

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS.

GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

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Dear Members,

Where does time go? I know this sounds like a question from the Science Show but it seems to get along at an increasingly cracking pace. The effects of time on all things, animate and inanimate, are readily observable. Diana's "Change in the Garden" article, Feb.05 NL, certainly struck a chord among members. An interesting part of garden design is allowing for, as much as is possible, the myriad effects of the fourth dimension on one's garden.

We have had positive feedback, which is gratifying, on our new website from non members and members alike. I have had two CDs, of beautiful Australian native plant gardens, made. Many of them owned and photographed by members. We can now regularly change the pictorial content of the site as well as create the beginnings of a photo bank for the Group.

If any member is going to Perth for the Conference and would like to represent the GDSDG please contact me. Naturally W.A. would like to have us there along with the other Study Groups.

Is there a NSW member out there who would consider organizing the Sydney meetings?

I am very happy to help but it is time to hand over this very pleasant job to someone else. Please contact me if you enjoy meeting great gardeners and visiting interesting places all over NSW!

Keep thoughts, feedback and replies coming in. Members frequently make excellent suggestions via Correspondence or in larger articles, viz.; Cheree Hall's idea of "new plants in the market place" NL Nov. 04 and Dora Berenyi's "member contact list" NL Aug 04.1 haven't heard from one member on these and I think both are excellent suggestions. We really must support the innovative ideas of members and actively use the NL as a national discussion forum.

Meetings : N.E. Victoria 23/4,18/6 Melbourne 29/5 Sydney 29/5

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Apologies for Feb 05 Newsletter No. 49.

The Gremlins got to work on the article "Supernatural" in the Design section of the Feb 05. NL. At the bottom of page 7, it should have read "[It is an] inspirational force. His clients had bought 44 hectares on the highest point of the [Mornington Peninsula] ". Apologies for any confusion.

JH

CORRESPONDENCE

I have always loved Prostantheras and have grown several here over the years. *P.seiberi*, *P. incana*, *P. denticulate*, *P. baxteri*, *P. incise*, *P. ovalifolia*, *P. nivea*, *P. rotundifolia* and a hybrid *P. "Snow Flurry"*. I should try a few more if there's room! I also love *Westringias*.

Sheila Simpson Lee NSW

Dear Jo, Thanks again for our Gosford day, and so sorry we missed the Sunday. My thoughts for the Raine garden's 'too grassy area.' is a casuarina forest. These trees do grow in a mono culture naturally, their fallen needles make the best weed matt, they are good windbreak trees and of course the sound is wonderful, something we don't have in mind when planting. I would suggest successive planting's to vary the heights.

What an inspiration Tom and Ann and their enthusiasm and energy were to us all. I would like to visit again in a few years. Have fun gardening.

Deirdre Morton NSW

Congratulations!

I have just had a look at the website and think it is wonderful; lots of information and food for thought. Thank you Brian Walters, Jo and anyone else who has worked to get it up and running.

Chris Larkin Vic.

DESIGN

An Interview with Professor Richard Clough

Jo Hambrett

Last year Professor Richard Clough, architect, landscape architect and educator, presented his outstanding collection of garden books to the Historic Houses Trust's Library.

He began collecting books in London, influenced by the example of one of his teachers, and inspired by reading Christopher Tunnard's "Gardens in the Modern Landscape" 1938. This seminal work on modernist landscape design, featuring modernist houses designed by Australian expatriate Raymond McGrath, had an historical perspective, with unexpected references to 19th century garden writers. Clough sought out these gardening books, then little valued and inexpensive. He collected for his own education and bought books on all aspects of garden design. When he was appointed to the University of NSW as Professor of Landscape Architecture and Head of School, he encountered teaching based on unfounded assumptions about Australian gardening and Australian attitudes to gardening. So he began to gather a collection that would give proper historical background to the subject.

Megan Martin, Library & Research Collection H.H.T. NSW

Richard Clough was the first landscape architect to be employed by the National Capital Development Commission in Canberra. His major landscape design projects included Anzac parade, Government House Grounds extensions and Lake Burley Griffin and surrounding parklands. He also advised as a consultant on several school and University campuses. The Kings School, Parramatta and Macquarie University Ryde are of particular interest. Both are outstanding designs, incorporating indigenous eucalypts and rock forms, and have withstood the test of time magnificently. Hopefully Prof. Clough can be persuaded one day soon to record their design history. Prof. Clough also had input into the design of the Voider family's "Nooroo" at Mt. Wilson NSW. It is a most serene and logical landscape, I would strongly suggest a visit if you haven't been and are interested in garden design.

When I read the above article [Spring 2004 edition of the Historic Houses Trusts "Insites" magazine] I thought that "teaching based on unfounded assumptions about Australian gardening and attitudes to gardening" would be of interest to GDSG members. I contacted Prof. Clough who gave his time most generously for the interview which appears below. I am sure, like me, you will be diving for the reference books after reading it.

It was a real privilege to be able to spend time with the professor, a man with an encyclopaedic knowledge of not only gardening history but Australian history as well:

JH

Professor Clough finds both the oft repeated mantras; that early colonial gardeners disliked and were intimidated by the native flora, and that they tried to recreate a British landscape in the colonies, baseless and annoying!

Whilst teaching at University he felt that the substantial achievements of early Australian colonial gardening was being unwittingly downgraded.

There were widespread inaccuracies taught about colonial *attitudes, availability* and the *use* of plants..

Many of the first educated people to settle the colony had a wide world experience. Informed by the Georgian era of enlightenment, they were full of curiosity about the land they were living in [more so than many subsequent settlers].

The first currency lads and lasses knew little of Britain as their birthplace was Australia. They were influenced by the land of their birth. There was a large variety of plant species available to the early colonists.. Trading with India, China, the West Indies and Dutch East Indies the very early colony had a great variety of fruit and vegetable species - possibly more than we now enjoy! Camellias were brought to Australia over a decade before Mrs. Macarthur, commonly thought to be the first, imported them.

The broad assumption that people found the bush monotonous is clearly incorrect. The Sydney bushland is fascinating and has inspired people from the very beginning of the settlement, as proved by the countless writings, paintings, sketches and scientific expeditions of the time.

Prof. Clough cites Mr. Ross, Tasmania's equivalent of Thomas Shepherd, as typical of the period. Ross advocated, in his Hobart Almanacs, using the existing Australian bushland to fit house garden and property. Clearing and retaining, not altering and introducing - using what is there and building out.

Clearly there were many influences at work on the early colonial gardens. Global and internal. Perhaps, as Prof. Clough suggests, our ancestors were far more practical and proactive and demonstrated much more initiative in their gardens than subsequent generations. A quick look at the very early historic gardens will demonstrate their almost exclusive use of drought tolerant species - no water on tap to take for granted then. Miles Franklin's "Childhood at Brindabella" gives a very accurate picture of country gardening of that time.

