

ISSN 1039-9062

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS.



GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

Newsletter No. 51

August 2005

Treasurer/Membership: Bryan Loft

ABN 82 428 110 028

Dear Members,

It is my very great pleasure to report to those members whom may have missed the news, that Brian Snape received an award, or, to be more Australian, a gong, in the Queen's Birthday Honours. Naturally it was for services to the Environment, in particular his tireless work for Trust for Nature and Birds Australia. Well done Brian, I know, typically, it is the wider recognition of environmental issues and their validation that makes the award important to you, however, on a personal level, may we offer Congratulations from all of us species, feathered, furred and finned, for a job so magnificently done!

Shirley Pipitone has kindly volunteered to liase with W.A. and represent the GDSG at the Perth Conference; other members going should make themselves known to her over there.

Our Treasurer, Bryan Loft presents his Report this NL. Please take the time to read it; there are a few important issues to address. We need to think how we will use the substantial legacy from the sales of "The Australian Garden". I would be most interested in thoughts and suggestions from members. Your thoughts too on the e- NL versus the rise in subs — a tricky one I know. Not everyone is on the net and the people who are won't want to pay the same as the people who are receiving a hard copy, still there will be a solution so please feel free to be a part of it!

A list of members, paid up and new, shall appear in the November NL. I am a Newsletter behind this year! You will find an application form with this NL so you can rejoin for 05/06 immediately if you haven't already. Could you please do it *quickly* to make amends for the effects of my tardiness on our patient Treasurer.

Have a look at Jeff Howes' suggestion in Correspondence, I think it's an excellent one - also suggestions for streetscape trees - start writing! and Happy Spring Gardening!

Meetings : **Melbourne Aug. 28th** **Sydney Oct. 21st - 23rd.**

INDEX

CORRESPONDENCE

DESIGN

More than Garden Etiquette - a question of Ethics? Chris Larkin

Visiting the Chinese Garden, Sydney. Dianna Snape

How Formal should a Native Garden be ? Jeff Howes

PLANTS and DESIGN

Lawns of Australian Grasses Diana Snape

Individual Grasses and Grass like Plants

Postcard from a Victorian Country visit Chris Larkin

PLANTS

Alphabet Soup - extracts Leigh Murray APS Canberra

Melaleuca tamariscina Sarah Caldwell APS NSW

Ringing the Bluebells Phil Watson APS Tas.

Growing native Plants on Clay soils Jeff Howes

SNIPPETS

Australian Native Trees as Streetscape and park specimens

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Garden Reports and visits

&

Upcoming meeting details

&

Treasurer's report

CORRESPONDENCE

Hi Jo

Long time no speak.

Hope all is well with you and yours, Norm and I are both keeping busy and are well. Good to get the newsletter and read others thoughts. Norm and I are planning to visit gardens in Sydney area in Sept (wont be able to make your garden unfortunately) and looking forward to it. Our garden is looking lovely at the moment. The winter has a softening effect which we both appreciate. The special green of maidenhair adds a great touch, looking good in shade or sunny spots. Maybe another visit in a couple of years could be appropriate and we noticed another couple from our group (Nowra) have joined GDSG (Suellen and Brian Harris) so theirs would make an added garden to visit

Maureen and Norm Webb NSW

Jo,

Why not place in the newsletter copies of what members write about their own gardens that are open under the OGS or those that just want to write a one page description of their garden? I know you are not seeing the garden however it could give a clue to their design philosophy. You could also ask them before you publish if GDSG members could come and look at their garden (I would not mind at all). That would be a great way to meet fellow members.

I do not know if you subscribe to Kay Gee's global garden magazine. Very good as they always have a bit about natives as a look at this:

<http://www.global-garden.com.au/gardenfeature1.htm>

Jeff Howes NSW

Dear Jo

Thank you for the newsletter - full of interest as usual.

(Such nice things said about us that we are looking forward to another visitation in a couple of years.)

We are working on incorporating Deidre's idea, of a casuarina forest, into our current plan of planting out more of the 'grassy area' and keeping it an indigenous area.

