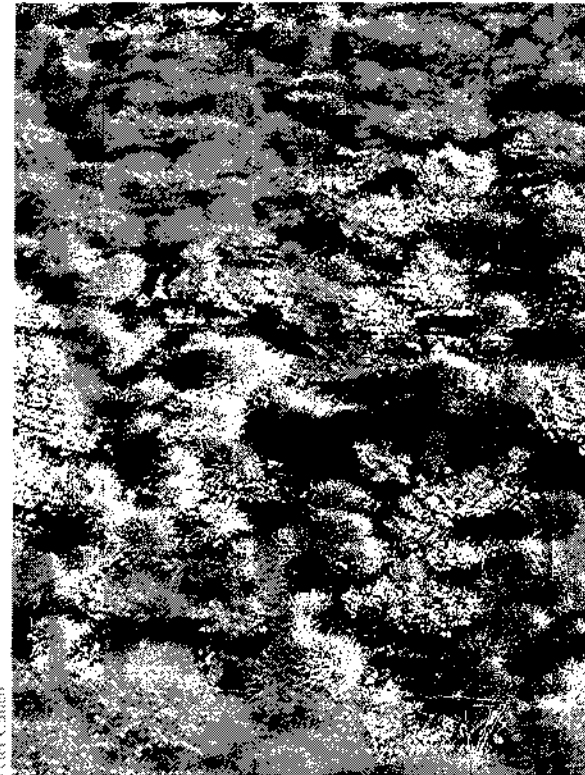
Grass, try introducing some native grasses for texture and contrast among the other native plants in your garden.

Start with some of the smaller tussock species near paths, such as Wallaby Grass [*Austrodanthonia* spp.], *Poa sieberiana* and Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda australis*) in clumps of at least 15-20 of each species, merging them to create informal drifts. Complete the Australian grassy texture among the shrub and tree framework of the garden with some of the taller species such as Bamboo Grass [*Austrostipa verticillata*], Plume Grass (*Dichelachne crinita*) and Large Tussock Grass (*Poa labillardieri*).

All of these grasses combine superbly with other distinctive native grass-like plants such as Kangaroo Paw (*Anigozanthos* spp.), Grass trees (*Xanthorrhoea* spp.) and Saw Sedges (*Gahnia* spp.). To fully enjoy the subtle, delicate texture of native grasses, position them so they can be admired with morning or afternoon sun behind.

Native grasses are very adaptable to cultivation, but don't forget to mimic natural elements such as grazing kangaroos and bushfires and cut them back to ground level every three years to help them rejuvenate. The local lizards and birds will be appreciative as you increase the grassy tussock areas in your water-saving garden, creating habitat through random planting and avoiding excessive tidiness. Some people like to go all the way in supporting the local fauna by seeking out all the local grasses and shrubs to include in their garden, but be careful if you are planting non-local species near bushland areas - Australia has enough bush escapees.

Mount Annan offers grasslands on a landscape scale with large areas of Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda australis*) which make a beautiful sight during summer with their bronze seed-heads swaying in the late afternoon breeze. With the scale of urban development in the district, these pure stands of Kangaroo Grass are becoming an increasingly rare sight and are being



*Spinifex* (*Triodia* spp.) arc dThryptomene ~ Great Sandy Desert, W.A.

managed as conservation zones.

Where areas of the Garden have been disturbed, establishing native grasses on a large scale by direct seeding is tricky. Grasses like *Themeda* have adapted to produce their seed gradually over several months, which then lays dormant until the following spring/summer. Seed is spread out after this maturation period with its germination into the tough clay soils assisted by the amazing engineering capabilities of the black awn attached to the seed. The awn is sensitive to changes in humidity making it curl and twist to help drill the seed into the ground.

Trials using direct seeding of Kangaroo Grass have been very successful, with the main limitation being the quantity of seed available, and the need to collect in a sustainable manner.

Despite our collective love of the cylinder mower, the easily-sown, wear-resistant, drought-resistant, water-efficient Australian native lawn will assert itself eventually.

**Peter Cuneo**  
Manager, Natural Heritage



Kangaroo grass (*Themeda australis*) seedheads

Whether it's the bold tussock texture of Alpine snowgrass or spinifex in the Pilbara, native grasses are an essential part of the Australian landscape and can bring unique texture and effect to home gardens.

Cultivation of native grasses has come a long way in recent years, with many species now available from specialist nurseries. Improved grass cultivars are now coming on to the market, often available as small plug plants which are ideal for mass planting.