It would seem then we have done the early colonists and ourselves, a great disservice in the teaching of our gardening history. We have neither learnt from the mistakes of our forebears, nor from their numerous successes.

I was interested in Prof Clough's thoughts on matters pertaining to design with Australian plants and the Australian plant garden.

Hailing from the Riverina Prof. Clough does not share the attachment to the Sydney flora of fellow landscape architects Bruce McKenzie and Harry Howard. He comes from an area where extensive clearing has produced a "Hans Heysen" landscape and the variety of native plants is smaller.

He calls himself a Functionalist — integrate the desired function into the landscape and work with what is there. If its poplars and willows so be it. He is a believer in Utility. Why are you building the garden? What are your needs? The function will vary from

person to person. Gardens are the transition between the larger landscape and the areas people use. All sorts of gardens have validity, he will not condemn a garden even if he doesn't like it.

He feels that just using Australian native plants does not necessarily make it an Australian garden.

Speaking with the confidence of a true Modernist, he is irritated by strong environmentalists who, he feels, have given up the struggle to create anything that is truly worthwhile. Man can create environments that are just as effective as natural ones. To refuse to build dams because of the environment is foolish. Man can create something else with the water that is saved. Fruit bats in the Botanic Gardens should be removed as they are destroying the very reason the gardens are there ie; the plants.

He is strongly influenced by British landscape architects Sylvia Crowe and Brenda Colvin who were concerned with the man made environment and developed an ecological approach to landscape design in the inter war years. He is a great admirer of Mrs. Molly Gibson, later Grassick, a contemporary of Edna Walling, who had a strong social conscience and was interested in non domestic spaces - workplaces, playgrounds and such like .Among her major landscape projects were the Shell Refinery at Geelong, the vacuum Oil Terminal at Altona, the Glaxo factory at Bayswater and the Maribyrnong Migrant Hostel.

PLANTS and DESIGN

"Yanderra" News

Emboldened by our first really good summer rains in three years I decided to do some summer planting and not, as usual leave it to the cooler autumn months. It would be interesting to see if I could get some extra growth by earlier planting with the back up of summer storms.

It was in the May 03 newsletter that I wrote about our loss of the garden next door and what we had to do in our garden to try and diminish that loss. Well, of course, all the planting was carried out during the drought -so progress was initially slow. Especially the lilly pillies, *Syzygium australe* - who were in charge of shielding us from the very worst excesses over the fence! I was almost ready to ditch them — they had not even achieved fence height in two years - and replace them with the easy going and very pretty blueberry ash when it began to rain. They are much happier now and, I think, may have won themselves a reprieve! The *Melaleuca styphylloides* along the same boundary have done well but have lately enjoyed the attention of the dreaded webbing caterpillar, so vigilance is needed there. Growth in the other beds along the boundary has been slow also, but very few deaths and the wattles are really looking good now. By the time they have done their best the rest should have grown a lot more. Happily the Persoonia has

seeded. It is one of my favourite indigenous plants and has proved tricky to grow when bought from the nursery. I hope this Spring will see planting expectations realized!

An interesting by-product of the drought was the huge reduction in canopy cover as the trees shed their leaves. Gazing upwards, as large sunny patches sprawled across the previously shady fern glade, I was amazed at how many large chunks of sky could be seen. The turpentines and grey gums had dropped a huge amount of leaf [not to mention never ending sticks] and this of course was totally changing the microenvironment of the understorey.. I planted the fast growing indigenous *acacia decurrens* and slower red cedars in an attempt to create a tall shrub size middle storey and protect the ferns and other shade lovers growing there. Fortunately the rains came and the trees obligingly re leafed before quick growth on their part was needed !

The trunk garden, mentioned in the same NL, is coming along well. No deaths to report. I have added two more eucalypts [demonstrating a complete lack of the discipline, so important in good design] *Euc gregsoniana* the mallee Snow Gum, and *Euc. leucoxylon* rosa, both trees remind me of places I like [Mt. Wilson and Melbourne] and, more importantly, have good trunks too!

I now must pinch out the tops and if I am really brave I'll cut some off at ground level to get the multi trunk and mallee effect. They have been underplanted with *Poa labillardieri* and the spectacular barbed wire grass, *Cymbopogon refractus* , its weeping habit, striking seed heads [just like barbed wire] and red stalks make it a real eye catcher, I adore it.

Next to the trunk garden, [and now part of it, in what was previously an unsuccessfully resolved, grassed open space] are plantings of poa and cymbopogon curving sinuously across the newly created bed.

NEW PLANTINGS

Inspired by Gordon Ford's writings on the natural garden and asymmetrical design, I placed a bird bath in the middle of the bed [the previously unsuccessfully resolved one mentioned above], approached by a straight path, but on the diagonal. Planted around its base are *Pennisetum alopecuroides* in a square pattern. Backlit by the afternoon sun, their fluffy seed heads are a happy contrast to the angularity of the cymbopogon and themeda seed heads.

It's an experiment but it looks right [occult balance], allowing me to introduce formal concepts without making the formality itself the feature. The straight lines of the path, the square planting at the base and the lower half of the birdbath are hidden by the curving sweeps of grass. The pathway is discovered almost as you are past it. The formality is secondary to the sweeping lines of the natural garden.

The backdrop is a newly planted, informal hedge of *Callistemon citrinus* Endeavour which runs along the front fence and down the side until it meets an old planting of *C. viminalis*. Again a formal concept in an informal setting. An added bonus - the blue/purple of the nearby jacarandas and the red of the bottlebrush perfectly match the Crimson rosellas, our the most frequent visitors to the birdbath!

Still at the front but on the other side of the driveway, the last of the struggling pepper trees has bitten the dust and some of the silky oaks should be feeling a tad edgy! Here, in

the newly extended bed, I have put in more lomatas, correas, *Phebalium squamulosum* and a couple of *Calytrix tetragona* "rich pink."

I also succumbed, predictably, to the "temptation to buy waratahs" virus, closely related to the "temptation to buy West Australian species and Boronia" virus and have popped in two Shady Ladies, one white and one red. I told them I loved them and that they were planted somewhere in the Blue Mountains, OK the last one is a lie!

The bed at the top end was also enlarged and part of a beautiful rock exposed. A much prettier picture. I have tried to make this planting restrained and a feature. Again a more formal design concept within a natural garden setting. Previously I have always deliberately chosen plants, native and exotic, whose shape and foliage were sympathetic to the indigenous bushland; endeavouring to create an overall effect that is harmonious and peaceful. I was aware however that this front area was uninspiring. It lacked the grace of untouched bush and the beds of small to medium shrubs sloped too quietly into the natural bushland behind. All was too subtle, some tension was needed to appreciate the peace! It was a picture that could be improved upon. I was also conscious of the need to draw people to this side of the garden away from the top boundary where the Bruce McKenzie garden had been. The focus had to shift.