Checked out the website - very interesting and clever - what a lot of work you all have put into it.

Ann Raine NSW

Dear Jo

Had a look at the extensive website, its a credit to the designer especially compiling all that information. One reservation is the details on Stony Range. It is not run by the Warringah Group of APS but another group under the auspices of Warringah Shire Council. I can find out more details if you like.

Pam Renouf NSW

Yes Jo, I am the other half of the Stocks Native Nursery equation. Our region is waiting patiently for rain again now - last shower was in January! Usually the countryside in autumn is a picture. We are all [APS group at Cootamundra] looking forward to your visit later in the year and plan to give those that make the trip a real country experience.

Irene Stocks NSW

DESIGN

MORE THAN GARDEN ETIQUETTE Chris La rkin Vic.

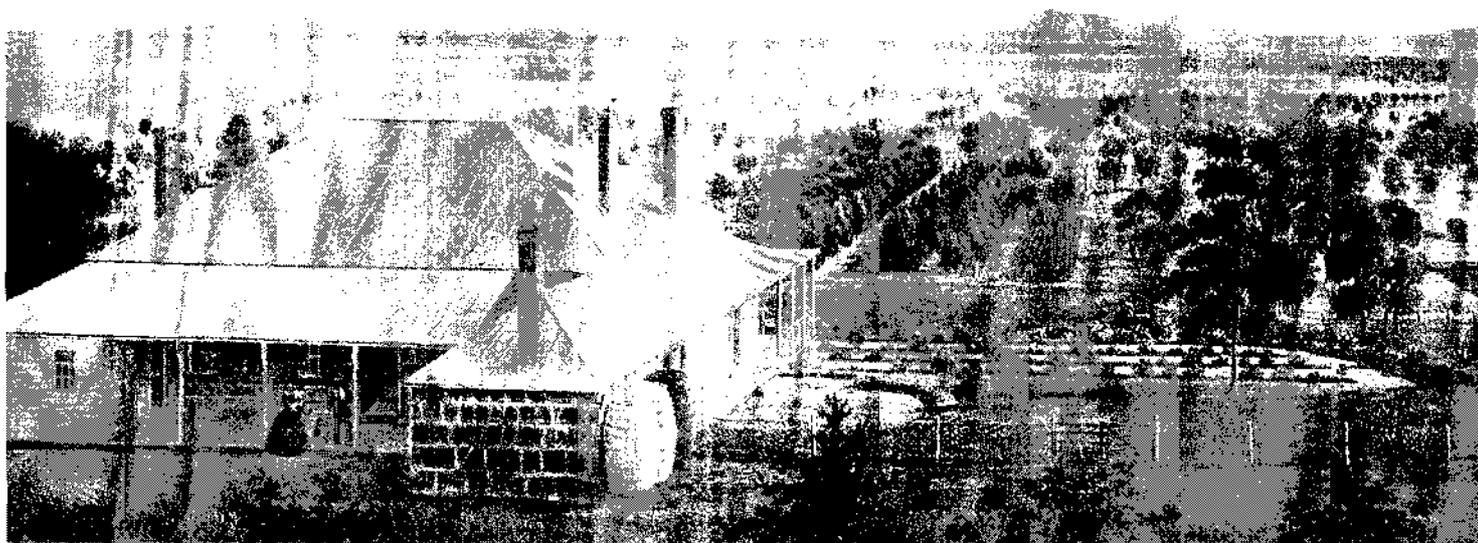
Bill (my husband) told me about a conversation he had at work. He was discussing water: water rates, tanks etc. with a colleague who said that 1,000 litres of water costs 0.75 cents whereas a 1,000 litre tank would cost him \$700, so where was the motivation to buy a tank. We have 2 x 5,000 litre tanks for the house and because we have just experienced the driest Autumn on record we have had to purchase 3,000 litres of water at a cost of \$70, not actually the cost of the water, which is free, but the cost of cartage. We have paid \$70 when a person on mains water would have paid \$2.10 for the same amount of water. So what is the motivation to put in a tank or two if you have the space to — it is hardly likely to be aesthetic or economic. But long before the government applies the carrot or the stick, some people install tanks and recycle their grey water because they are concerned to do what they see as 'the right thing' or the 'socially responsible thing' to do.