If you can't quite bring yourself to make the ecologically responsible statement of digging up your water-guzzling lawn and replacing it with a field of Wallaby

### **Pittosporum undulatum - Traitor or Survivor ?** Jocelyn Ho well

Sweet Pittosporum is a small tree native to some of the moist forests and woodlands on fertile soils on the coast and nearby ranges in south eastern Australia. Its natural range extends from southern Qld. To E. Vic. Around Sydney it occurs naturally in widespread sandstone gully habitats and in the understorey of two rare vegetation types, the Blue Gum High Forest and Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest. Each Forest has been reduced to about 1% of its former extent and has been gazetted as an endangered ecological community. Unlike many native plants P. undulatum appears to be extending its range under European settlement. Bird dispersed seeds and the ability to recruit without fire give it an advantage over many native species. It has dense foliage which tends to suppress growth underneath it, giving it a reputation of reducing biodiversity. As it colonises changed habitats, it is accused of invading bushland! Invasion only extends as far as humans have modified the habitat - removing P. undulatum without addressing the other habitat changes will not restore former vegetation.

Consider the implications of climate change. Will all native species that alter their range under changed climatic conditions be branded environmental weeds and be eradicated from new habitats?

*As readers of a past N.L. may remember, I've always had a soft spot for Pittosporums; I find them attractive, adaptable plants to use in garden design. Ed.*

### **Golden Rules for Container Plants.** Central Coast N.L.

- Know your plant - habitat, growth patterns, soil and water needs.
- Vary best quality potting mix varied to suit the plant's requirements
- Drainage must be perfect - don't stand pots on open ground, if in a saucer raise pots above the water level. Some members recommend first putting tube stock into oversized pots to increase drainage and therefore initial growth.
- Group pots together for protection from the sun and ease of watering. Mulch [gravel, bark, etc.] to prevent drying out.
- Water by plunging pot into a bucket of water until bubbles stop rising, allow to drain, avoid tipping water from saucers back into the pot as it contains harmful salts. Hanging pots need more water.
- Rotate pots for even growth, moving them regularly to maximize the appropriate sun, shade or light.
- Fertilise regularly, varying the type used - fish oil, Seasoll or liquid organic mix Spray foliage weekly to force the pace.
- Add slow release pellets to the potting mix - cover with mulch..



## **SNIPPETS Death of a Garden - a Change in the Landscape.**

Unfortunately the last three months have not been the easiest or happiest of times at Yanderra. As the drought dragged on and bushfires raged 3 kms. away; our neighbours of fifteen years completed the sale of their property. Members who have visited this garden will remember its beautiful Bruce Mackenzie design in the Romantic landscape tradition using exclusively Australian and mainly indigenous plants. The garden was a mini ecosystem as well as a series of beautifully designed spaces, with massed plantings of *Allocasuarinas*, *lomandara longifolia* eucalypts, callistemons rainforest species and two large ponds providing a substantial habitat to a myriad of bird life including Bower birds, as well as goannas and bandicoots. I cannot describe the feeling as the new owners systematically removed<sup>3</sup> A of the landscape - the habitat, the design, the plants, the serenity reduced to three piles of woodchips. The Bower birds have gone.

The drought hastened the demise of our ageing *hakea salignas* planted along our communal fence, this, as well as some very exuberant pruning by our new neighbours of our pittosporums and microcorys- also along our fenceline gave us a birds eye view of the woodchip piles in the moonscape- intolerable on so many levels, not least emotionally. The shared landscape that both gardens had become over the years is now no longer possible - our garden can no longer borrow that landscape [ a more rural concept ], we must take the opposite approach and shield ourselves from it - the garden must finish at its boundaries - a more urban concept. *Melleleuca stypheloides* replace the *hakea* where the view is bearable, lillipillies and blueberry ash where it is not. Our small beds along the fenceline that were the edges of the larger beds next door now have to be plumped out to become blocking beds, tight fists, not languid fingertips. As I plant I console myself that at least I'm replacing some of the lost habitat.

### **Trunk Garden**

I've always struggled with the very front of our place. Years ago, I planted a jacaranda in the corner. My grandmother had grown it on as a seedling from a huge jacaranda which towered over her tiny farmhouse. My jacaranda has copped some friendly fire over the years, not least from Jeff Howes and my former next door neighbour! But my children sat in its forked trunk as I had sat in that of its parent, so it had to stay.