The plants were chosen for their form and colour, definite specimen plants. *Banksia serrata*, two *Corymbia eximia*, [small, attractive shape, full canopied, grey pendulous foliage, soft, yellow flaky trunks and heads of cream summer blossoms], an *Angophora costata* and *Euc cinerea*. I aim to keep the latter cut back to a shrub of round tinkling silver leaves. There are three species of grevilleas, *G. miqueliana* —soft green elliptical leaves, *G. Victoriae*, oval leaf form, and the grey toned, very attractive *G. arenaria* — these three blend well with the correas, phebaliums and eriostemons in a nearby bed and provide relief amongst the predominantly silver foliage. The rest of the planting is silver and grey, *Federation Stars* "Starbright" flannel flowers, *Senna artemisioides*, *Leucophyta brownii nana* and *Prostanthera sericea*.

The grey plantings catch the cars headlights as we come up the drive at night and are quite luminous, even by starlight. By day, from both inside and outside the house, this garden draws one physically and visually closer. It makes an area that was never noticed before, just extra scenery if you like, a feature garden which also highlights the bushland backdrop.

The front rainforest bed opposite this new planting was also slightly enlarged in the interest of balance [not the bank balance Bruce would hasten to add!] Here I seized the opportunity to add more of the indigenous *Backhousia myrtifolia*, lovely, lovely things that they are, with creamy flowers, residual pale green star shaped calyx and an attractive horizontal habit. Also, *Graptophyllum ilicifolium* the holly fuchsia, a bold little rainforest shrub with stiffly serrated leaves, like holly but much more of a tree frog green with bold crimson fuchsia flowers in late spring - apparently beloved by honeyeaters - a beauty! Plus of course, dear old *dianella* as the hardy, indigenous and attractive infiller.

The drought has taken its toll of some of our older trees and shrubs, or possibly just hastened their demise. One of our big *Banksias serratas* in the front lawn — part of the original planting nearly twenty years ago suddenly and unceremoniously died. An

unexpected plus though has been an greatly improved vista from one of our windows which takes in a large part of the entire front garden area with a focus on, the previously obscured, variegated *Tristania conferta*. A real specimen tree and now properly highlighted. A large, prolific purple flowering *Alyogyne huegii* has also shuffled off, a pity as it looked great flowering at the same time as the *Prostanthera ovalifolias* in the same bed - often referred to as the "suffragette garden" due to its deep purpleness! I have replaced it with lower growing birds' nest ferns and midjin berry, *austromyrtus dulcis*, enabling one to appreciate the gentle slope of the garden bed, which the very large *Alyogyne* didn't, and view the, now mature and attractive, trunks of the Bangalow palms behind. This successful change gave me heart to get stuck into the nearby *Hibiscus splendens* which had got a little too territorial for my liking. Reducing their numbers, size and shape also allowed for unexpected, pleasing glimpses of the glade behind .

As Diana wrote in her "Change in the Garden" article Feb 05 NL "the death of any plant is sad but the chance to do a little redesigning is not Designing continues throughout the life of a garden and gets more and more interesting as the years go by." Some of the elderly members of the *Casuarina torulosa* glade, having grown here forever, look tired of life. I don't feel they'll make another summer. It is one of my favourite areas in the garden and, fortunately, we have been adding to it over the years but the size and shape of the old timers is irreplaceable.

I must make mention of the veritable snowstorm of grey gum, *Euc. punctata* .blossom that covered the garden in the second half of February. Unbelievable. The trees were alive with birds, mainly raucous rainbow lorikeets, which I could hear rather than see. The air was so full of tiny blossom filaments that I was shaking them off the dry washing, the joints in between the verandah pavers were packed tight and the leaves of garden plants were covered for weeks in a heavy dusting of fragmented blooms.

HABITAT GARDENING

When in the garden I often think of conversations had with Danie Ondinea, one time GDSG member and co contributor to our book. As most of you will know, two of Danie's passions are wildlife and habitat gardening. To my mind, a successful garden provides habitat for all manner of indigenous flora and fauna, and Danie's knowledge and wisdom has very much influenced my plant choice, design and maintainance at Yanderra.

One of her main concerns is the very real threat that excessive *tidiness* in the garden can pose to wildlife, both plant and animal. One doesn't have to be overly zealous to do damage. It is so easy to pull up some lomandara seedlings with a handful of erharta grass - they seeded because you had left the area undisturbed, but then so did the ubiquitous erharta! We have decided to stop both mowing and planting out with tube stock [spectacularly unsuccessful] a dry, difficult and rabbit warren section in the back corner near an occasional watercourse. Three or four angophora seedlings have popped up, very gratifying, but so has patterson's curse, erharta, scotch thistle and other things, for which I have only unprintable [definitely non botanical] names! The course of action will be, I think, to weed out the larger stuff and let it remain undisturbed. This

way, hopefully over time, we will achieve success in two areas, regeneration and habitat provision.

Near our back door, are three or four large pots filled with water and water loving plants. Their function for me, is decorative. Not so for the little frogs that took up residence there. To them it looked awfully like habitat. So, moving a pot's position, to enhance the overall visual effect, did very little for one resident, whose froggy legs waved forlornly at me from underneath the very heavy pot after repositioning. Filled with remorse for my stupid act of visual vanity I recycled him, back into the water, to miraculously recover or provide fertilizer. I fear the latter.

Who hasn't, when trimming or pruning, managed to reduce a lizard by about half his size? Again, the most awful feeling. One which would not have occurred if tidiness, design and maintenance [ie: gardening!] had not been issues. Moving logs, raking leaves and sticks, cutting down dead or dying trees and excessive use of artificial aids like water saver crystals and pesticides can all make life difficult for the flora and fauna trying to complete their cycle of life in our gardens. The gardener can also become a victim of the tidy up campaign - many a time this particular gardener has experienced the bull ant in the pants situation after accidentally disturbing a nest, felt the wrath of an angry wasp and had snake and funnel web near misses! Not to mention cuts, bruises and aching limbs the next day.

Achieving environmental harmony within a garden can be a challenge, as a garden is by definition, a manipulated and controlled space. I like to think that *awareness* and *vigilance* will help us rise to the challenge of incorporating a successful habitat garden within a manipulated space. Leaving some areas, in among the more gardenised areas, undisturbed is a design as well as an emotional challenge - especially for the more horticulturally controlling amongst us!

Nevertheless, in the interests of such globally major issues as ecological sustainability and biodiversity, it is a *very* important concept for all gardeners to embrace. It is up to those of us who love and garden with Australian native plants to lead the way.

Changed Landscapes

Chris Larkin

In the last newsletter several articles were awash with the jargon of the landscape architect. When plain language isn't used to talk about something I become very suspicious about what is going on - I'm on high alert for 'the gap' - the credibility gap between what is being said and the actual reality. Without visiting the sites we are in a poor position to judge.