I have not long finished reading Tim Flannery's 'The Future Eaters', which although published in 1994 is still relevant today. I think it would be fair to say that Flannery argues that our environment has been shaped more by El Nino than anything else. From observing our own garden specimens we can see that many plants are amazingly adapted to periods of low or no rainfall — bunkering down and waiting it out until the relief of rainfall. Flannery's book is a great read if you have not yet done so; dealing with the 'ecological history of the Australasian lands and people' it is a good reference book to have on the shelves. With uncertain weather he postulates that this fragile land may only be able to sustain 15 million people - a few million less than we have at present. You may or may not agree with some of Flannery's arguments, inferences or conclusions but the book contains many facts and gives a perspective on the effects of human habitation for the last 60,000 years or so.

By this stage you might be asking what have water tanks and Flannery's book got to do with garden design. At the risk of sounding reactionary (or is it just my tendency to philosophise?) my point is that as adults (at voting age and beyond) we have a responsibility to become informed and make informed decisions in all areas of our lives. Is it possible not to know that water is a scarce commodity in most parts of this country because of our unpredictable weather, and knowing this ignore the fact that we need to conserve water? This is an ethical issue and ethics are not often spoken about in relation to gardening - or at least not directly. I don't believe I've ever seen a chapter that tackles it head on although it is implied whenever there is discussion of issues such as water usage, gardens for habitat, not growing weed species, growing Australian plants or only those that are locally indigenous, use of pesticides and so on. The ethics of gardening may be seen as burdensome. In fact ethics full stop might be seen as burdensome if you concentrate on the negatives; the things you should not do, or that you should try not to do or that you should try to do as little as possible. On the other hand e.g. conserving water, not growing weed species, may appear to be a merely a logical and responsible way of behaving given what we know and believe. No-one would argue that human society could easily survive without a set of beliefs that at their core are about how human beings should relate to one another for their mutual health and

happiness, and by implication how we should treat this planet - the plants and animals so essential to our own ultimate wellbeing, and indeed survival. Ethics are socially and culturally determined. Some ethics have the sanction of law, water restrictions when they are applied have, but much of it, and most of it concerning the gardener, is open to change according to what we as individuals currently know and believe at any point in time. We know we are experiencing global warming; some people may believe that this is a natural phenomenon, others that it is the result of human activity, yet others may think it is a combination of both these things. If you believe the first then you may start to grow more drought tolerant plants accepting the fact that global warming is a trend, or you may put in a watering system to enable you to continue to grow the plants you want to grow. If you believe that human activity has any part to play then as a consumer and gardener you may believe that you can do more to lessen your own impact by installing a water recycling system and buying a rainwater tank for the garden. What we know and believe underpins our view of the world. How we behave as gardeners, the choices we make in this most deliberate of activities, indicates more than our taste in garden design and garden plants.

I am fond of saying that gardening is not an ethic free zone. (Is any area of human activity ethic free?) As people interested in garden design we can implore gardeners to think of more than their needs and tastes when designing a garden. I don't believe people who grow Australian plants, or predominantly Australian plants, are by virtue of that fact alone necessarily acting more responsibly with respect to their environments; they could be attempting to grow a rainforest in a desert for instance, although I exaggerate of course. Gardening for pleasure, rather than survival, is a largely western, somewhat indulgent past-time so we all need to be careful that self-indulgence doesn't over-ride or blind us to the need to proceed with caution and care for the environment. We need to become as informed and knowledgeable as possible about the bigger picture, about the state of the planet and our local environments, and to question the impacts of implementing the garden design we would like. I am left wondering if questions of ethics were discussed more directly in relation to garden design whether the current trend for minimalist gardens and box hedges would have a hard time mounting an argument for their 'raison d'etre' - one can but live in hope. (Any reactions to what I've written will be gratefully received. I can already see Jan Hall reacting in horror to my use of the word 'should'.)