I have decided to create a trunk garden amongst the jacarandas — in my mind's eye, where so much of a garden is, I see the smooth eucalyptus trunks set off by a background of green ferny foliage and purple blooms. The species I've chosen are: *Euc. Haemastoma*, the famous scribbly bark, *E. citriadora*, glistening white, *E. maculata* grey and cream patches and selected dwarf forms of *Emannifera*, red and cream patches and *E. pauciflora*, grey-white smooth trunk, which go under the rather disconcerting names of "Little Spotty" and "Little Snowman" respectively. I've thrown in *Angophora costata*, vivid pink and *AMspida* as well. I was lucky enough to find some of them as multi trunked specimens. I shall keep you posted as to progress.

### **Now for the 40,000 year forecast** James Woodford

To Frances Bodkin, a traditional D'harawal Aboriginal descendant, the massive flowering of *Acacia decurrens* 18 mths ago was a terrible meteorological warning. According to the calendar of her ancestors, it signaled a meeting between the climate cycle Gadalung marool and the season Gadalung burara, bringing the harsh weather we are now experiencing. Ms Bodkin, a botanical author, teacher and traditional storyteller at Mt. Annan B.G., is one of the last people in the Sydney region who inherited tens of thousands of years of weather wisdom. In Sydney says Ms. Bodkin, there are eight phases to the 11 year cycle. Gadalung burara is the hottest and driest part of the cycle and is indicated by a massive blooming of the Sydney wattle. Unless her ancestors began burning as soon as the wattle flowered they risked fires getting into the tree crowns. Traditionally, for Sydney's Aborigines, the New Year began with the season of Murrainyungorray, which coincides with Sept.- Oct. and is marked by the waratahs flowering. On top of the seasons there were bigger and more complicated cycles, as well as plant and animal behaviours, used to forecast weather changes. When the bearded dragon stands with its head erect, it is a sign of rain.

*Have any members noticed interesting plant or animal behaviour in their patch which help them to predict weather patterns? I realize we haven't the benefit of 40,000 years practice! Ed.*

### **The Wood For the Trees** Robert Griffin

When the First Fleet set sail from England it was assumed that timber for building boats, houses and furniture would be easily obtained in N.S.W. However, the first settlers found that the felled trees were decayed and the cut timber warped and split - the shortcomings of this timber, probably *Angophora costata*, led to the search for other more suitable timbers in the surrounding countryside. *Castanea sp.*, *Euc. Robusta*, *E. resinifera* and *Toona ciliate* were soon found.

The best known and most widely used N.S.W timber, red cedar, was first described by Gov. Phillip during a journey along the Hawkesbury River in 1790. As early as 1802 attempts were made to control the cedar trade and logging was carried out with such intensity in eastern N.S.W. that by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the cedar industry was virtually defunct.

In 1912 R.T. Baker published *Cabinet Timbers of Australia* in which he not only promoted the aesthetic appreciation and use of native timbers, but also suggested the establishment of forest reserves as - "some of these beautiful woods, owing to the rapid advance of the settler, are in jeopardy of being exterminated altogether".

## Books

**The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens** reviewed by Paul Fox. [A.G.H.S. magazine Jan 2003]. O.U.P.

The range of information found in the Companion is extra ordinary. To assemble more than 1500 entries by over 200 contributors, cross reference and index them is a major intellectual and organizational achievement. The entries on important post Second World War landscape architects afford an opportunity to read about contributors to an Australian landscape sensibility all in one book.

One of the most powerful comments in the Companion comes from T.R. Garnett's entry on Gardening wherein he suggests "the styles of gardening and the varieties of plants grown still follow those of other countries ". This made me . . . reflect on whether the Companion might have had an entry at its beginning called "Australian gardening" that set the scene in a different way to the chronological entries. It might have addressed what was distinctive about Australian gardening, and reflected upon whether the changes we are seeing in newly designed public spaces will eventually redefine Australian domestic gardens. That it allows us to look to the future as well as the past is perhaps its greatest contribution.

" **New conversations with an Old Landscape**" by Catherin Bull. Images Publishing Group. It is a central thesis of this book that designed landscapes are records in landscape form of the conversations between their designers and the landscapes as they existed before they were altered. Conversations between our migrant forebears and the landscape they found on arrival were dominated by assertions that the Australian landscape should be more productive and recognizable. Such preoccupations closed their eyes , ears and minds to what the existing landscape had to say, native grasslands and forests rapidly disappeared before their message was heard or understood. An excellent book, documenting the post war Australian landscape design experience.