The article on design called 'Super Natural' by Beverley Johansen may have an unfortunate gap in it; from p7 to p8 of our newsletter it does not flow on, but I think there is enough content combined with pictures for us to get an idea of the project. Are we really to believe that these terraces and maze relate the contemporary house to the Australian landscape! The un-Australian poplar lined driveway is an idea 'borrowed'

from the changed farmed landscape where poplars are used commonly as wind-breaks. But if that isn't enough poplars, 'another twenty-four', are used against some walls. To top it off there's a set of antique Buddhist temple gates at the main courtyard entrance, which opens to an olive grove! I'm confused, but not as culturally confused as this design appears to be.

At present in the city of Knox where I live the local Council is in the long process of attempting to have local and specific variations on building and development guidelines changed at the interface of land zoned rural and land zoned for residential development. As a generalization Council is trying to mount an argument to the State Government for transition zones to be established. Interestingly Council is arguing for retaining the visual appeal of open farmland as well as forested slopes of the ranges. Furthermore they think that the solution for both these landscapes is to insist on 1000m² minimum block size! Which brings me to the point I've been pondering since reading the newsletter article, mentioned above, and Council's proposal - is there value in retaining the aesthetic of a changed landscape, and if so how can you achieve this in the sprawling metropolitan area, let alone more outlying areas where land is rapidly being sliced up for housing development?

Recently Council lost a fight at the Appeals Tribunal against a large development of 89 house lots in part of a sparsely treed valley previously farmed. I can't say I'm surprised as I really do think it is hard to mount an argument against development in areas of cleared land. Now the property in front of us is in the process of subdivision. (Last year it was the property to the west.) It forms part of the northern slopes of the Lysterfield Hills and has some valuable remnant vegetation — particularly understory plants such as grasses. The developer has made at least one major concession in 'giving' Council a 17m deep strip of land bordering the street but several of the proposed allotments will not be large enough to allow for reasonable size gardens and height restrictions allow for 2-storey buildings which are a common choice in the area. So it is back to the Appeals Tribunal for us to see if we can gain anything, particularly with regard allotment size and building heights. While we stand and fight both of us toy with the option of flight.

Chris Larkin Vic.

Change in the garden—good or bad?

A response to Diana Snape

We purchased a bush block in outer eastern suburban Heathmont 26 years ago & built a house retaining most of the bush. My experience of the past 25 years demonstrates that a naturalistic garden is continually evolving and providing limitless challenges.

The children have long gone and now have their own bush blocks. The pittosporums, once cubbies have gone, as has the walk in rabbit hutch making way for changes. The

removal of five large pine trees has resulted in the regeneration of *lomandra longifolia*, *lomandra filiformis*, *gahnia sieberiana* and *prostanthera lasianthos*.

Change in the garden has evolved to meet changing family needs with varying degrees of planning over the years. Change can also be forced upon us as was experienced in the recent storm. The largest of the remaining exocarpos lost yet another large limb and the other remaining two were uprooted leaving a significant gap. This space now provides the opportunity for redesign.

This garden will continue to have many changes and in more recent times since rejoining SGAP and joining the garden design study group, my "design ideas" have become focused on the challenges and opportunities presented by a dry, shady garden. Without challenges and opportunities gardening for me would be boring.

Pam Yarra Vic.

It Works

"The trouble with Australians is they won't take risks, not when it comes to gardens. Most prefer to cling to plants of European origin- box hedges and cottagey flowers, when they could be celebrating native plants that suit the climate and soil."

My words - no.

They were said by Andrew Pfeiffer, one of Australia's most eminent Landscape designers, in a recent article in the Australian Financial Review (Oct.15-17 2004). Pfeiffer trained at Kalmthout Arboretum in Belgium, Kew Gardens in London and on estates in Scotland, England and France.

Since then he designed gardens from "window boxes to broad acres"-for clients all around the world.

Based in Sydney, he spends three months a year travelling to overseas commissions.

In 1978 Pfeiffer met Gunther and Gitta Rembel who were about to build a house on 2 acres at Dural in NSW and Pfeiffer went to work designing their garden.

He divided the garden into compartments, each containing plants that were ecologically compatible.

18 months ago, Pfeiffer decided to use only plants that are indigenous to the surrounding bushland, on the last part of the garden.

"The result is unquestionably the best single garden I have ever designed simply because of it's powerful sense of belonging to it's native environment and the Zen-like harmony it creates. It's as if all non- essential ideas have been boiled away, leaving simply an essence. It is so simple and so obvious. It is getting rid of all the baggage of being European.

You recommend it to clients in Perth, South Australia, and the bush and no one is quite brave enough. You recommend it to the Rembels and they say 'Go ahead, sounds exciting'".

For the past few years Pfeiffer has been designing a garden in StTropez .France that doesn't have automatic watering because it is planted with local native plants from the Mediterranean. There are no lawns to be watered or mown-instead there is a local grass that dries out in the summer and looks natural, amongst the rosemary and the lavender says Pfeiffer.

If my husband and I were to start our native garden again I would love to work along these lines-making it totally indigenous to our area ,but maybe doing it in a more formal parterre style, using for instance our little yellow hibbertia as a border,next could come the Nodding blue lily, then the beautiful Hop bush -together with a native grass .which at the moment, in our garden, looks great with it's olive green colouring and waving seed heads.

I have been on a trip with the Royal Botanical Gardens in Sydney, together with the Australian Plants Society, recently to Victoria to visit native gardens around Melbourne. I know what kinds of gardens we can and do create. They are water efficient, full of birds and stunning and making the statement "I am Australian and I represent this Country". It is exciting to me because it works so beautifully.

Win Main NSW

SNIPPETS

2005 Australian Open Gardens Scheme
Four Sydney Native Gardens Open for Inspection

Jeff Howes NSW

Great news - for the Spring 2005 / Autumn 2006 season, there are four Sydney gardens open under the Australian Open Garden Scheme that feature either all or predominately native plants.

Members, Ros Andrews and Cherrie Hall are having a well earned rest this year, so you will have to wait till next year to see their wonderful Australian plant gardens.

Three gardens will be open from on 10 and 11 September 2005 and they are;

- ❖ Jeff Howes garden
- ❖ Carol and Brain Roach's garden
- Jenny and David Chandler's garden

The fourth garden will be open will be open on 24-25 September 2005 and is:

- Jo Hambrett's garden 'Yanderra'

Why not visit one or all of them as they all have very different approach to successfully growing a wide range of native plants?

Please note, these gardens are open from 10am to 4.30pm on both days and the Australian Open Garden Scheme charges an entrance fee to enter them. Most of the money raised, is returned to the community under their Community Grant Scheme.

Following is a brief description of the four gardens.

The mature garden of Jeff Howes has been developed over 25 years and is a landscaped native garden in 'suburbia'. At the front, use has been made of many types of native

grasses, interesting foliage plants, rocks and orchids, there is also a private north facing courtyard featuring large orchid covered rocks and a small ornamental pond.