During a recent visit to Sydney with Brian, I especially enjoyed two GDSG-related things - first catching up with Jo over a long lunch and then revisiting the nearby Chinese Garden. Brian and I saw this garden soon after its creation in 1988, so it was interesting to visit it again to see how well it had matured in 7 years. I think it is worth a visit, even though the plants are almost all exotic. It is a large and distinctive garden with a close association between plants and built structures - walls, passageways, semi-open rooms, pagodas. Garden scenes are often framed by constructed spaces in walls, intended specifically for viewing, such as a circular moon gate and other symmetrical shapes. In one example, a large key-shaped opening reveals 6 or 7 close-growing bamboo trunks (only 7 cm or so in diameter) artfully displayed against a section of blank wall. The trunks are in perfect proportion to the space within the frame. I immediately pictured selected Australian tree trunks in their place. Australian designers rarely choose to focus so closely on one particular feature in an Australian garden - but we could. As block sizes shrink and people move to townhouses or units, gardens are becoming smaller and more closely allied to buildings. Focussing on individual or small numbers of plants with architectural shapes, interesting textures or appealing colours may well become desirable. (Colour in stems or foliage is longer lasting than that in flowers.) Framing the chosen view will enhance it and eliminate possible distractions. However the chosen view must then

Other views or vistas in the Chinese Garden are of course more extensive, most including at least a glimpse of the lake. The whole garden is never visible from any one point, even from the teahouse on the first floor of a building. Do we tend to want to see greater expanses of our gardens at once, rather than separating different sections? The smaller the garden the more this may be true. Or is this desire a reflection of the wide open spaces in the Australian landscape? We are probably familiar with the idea of rooms and screening to help us change the nature of different areas and generate surprise in the garden. In the Chinese Garden complete screens of opaque walls worked well. In our garden I think I prefer partial screens of plants, as to some extent I like to link the garden as a whole. Is this more important in a small garden? Does the use of some opaque boundary divisions make a garden more stimulating

As with Japanese gardens, the Chinese Garden contains a lot of symbolism. Within the garden there are named rocks (for example in the large lake, representing mythical animals), named landscape features including special rock arches and named built structures. There are references to naturalistic elements with paths following slopes up to a peak representing a mountain and creeks, one from a spring running down into the lake. I think we may do something similar with representations in our own naturalistic gardens symbolic of larger elements in the natural environment - pools, dry creek beds, sandhills, rocks, etc. - without giving them any formal names. Some of these are probably characteristic of many Australian gardens.

I am always impressed by a garden where the right plant seems to have been chosen for

each niche and there is much repetition of suitable plants within separate areas. Here in this garden the planting is generally specific to an area and the plants collectively make the garden rather than being conspicuous as separate specimens. Beautiful individual trees are given special significance and groups of similar trees are used effectively. The same scene, or sections of it, are framed and can be viewed from different angles, each picture looking attractive. Can we take some emphasis off individual plants and also achieve such clever organisation of viewpoints in our gardens? Should we try to?

With Australian plants the choice is so wide and we are all trying to learn the characteristics and needs of so many plants. Even if we restrict ourselves to plants indigenous to our own area there is still a lot to learn. As our knowledge and experience of our plants grow we will increasingly be able to make confident selections for any and every niche in our gardens. I know that Brian and I are still experimenting with new plants in our garden and still learning the best plant to use in a given situation. We are also gaining experience in pruning and maintenance generally so we will know whether to leave plants to do their own thing, or not, as the situation requires. When plants are tried and true, we can all design with more confidence, if we can then bear to restrict ourselves to just those known and reliable plants.

The Chinese Garden is a formal public garden but I think it raises a number of questions which may help us clarify some design goals in our own gardens.

How Formal should a Native Garden be?