"**Bush Seasons an affectionate study of a tiny bushland**" by Joan Semmens. Hyland House Publishing. This is the story of 100 acres of dry grassy woodland in N.E. Victoria. Joan Semmens, during many years of daily walks, began to document and illustrate its prolific vegetation- a monthly diary of the seasons evolved and with it the author's interest in the impact which disorderly growth of human settlement has on native vegetation. A really lovely book, the illustrations are as delicate as the ecosystems they live in and the text seems informative and well written. J.H.

## VICTORIA - MELBOURNE MEETING - MAY 4<sup>TH</sup> AT 1.30pm

The next Melbourne meeting will be held on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> of May at the home and garden of John and Hilary Hirst. Please note the slightly earlier start time of 1.30pm. This is a very large garden indeed and should take around 2 hours to look at with Merele Webb and the owners acting as our guides. We will be provided with details on the history of the garden on the day but just to wet your appetites a little let me mention a few things. Gordon Ford did the first rockwork in the 1970's with subsequent design and construction by Andy Avar, Merele Webb (Nillumbik Bushscape) and Peter Smith (Bradley Bushscape). I have been told that these 4 individuals have each been responsible for creating a rock stairway! Bev Hanson's advice on one aspect of the garden was also sought and her suggestions acted upon. The property is 17 acres in all with swimming pool and tennis court. About 2 acres is gardened as such with the remainder being given over to trees, mown grass and a dam. Vistas are all important to this garden.

Visitors will need to park on the road. When entering the property please make sure that you close the gate as the whole property has been successfully fenced against rabbits.

Depending on the weather we may subsequently meet at Currawong Bush Park off Reynolds Rd. Apparently there is shelter in this park so a self-catered afternoon tea is possible. This means that you should bring a thermos and other refreshments for yourself and possibly a seat. A drink bottle if you think you may become thirsty during our visit would be wise.

## LAST MELBOURNE MEETING – FEB 9<sup>TH</sup> – CRANBOURNE BOTANIC ANNEX

I think this was possibly the best attended meeting for the Melbourne group. The opportunity to have Paul Thompson explain the proposals for the development of the gardens in the old sand quarry at Cranbourne Annex was too good to pass up. Paul has worked closely with a group of architects to come up with a very exciting design. It's a big plan, an ambitious plan, which includes an information building and an extensive car park within a garden setting and the development of a small valley. The total area when finished will be similar in size to the Melb Botanic Gardens.

Paul led the group on a tour of the site so that we could put our powers of imagination to work. We started at the 'car park' moved to the 'information building' and then bush bashed our way down to the valley floor where there is a natural lake of quite fine water. From the 'information building' you will have very good views down the valley that is surrounded by rolling hills. The planting design will include plants from around Australia with a central large area being devoted to arid land plants to mimic the red center.

Tendering for stage one should occur sometime this year. For those of us who have been privileged to see the site before work commences it will be fascinating to watch its development. Just as with the Royal Botanic Gardens the vision evident in the design will not be fully realized in most of our lifetimes but hopefully we will need less imagination than at present to see what the dreamers had in mind. Thank you Paul for a most interesting meeting.

**THIS** was the last meeting with Diana as leader. A tribute has already been made to her huge contribution to the study group in the last Newsletter. Now it only remains to thank Jo Hambrett for taking over the role of leader and to wish her all the very best.  
(Chris Larkin)

### **N.E Vic Meetings**

#### **Sept 2002**

Unfortunately there was only a small attendance for a new and exciting garden, that of Ross and Elaine Sutherland, just out of Dookie. They have chosen a site near the top of a hill and therefore need to keep their views open, while blocking the wind and creating some shade. These considerations guide the allocation of space with naturally the area around the main windows of the house reserved for the low growing 'pretties'. Some planting is already in place along the drive and at the edge of the open space around the buildings. We were amazed at the health and floriferousness (have I just made up a new word?) of everything including some touchy species (eg. *Leschenaultias*). We were there in September, already the weather was hot, we are anxious to know how it has come through this terrible summer. My recollection is we spent more time admiring and envying than offering helpful suggestions. Discussion highlighted the fact that we are still short on specific advice for inland gardens and perhaps we should try and collect and conserve our accumulated experience to make it available to beginners.

A set of records that could be very helpful would be of those plants which not only survive the heat and drought, but manage to look good doing so. Walk around the garden in the next few weeks, notebook in hand, I am certainly going to have to do it to note the gaps.