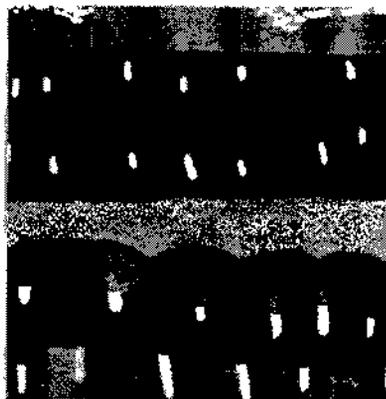
In the garden at the rear of the house, there are many rainforest plants, ferns and orchids that give a cooler shadier ambience which offers a cool spot for relaxing in summer. All this has been established on dry clay soil which has offered the owner "many challenges".

The garden of Carol and Brian Roach immediately adjoins the Berowra Valley Bushland. They have an extensive, unfenced frontage to the road of about 25m with the southern side boundary opening into the bush. Their gardens are designed to simply merge with this natural environment. Brian has been a keen collector and propagator of Australian plants for nearly 30years. Over 300 species of native plants from all over the country can be seen growing in raised gardens which are largely encircled by meandering paths. Brian operates a small nursery and plants will be available for sale at very modest prices.

David and Jenny Chandler purchased their home in 1979 and the only native plant present at that time was a large scribbly gum (*Eucalyptus haemastoma*) the rest of the garden was all lawn. Since then most of the grass has now been removed and the front garden, which is on a north facing slope, has been planted with Sydney sandstone flora. On the south side of the house sheltered by the carport is a fernery with numerous hanging baskets of ferns and orchids, these provide a cool entrance to the house. The back garden overlooking the pool is in sun most of the day and this area is planted with Eremophilas and Grevilleas and is continually visited by native birds. There is also a sheltered area with numerous native orchids and tree ferns. On the north side of the house a small rainforest area which, is sheltered by large *Pittosporum undulatum* trees and features many palms, ferns and orchids.

The garden of Bruce and Jo Hambrett is on acreage and the simple weatherboard and iron roofed dwelling, viewed through a dense grove of pendulous rose she - oaks, evokes the timeless ambience of rural Australia. Indigenous species such as Blackbutts, Angophoras, Grey gums and a Turpentine glade (the length of the five acre block) are underplanted with a great variety of indigenous and rainforest species. Exotic plants in cottage gardens and sandstone terraces near the house are chosen to blend with the Australian native plants nearby. Exotic deciduous trees are planted for autumnal and winter interest.

New sweeping beds of Kangaroo, Poa and Cymbopogon grasses have been most successful, as has a new "silver" garden bed of Flannel flowers, Sennas and Prostantheras.



Musings of Mt. Penang

Suellen Harris NSW

From Nowra to Gosford is more than a cut lunch and compass job. It's a logical work of navigating. But as Brian and myself have managed to navigate ourselves to Melbourne and back without a scratch, Gosford and the gardens at Mt Penang was a piece of cake. It was our first 'outing' with a study group so we were prepared to meet new faces (as well as some familiar ones).

The Mt Penang Gardens is not without its critics. It's new, it's modern, it's been professionally landscaped and it's been given considerable grant money by the state government, \$8.7M to be exact. The latter being a source of envy for many. Located 80kms north of Sydney, it sits in the heart of the sandstone quarrying district; the old Kariong Detention Centre site. The inmates have moved on and there is a show garden evolving instead.

The architects looked for a relationship with the surrounding landscape, with strong vertical and horizontal walls representing the blocky nature of the sandstone and how people traverse it. At the base of these walls are cool nooks with ponds filled with water plants. Flat and raised beds imitate the coolness within by rainforest plantings and the clever camouflage of supports with orchids growing on mesh and moss. These nooks brought relief from the heat of the day.

Gravel paths weave and cross to bring one to the sculpture garden with its borrowed landscape of the eucalyptus in the neighbouring property and its spectacular view. Further down the path is the grove of *Brachichiton rupestris* (bottle trees) with their bulbous bottoms. There is the arid garden with ancient stands of cacti and succulents; some cleverly planted in raised 'Rocla' concrete stormwater pipes, mulched with a mix of pebbles and rumbled glass. Follow the path, and nearly always in sight, is the pond. This large rectangular pond, stepped to create a waterfall was a welcome relief from the heat. The pond can be accessed without the need to bend or kneel to feel the refreshing cool water through your fingers. The architects have used mainly Hawkesbury Sandstone species in their plantings, grasses, *Xanthorea* spp., *Telopea* spp and more. Water features are present throughout the garden and represent historical events. Without our wonderful guide, Andy, we would still be scratching our heads as to their meaning. And finally, the bridge! The first and last piece of architecture you see. In fact, you can't miss it; it's bright blue, slightly twisted and has viewing holes on one side and the pond on the other. I found the bridge quite fascinating, quirky, innovative and just plain fun. The camera can view, through the holes, the sculptured gums at the back. It makes for some really interesting photos!

The best bits? The arid garden (loved it), the large pond and of course, the bridge.
The not so good bits? I needed Andy (our guide) to interpret, and more plantings.

It's a wonderful piece of imagination with its nooks and overhanging walls, lookouts to the surrounding countryside and mostly native plantings. I want to go back again in a

few year's time when it's out of its infancy to become an adolescent. Definitely worth seeing.

Report on SYDNEY MEETING Central Coast weekend 19/20th Feb 05

What a fantastic weekend this was! It was an absolute feast of gardens and garden design and reminded me of our wonderful South Coast GDSG trips of a few years ago. Many thanks to GDSG members Tom and Ann Raine for organizing the weekend so magnificently.

We began Saturday morning at the new Mt. Penang gardens, at Kariong, high above the city of Gosford [take the Gosford exit off the F3]. These gardens are part of the Festival Development Corporation's Mt. Penang development site — a regional park, comprising Festival and Events, Mixed use, Sports, Commercial and Bushland precincts as well as the Festival Gardens. It is a peaceful, rural setting, at least at the moment and the gardens, the shops and amenities blocks appear as a slightly surreal pieces of sculpture amidst the horse paddocks. The older rural style buildings dotting the grounds harken back to the days when it was a self sufficient, government run juvenile institution.

The shop, café and toilet blocks sit on a very red, a most Australian red, square of concrete. The front of the buildings are covered with soft focus image of a bright orange kangaroo paw— awfully like Brian Snape's photo on the cover of our book ! Sections of the buildings are clad in mirrors, reflecting the large bodies of water, natural and constructed that are a part of the overall design. The café is an elegant shed floating above the water, its walls rolled back to embrace the scenery, like a Japanese tea house.