Jeff Howes NSW

Those of us interested in designing gardens using native plants are aware that one of the major components is the assessment of the site. Soil type, moisture levels, drainage aspects, amount of sun/wind, siting of paths and other hard landscaping requirements need to be considered. As a result of taking all these factors into account a list of plants, hopefully suitable for that site, is compiled and thought is usually given to trying to have complimenting foliage, texture and flower colours and placement of accent plants. This is done, in the hope that the finished planting, when mature, will have a sense of harmony and a happy owner. If this is all too hard then you could become a plantsperson/collector and just plant whatever you like at the time - much easier in a lot of respects and I sometimes envy them for their often lack of design principles.

For the owner the next step is one of maintenance and how much will be undertaken. The result of this decision will affect the degree of formality or neatness of the garden.

This leads me to focus of this article. What makes a formal native garden, should we have formal native gardens and if so how formal should a native garden be? I was thinking

about this as my garden in one of four gardens featuring native plants that will be open this spring, in Sydney, as part of the Australian Open Garden Scheme. What will the public expect when they visit these gardens as they all have different approaches to their garden design. I will try and get some feedback from the visitors on their perceptions as I suspect my garden would rate towards the formal end of the scale even though I have little lawn.

Some of the things that add to a garden's formality are the obvious ones, sweeping paths and patios to remove leaves and twigs etc, pruning off of old flowers, pruning plants to remove old wood as well as keeping the plant looking healthy and nicely shaped. Having the garden mulched with similar textured mulch for continuity, suitable seating and outdoor living areas etc. How much time the owner has available to spend on maintenance is also a key factor as there is no such thing as a low maintenance garden and keen garden would not want one anyway.

The key factor for me in looking at a garden and deciding how formal (or its neatness factor if you like) is how they maintain the edges of the garden beds where they meet the grass lawn. I have trouble accepting gardens that give me the message of constant maintenance and a structured clipped formal look. I prefer gardens with some softness about them. There are many ways that are used to separate lawn and garden beds/paths, some, but not all, of these are:

- With a spade to create a highly visual very neat look.
- ♣ Using a border of treated H4 pine, poured concrete, bricks, etc, again a very visual barrier.
- Trimming with a long handled pair of clippers (my method) so lawn and mulch just meet and there is a softer transition of them.
- ♣ Allowing low growing ground cover type plants to spill over on to the grass or hard edging. This gives a softer less formal effect.

What are other members' comments on formality, or, is it a non event as long as visitors' first opinion is positive when they see your garden?

PLANTS and DESIGN

Lawns of Australian Grasses

Diana Snape Vic

As increasingly greater areas of our suburbs become covered with hard surfaces - concrete, paving, brick, timber - lawns (as well as gardens) are shrinking fast. I think most of us have mixed feelings about lawns, with happy childhood memories of playing on grass and current concerns about water-demanding lawns of exotic grasses. We have no lawn in our garden, though we do have a number of tufted grasses. Our nature strip¹ has been replaced by a combination of daisies with just a few clumps of Kangaroo Grass

and a couple of poas. Even so, in a small garden, a little lawn can be an attractive feature in itself, as a simple green open space contrasting with garden beds.

A lawn of Australian grasses would look attractive and be ecologically beneficial, providing habitat for insects and birds. It would also require much less water and very little mowing. I have often wondered myself, and also been asked by others, about the possibility of establishing such a lawn. I have seen this done very successfully by the diligent removal of all weeds from an area already growing some indigenous grasses. However most people who want to create a lawn are starting with bare soil and not a native grass seed in sight.

Creation of an Australian lawn should now be possible. Recently I heard of a company Native Seeds Pty Ltd based in Cheltenham, Victoria, which sells seeds of Australian grasses. They have 21 lines of grass seeds available, of various species or combinations of species suitable for different purposes or conditions. The four most commonly used grasses are Weeping Grass (*Microlaena stipoides*), various Wallaby Grasses (formerly *Danthonia* species, now divided into different genera), Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*) and Red Grass (or Red-leg Grass) (*Bothriochloa macro*). Each grass has its own properties - both advantages and disadvantages - and by using a mixture the results can be optimised. I had not heard of Red Grass before but it occurs widely in Victoria and also in NSW, Qld, SA and Tas, and sounds an attractive and useful grass.