Jan recently visited the new developments at the Geelong Botanic Gardens which she found very impressive on several counts: the sheer technical feat of moving large trees, the way these plants have been re-used in dramatic groups, the overall shaping of space, the linking of plants and structures to the environment of Geelong, the *dianella* collection and the groups of desert loving plants.

#### **March 2003**

Gloria's garden was showing signs of the heat and drought but nevertheless was a delight as always. For the several new comers to the group it was an eye opener, and for the old hands there were subtle changes to note.

We then tried to define our aim and the content of our proposed guide to inland gardening. We agreed to each prepare in point form, all the advice we would offer to a novice gardener on watering. Future topics will deal with soil types, planting methods and times, pruning, maintenance and growing from seed and cuttings. Jacci described how she and her sister had formed a local community group with Federal 'morale boosting funds' to save their sanity during drought imposed inactivity and depression. This group is working to a publication of a guide to better gardening in the Caniamo area. She feels it has revived a great deal of the community closeness which had been lost in the area with the closure of local schools, normally a community focus point. The final effort is to be a booklet specifically for local conditions, including but not restricted to, indigenous and Australian plants.

Next N.E **Vic meeting:** Saturday 31 **May** @ 10:30am -  
 Van Riets Garden and Neighbourhood House inspection  
 Convenor: Barbara Buchanan

NSW Sydney Meeting - August 10 @ 11am

The next Sydney meeting will be at Ian and Tamara Cox's 5 acre garden at Kenthurst. Ian and Tamara are longtime APS people and have a wealth of gardening knowledge, especially with indigenous plants. Tamara works with the local bush fire brigades and will also speak to us about fire management on a property. Their garden is featured in Paul *Urquhart's* book *The New Native Garden*. After lunch [BYO] there is a short drive - 10 mins. To Leanne and Graeme Eze's garden at Dural, this garden is perched across a large sandstone outcrop with views across the gully to Kenthurst, *it is* especially interesting due to the formal treatment of many of the native species and the use of pruning in both formal and "bush areas".

Please let Jo Hambrett know if you are coming by Aug.3<sup>rd</sup>.

More information about the two beautiful Sth. Coast [ Wattamolla and Kangaroo Valley ] gardens - kindly organized by Maureen Webb on **Sept.14<sup>th</sup>** - next NX. Put the date in your diary NOW!!

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Please Note: Your annual subscription is due by the first of July 2003. Included in this newsletter is the yellow membership form for you to fill in and send to Bryan.

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#### **GDSG 2003/04 memberships paid to date**

Ingrid Adler, Noel Kerrison APS Tasmania, Library National Botanic Gardens  
 Canberra, Joan Barrett, Elsita Boffi de Schulte, Elizabeth Brett, Ian Bond,  
 Yvonne Coventry, Rith Crosson, Arthur Dench, Cheree Densley, Judith Dykes, Pamela  
 Finger, Linda Floyd, Christuine & Angelo Gaiardo, Mary Graham, Jan & Alan Hall,  
 Monika Herrmann, Julie Jones, Bev Kapernik, Win Main, Penny Munro, David Oakley,  
 Alison Payne, Georgina & Jon Persse, Lynette & Peter Reilly, Nicky Rose, Rosalind  
 Smallwood, Margaret Stanton, Irene Stocks, Ross & Elaine Sutherland, Lesley  
 Waite, Jim & Pat Watson,

## GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT 1 July 2002 - 31 March 2003

BOOK Account

Sales		\$9634.64
Less Book purchases	\$8076.75	
Selling costs	\$ 202.75	<u>\$8278.50</u>
Surplus		<u>\$1360.14</u>

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BANK ACCOUNT

Bank Balance Uuly 2002 \$ 2519.69

## Plus INCOME

Book surplus	\$ 1360.14	
Donations	\$ 55.00	
Bank Interest	\$ 8.53	
2002/2003 Subscriptions received	\$ 619.00	
2003/04 Subscriptions received	<u>\$ 152.64</u>	
		<u>\$ 2195.28</u>

## Less EXPENDITURE

## Newsletter Expenses:

Printing	\$ 877.25	
Postage	\$ 339.70	
		\$ 1216.95
Sub to Friends of RBG Cranbourne	\$ 25.00	
Sub to Friends of Kawarra Gardens	\$ 20.00	
Sub to Eurobodalla Botanic Gardens	\$ 20.00	
State Tax on Bank Withdrawals	<u>\$ 10.60</u>	
		<u>\$ 1292.55</u>

Balance 31 March 2003

\$ 3422.42