The gardens themselves are only 15mths old, there is a lot of growing yet to achieve and, I suspect, a lot of sorting out exactly which plant is "right" for the particular job it has to do. There are areas called "fissures" [reference to the Hawkesbury sandstone geomorphology and topography which greatly informed Anton James, the designer] where plants with similar needs are placed. This enables visitors to see species which are suitable for home gardens and grow well in this particular environment. It is a garden of d^coveyry a^j} sensuality - nature held in curving concrete walls, an abstraction pf the g??^ ^pdgippnp cliffs of the Central Coast. The water and mist features are fun and cooling, esrapiaUy fyy the children, but overhead the relentless summer sun beats down| Whilst a^ drink of cool

water under the shade of a huge gum is welcome, we need much more shade in the gardens, if we are to take the time to enjoy them that they deserve.

Much has been written about Mt. Penang gardens by people far more learned and qualified than I. If you would like a copy of the handout I gave the members who attended, contact me and I'll send it to you. It makes for very interesting reading, not least for revealing the drama and complexity involved in creativity!

After the Gardens we left for "Rainridge", GDSG members Tom and Ann Raine's garden, via Nola Parry's "Wildflower Place nursery. Naturally, treasures were found and duly purchased — buckets of cut wildflowers in posies and oases looked spectacular. The waxy red pink perfection of the flowering gum blossoms defied imagination.

"Rainridge" is set across the top of the ridge, high on a hill, overlooking green folds of rolling countryside, the beach and sea glinting in the distance. The house is approached by a long, steep driveway between natural bushland and rainforest planting on the eastern fall below the house. The drive flattens out at the top of the ridge and one approaches the house on a winding path through small shrubs and grasses. A formal squared pond tucks up against the edge of the verandah. The closer the plants are to the house and pond the lower their habit and greyer their hue. This allows for uninterrupted vistas from within the house and complements the grey tones used on its exterior. At the back of the house, high up on the verandah, one can admire the vastness of the far view or gaze upon the nearer delights, including a rockpool amongst the rainforest plantings, just below.

Nola Parry joined us for our tour and readily identified the myriad of plants in the garden. She spoke of her delight in having such a wonderful opportunity to work with great clients. Gardeners who are happy to experiment with obscure but interesting plants. Interestingly, she spoke of COLOUR as her predominant interest in garden design. She notices colour before form and as a retailer she says that it is colour in plants that the public respond to and subsequently buy. The nursery industry, in response to this, are producing better plants which are purchased and therefore more native plants are represented in the gardens of the general gardening public - not because of any philosophical or environmental commitment but simply that they look good and perform! She reiterated that green is a colour. In her design work she approaches the garden with the view that the area close to the house is the painting and everything around it the frame.

Tom and Ann have been trialling some kangaroo paws, for use in large area landscaping, for horticulturist, radio presenter and TV gardener, Angus Stewart. He was to have joined us to talk about this but was unfortunately unable to do so. Tom's large and very productive veg and fruit patch was admired by all. There is a need for screening at the back of the property, using indigenous rainforest species, as a neighbour is due to start building soon. The only exotics on the property, large liquid ambers flanking the top of the driveway and providing welcome shade have been underplanted with white cedars as a replacement in the future. A lovely ground cover that took our collective eye was *Hardenbergia* "Flat white" a release from Mt. Annan. It has a very dense, low habit and is a lush green, Ann is very pleased with it. Sturt's Desert Rose, from the NT with its grey foliage looked very prosperous as well. *Billiardia ringens* looked super scrambling up a pole amongst the rainforest plantings.

We managed to get everything done, including meeting some Central Coast APSers who came say hello. It was a great day - the finale, a huge storm which, apart from being quite terrifying, kindly dumped a lot of precious water over a huge area during the night!

Sunday dawned clear and washed very clean! We had three gardens to visit, all belonging to APS members on the Coast.

Our first garden was "Morvah" owned by David and Betty Price. David and a chainsaw had to deal with a huge eucalypt that had fallen across the driveway in the storm the night before - literally before breakfast!

The land was originally used for grazing and when the Prices bought it 16 yrs. ago it was covered in the usual suspects of blackberries and lantana. Fortunately there were stands of remnant eucalypts, one of which stands proudly almost in the middle of the block and in front of the house. An *Eucalyptus elata*, a magnificent specimen in the most perfect spot. Betty made the point that their previous garden had been exotic - they still have a picking garden behind the house, as well as a veg patch and fruit trees - however it was the move to this land and walks through the adjacent bushland that stimulated her interest in natives. She fell in love with them and now when she looks at some exotics she is inclined to think "how vulgar"!

They have tried to create vistas and plant clumps of indigenous trees a la capability Brown. As well as rooms and secret spaces to be discovered as one moves through the garden. Their first imperative was boundary planting to screen neighbours and define boundaries. They bought swags of trees from the Forestry Commission at Pennant hills.. A great swathe of planting is on the sloping area in front of the house. It serves as noise protection and wildlife habitat as well as being visually beautiful. It is choc a block with grevilleas, eriostemons, leptospermums, billy buttons, isopogons, banksias, thryptomenes and callistemons to name only a few. On the side of the house, viewed from the bedroom is a three tiered frog and fish pond. It is one of the most successful ponds I have seen in a garden. The top pond, the frog pond, is flanked by xanthorrhoea on either side. Some native grasses are in between and a micromyrtus arches over the edge. In the middle distance a *Banksias robur* is the feature. The water flows gently under a little wooden bridge, flat and weathered grey - the path leading to it consists of mulch with flat timber strips across it at intervals - very simple and unobtrusive. Water then flows into the fish pond on the bottom level which is almost directly underneath the frog pond - it's a boomerang shape if you like, on two levels with the ponds at both ends of the boomerang.

Onto Anne and Peter Turner's cottage garden nearby - so different again! Anne explained that they had bought this property in response to the need to downsize both house and garden and to have a flat space in which to garden, rather than sloping as their previous block had been. Their new house was surrounded by grass, nothing else and backed onto wetlands, of which it was once a part, so when Anne described the grass as rank she really meant it! Then; \$ph\$ipn wa\$ to drain the soil by installing subsoil drainage pipes and spreading pebbles over the top. Raised beds were built, timber edged in square and rectangular shapes and filled with soil - gypsum and coastal river sand mixed wjth the heavy clay loam. The pebble overlay becomes the paths between the beds and provides

ease of access to the drainage system underneath should it be needed. Naturally the natives romp away in their raised beds and endless sunshine.

A bed of low growing plants is under the clothes line for obvious reasons! Anne's clothesline, bang in the middle of the back yard, got me thinking. It is such an Australian thing and I love seeing how people resolve its deserved place in the garden. In Anne's case it was almost like a piece of sculpture, it looked great, in the middle, surrounded by geometric beds of Australian native plants. I was reminded of an art work in the AGNSW, some years back - a clothes line hung with ceramic flying foxes of all shapes and sizes, it was very whimsical. I think Australia is one of the few countries that doesn't resort to the clothes dryer as a matter of course and consequently our clothes smell like sunshine - how lucky are we! Long may it live! Council has also provided Anne with indigenous species for her to plant in the wetland at the back, between it and her boundary.

At the front of the house the Turners have opted for privacy planting, grevilleas, leptospermum, banksias, scaevola, brachyscome daisy and the beautiful grafted *Grevillea beadliana* with its gorgeous crimson spider flowers and felty grey/green, frog foot foliage.

Georgina Persse made the insightful comment that so far the three gardens we had looked at had made resounding successes out of problems - a definite example of how often in design the problem is part of the solution.

And so, on to our final adventure for the weekend. APS stalwart, Audrey Taggart's wildlife habitat garden on the side of a deep, once heavily rainforested gully.

The Taggarts bought the block in 1981. Consisting mainly of lantana, except for two eucs and a cheese tree, it was bordered by a reserve at the back. They placed the house along the contours of the land so the morning sun could follow them around. The natural vegetation was quick to reassert itself once the lantana was removed. Audrey noticed that the natural vegetation was also seeding in the garden and providing the habitat she wanted, so there it stays unless it "doesn't work". Audrey provides lots of water in the garden, at various levels, taking care to keep the undergrowth away so the birds can see any predators. Some "wildlife - scaping" tales and hints from Audrey include:

a black satin bower bird eats the berries from the midjin bush *Austromyrtus tennifolius*, a wattle bird nested in her hanging basket of *Hoya mcgilvreyania*, Leptospermums are a great plant for birds as insects hide in its rough flaky bark, *Grevillea mucronulata* has a green flower which is very attractive to birds. She has counted 22 scrub turkeys sitting in one of the cheese trees after scratching through her garden.

Audrey was also able to ID for me two plants indigenous to my area [as well as the Central Coast] which spring up and are most attractive - the slender, deep green, serrated leafed *Trema aspera*, its seeds relished by small birds and *Breynia oblongifolia* attractive to butterflies, insects and birds it looks a lot like cassia but has alternate leaves. It is a very hardy shrub, can be happily pruned and with its horizontal habit looks great planted with *Indigophora australis* and *Backhousia myrtifolia*..

We concluded the day with a talk on long stem planting. It was fascinating. Details have been written up in an issue of "Australian Plants" and are on the Central Coast's website

www.australianplant.org if you have not heard about this technique I would urge you to look into it. I came away with a lot more knowledge in my head and a dear little *snoum glandulosum* - long stem planted - in my hand. Both courtesy of a wonderful exponent of Australian native plants. Thank you Audrey.

Next Sydney meetings :

May 29th Ferntree Court Hopetoun Village design suggestions

A most exciting project for the GDSG has come to hand. The manager of a large retirement village would like to enlist the help of the GDSG to improve and beautify the gardens surrounding the residential apartments in the complex. Members, Ian and Tamara Cox and myself have already met with him and interested residents and have the initial brief including a resident "wish list". This is a marvellous opportunity to hone our design skills whilst creating something really worthwhile, practical and beautiful. Meet in the carpark of Hopetoun Village, off David Rd. Castle Hill at 11 am.

The Forestry Commission is nearby with a well stocked native nursery and a café. So is Annangrove Grevilleas' nursery and Jo Hambrett's place in which to have lunch and a cuppa if that's what people would like to do! RSVP May 25th

October 21/23 Cootamundra weekend.

AH set for a visit from the Garden Design Group for the weekend of the 22nd October. Suggest get to Harden and Stocks garden and nursery on the Friday afternoon .have dinner at the Terracotta restaurant (local produce), then proceed to the Southern Comfort Motel at Cootamundm (half an hour from Harden). Saturday morning a tour of Coots than morning tea at Art -Pax gallery before proceeding to Treeops (us) for lunch and a ramble around our garden before visiting Paula Rumble's garden. Afternoon tee and then to Harrison Deep restaurant for evening meal. Sunday morning depart for Grenfeil to visit another garden with Western Australian plants the main feature). Return to Sydney (hat day via Cowrs, Sathursi (incoming trip Hume Highway). Could be a great few days, canola will be flowering and the countryside a picture (God willing witts rain). Let me know re the intinersry and i will make some tentative bookings. All the best.....Win

Join GDSG members Win Main and Paula Rumble for a weekend of garden design in the bush. Please make a special effort for this. We will have a ball, all that fabulous country hospitality plus gardens and nurseries to visit. Put it in your diary now! Let me know your intentions ASAP in order to make organization as simple as possible for Win and Paula . Further notice and details in the August NL



**GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP N.E. BRANCH
Mar/Apr 2005**

**Report of meeting on Feb 26/ 05 at Diana and Martin's Yackandandah garden.
The next meeting is to be at Hall's new garden on Sat April 23rd, 10.30 for 11am,**

The following meeting will provisionally be June 18th at Glenda's new home in Baranduda.

The next meeting will probably be at van Riet's new garden, and we have two new members who would like some ideas to chew on, so we are aiming at 5 meetings this year.

We had a good turn up to start the year including a special visitor Emily Brien doing a work placement with Wangaratta Council who will help with some of the donkey work for our publication. Karen Jones, Environment Officer with the Council has secured \$8000 funding, \$2000 each from Wangaratta and Indigo and N.E. Water and Catchment Management Authority, (CMA).

So we are now down to the nitty-gritty- while Emily checks various printing option prices, we start to prepare information for a flyer on general water-wise gardening to be mailed to rate payers and a more detailed booklet on plant choice and garden design to be available for those who ask for it, as well as being available on the web.

We should be able to include photographs so will be looking for those of plants **on the list** that show plant habit and groupings as well as a few eye catching, stunning close-ups.

We plan to push the message that Australian plant gardens don't have to be dull and untidy and need not be any more work, probably less, than exotic ones which they can match in interest and beauty. The list of readily available plants suited to the area has been collated by Jan and Helen with a great deal of soul-searching as to what to leave out.

We just might alter this slightly when we come to what we perceive as an important extra, - effective combinations in the garden. I already have some from a year or two ago, but any more will be welcomed, please ring myself, Helen or Janice don't wait for the meeting. We want to spark enthusiasm and show what can be done. To this end we will use the interesting plans based on the list which Gloria and Kay produced as a guide to gardens that are beautiful on any score and how best to use native plants which may be unfamiliar. Another point to be included is that the Mediterranean plants being pushed for their suitability to the environment are just the ones that are most likely to 'jump the fence' and be tomorrow's noxious weeds, so at least plant Australian 'weeds'.

Lists of further reading, nurseries and horticultural suppliers are also being prepared.

To follow up on suggestions for the Miles garden where the house looks down over a smooth valley to a distant view of Buffalo, Helen produced a set of photos which combine to show the panorama which she took while John measured the contours. The resultant plan was photocopied for those members who had not been able to visit the site. From lively discussions some general recommendations emerged.

The pig fountain could be made a feature of a hidden area that one has to wind one's way to find. Perhaps a small rustic building to represent a pig sty could be included.

To frame or not to frame the view, and if so with what? We seemed agreed that if a suitable position could be identified from inside the house or on the terrace, then a frame does enhance a view. We were not too sure how severe the frosts are, whether they drain down the valley or accumulate, but assuming the former, lemon scented gum was probably the first choice. I have since wondered about *Hymenosporum flavum* which has an upright growth, rich dark foliage and that wonderful perfume on spring/summer evenings. It does do well locally given good mulch on planting, and not planted until big enough to have ripened wood. Another quite different small tree is *Allocasuarina huegeliana* which I have just found the Encyclopedia describing as a spreading tree, whereas my trees have grown slimly upright, light and airy and drought and frost hardy. Maybe they will spread with age, the oldest would only be just over 10 years.

The situation gives scope for planting groups of lowish shrubs in patterns which can be seen from above. As Glen propagates much of his stock, this is an ideal way to have several/lots of a kind on hand to make the clumps, which should vary in foliage type and colour. This is both the easiest way to treat the space and the most suitable given the backdrop. Ornamental grasses could be quite a feature, especially if a maintenance regime can be devised.

Over lunch we discussed our impending visit to the Yackandandah Pottery and the uses ornaments in the garden. Jacqui has found piles of water-rounded river stones can be built into small cairns quite easily, and if they do get knocked over restoration is easy, but not quite the same—new ornament. Mary who is well known for her collection of found objects, many of them coming from Patrick's roadside flora surveys, was reported as painting the ribs of her original igloo when it was bare for recovering and had to build a new one for Patrick to use! Someone else has seen mock mallee fowl nests carefully built from fallen twigs.

Then it was out to Martin's garden. We concentrated on another steep slope below the house, this one steeper and not really seen from the house above. Water run-off from the house and hard surfaces around it, plus the odd spring in wet weather, are the obvious focus for the design. Jacqui pointed out that a holding pond just below the house level would enable the rate of flow to be moderated as the fall is very steep. The floor of the valley has a series of dams with wet swampy margins which will be left with natural vegetation - a whole learning area for most of us. Apart from the stream bed to be defined with rocks, waterfalls, pools - a big job but loads of fun, the answer we came up with seems to be much as for the Miles. Clumps of lowish growing shrubs and grasses making patterns with their foliage contrast. In both cases adequate space should be left to set the clumps off and allow access. In Martin's case Diana's horses help with maintaining clear areas. One genus which should be well suited to the conditions and provide red leaf colours is *Leptospermum*. Martin has set himself a tremendous challenge in making his garden to high standards of both plant material and design and potential education (the alphabetical beds). It is not something that can happen overnight but there is much to enjoy already and the promise of much more in the future.

Barbara Buchanan

Last Melbourne Meeting - Feb 27th - Visit to Cranbourne Botanic Garden's 'Australian Plant Garden'¹

Thanks so much to Dianne Clarke, who works as a plant technician at Cranbourne), and John Armstrong, who is a long time member of the Friends of the gardens, for guiding us so skillfully and informatively around the new Australian Plant Garden. Both people are members of our own group.

It was around 2 years since our last visit when Paul Thompson described the vision and marched us up hill and down dale - scrub-bashing - saying all the while 'imagine'. The Australian Plant Garden is being constructed on the site of an old sand mine. Undoubtedly a difficult site but certainly one that has been no stranger to disturbance. Now hills have been shifted and red sand, from quite close by as it turns out, brought in to recreate 'the red centre' at the heart of the design. The car and bus park is all organized with semi-mature melaleucas, in the main, used for shade: the idea is you can get out of the car and walk down shady avenues to the entry. There is an extensive stylized dry creek-bed connected to a non-naturalistic river where water will travel over concrete blocks of 3 different thicknesses. The computer-generated design tells them that the different heights of the blocks will cause shallow water to 'churn' as if going over rocks or rapids. This river travels over a waterfall to join a lake that is a permanent source of water in the garden. Behind the non-naturalistic river is what John described as the longest sculpture in Australia - a long metal wall with rusted surface to symbolize the cliff faces of gorges or streams. There is plenty of seating in this area and behind it an extensive area set aside for 'show gardens' which I believe will be sponsored by the nursery trade but managed by garden staff. They will have an educational purpose and will be temporary, possibly lasting for 3 to 5 years.

The garden is a very large ambitious work due to be opened around April next year. By then only about 1/4 of the design will be complete but there will be plenty to see including a new visitor center at the entry. There was so much more planted than I expected both with advanced and smaller plants. At this stage the hard structure is clear but the effects of plantings is hard to visualize. It was suggested by our two guides that we visit again next year at the same time - which should be just before opening - to see how things have progressed. So consider it a date, it's all too exciting to miss.

NEXT MELBOURNE MEETING - MAY 29TH

Visit to the home and garden of Faye and Bruce Candy

Faye is a longtime member of APS Foothills and with Maureen Schaumann helps to organize the daytime meeting of that group which she leads at their monthly meetings. Faye is one of the first members of Foothills that I got to know. In fact, greedy to see some examples of Australian plant gardens, I invited myself to her Menzies Creek home on my first visit about a dozen years or so before she shifted. The garden that she had at Menzies Creek was about 1.25 acres (the same size as my own) and I enjoyed it immensely. In many ways there wasn't a lot that I could simply imitate in terms of plants from that garden as the soil and climate are so very different from my own - even though Menzies Creek is only at the end of the road I live on, about 20mins away, it is in the

Dandenong Ranges with cooler temperatures and much more rainfall. What I loved so much about that garden - and love so much about her current garden - is the particular feel that Faye, with all her knowledge and care, can create in a garden. Faye always insists she is a collector first and foremost but there is no doubt that she takes great care with the plant design of her garden. When she began her Berwick garden Faye decided on certain formal elements in the back garden, especially with the layout of pathways. It was an idea she wanted to pursue, not one she was familiar with but one she wanted to try. This kind of discipline and experimentation is quite typical - in recent years after one idea for a large garden bed, framed by pathways and a fence, failed, Faye decided that she would plant a grass garden with grasses (of course) and small plants like epacris. This has been an amazing experiment and quite lovely. It has been another way to create an open feel in a center garden where tall shrubs would have shrunk the space.

I do hope you can come and visit to see for yourself what is possible on a standard house block. There's a wonderful Australian plant garden, well cared for and loved, chooks, veges, propagating area and more. Let's just hope for a wonderful sunny afternoon. A hot drink will be available during the visit,

MELB MEETING DATES FOR 2005

August 28th to be advised

November 27th — last meeting for the year will be at home of Pam Yarra at Heathmont.



Illustration of the national flower of NSW from JH Maiden's *Flowering plants and ferns of NSW* (1395), one of the Powerhouse Museum's earliest **publications**.