So far this company has provided seeds for Councils, commercial projects and regeneration work, but they hope to become more widely used by the general gardening public. With water restrictions becoming more common, I expect they may soon be very busy. I wish them good luck and hope this may signal the beginning of a new phase of lawn-growing in Australia. For details of the grass seeds available and for a lot more information, you can see their website <www.nativeseeds.com.au>

Individual Grasses and Grass-like Plants

Diana Snape Vic

With the last copy of Horticulture Australia came an Ornamental Native Plant Catalogue (website <www.ozbreed.com.au>). Among the grass species and forms advertised was one we have tried and found very attractive, a blue, more prostrate form of Kangaroo Grass called *Themeda* Mingo. The colour and form of this plant are quite striking. Another recommended grass is *Eragrostis elongata* Elvera, one I don't know - have any members grown this one?

Other grasses included were special forms of two poas (*P. labillardieri* and *P. poiiformis*) and a number of varieties of *Pennisetum alopecuroides*, a lovely grass but unfortunately one considered by many experts to be exotic in origin.

There are quite a few Australian grass-like plants which are hardier and better behaved than most grasses. They require very little maintenance and look good in the garden all year round, grown as individual plants, scattered or grouped, or even used to cover an area as a high³lawn². Two genera which contain examples of such plants are lomandra and dianella.

Lomandra longifolia has been widely used in commercial landscaping on a big scale but now different forms are available which are finer and more suitable for domestic gardens. We also have growing both the fine green *Lomandra confertifolia* and the blue-green *L. confertifolia* ssp. *rubiginosa*. There are a variety of other lomandras too, decreasing in size to the petite *L. nana*.

Dianella caeruleahas proved a most successful (and vigorous) plant in tough conditions in our garden. Varieties have been developed called Breeze and Littler Jess (at 400mm much smaller) which sound worth investigating. There's also *Dianella revoluta* Little Rev, described as small (300mm) with blue-grey foliage.

Of course these aren't the only possibilities for grasses or grass-like plants (tufted or strap-leaved) but I think it's good to see special forms being developed and becoming more widely available for use in garden design.

POSTCARD FROM A VIC COUNTRY VISIT Chris Larkin Vic.

I have just had the most fantastic few days away with my good friend Bev Fox. We visited members of the GDSG NE Vic branch and attended a combined outing/meeting of this group and APS Wangaratta on the Sunday. Our hectic few days started when Barb Buchanan met us in Glenrowan and guided us to Fiona and Paul's mud-brick home and expanding garden. After feasting on homemade soups we walked around the garden to marvel at the large range of very healthy plants they are able to grow; many of them, like the grey leaved prostrate eremophilas, are only able to be grown successfully at the seaside around Melbourne. Fiona has a large area marked out for gardening with a wide variety of Australian plants; they intend to revegetate the rest of the acreage with indigenous plants. I wonder if she will maintain that discipline. After leaving Fiona and Paul it was on to Jill and Tony Judd's home. The Judd's have battled with a poorly drained site and a build up of salinity from previous owners using bore water. Jill's garden is quite formal; she is a very good pruner and the result is a neat garden of very healthy plants. The allocasuarinas in the lawn add a lovely different dimension and connect with allocasuarinas in the neighbour's garden. Our last stop for the day was our billet for the night with the extremely warm and hospitable Helen and John van Riet. Helen and John had only shifted to their new home about 2 months ago and they can hardly wait to get 'stuck into' the garden. In fact one of the main aims for the Sunday meeting was for members to help the van Riet's design their garden which is currently a mixture of exotic and Australian plants with few small plants of any kind. Helen and John enjoy good health and are extremely energetic so good luck; I know you will

produce something beautiful for your own enjoyment as well as for your many visitors. Please implement a large plan with sweeping beds, large gentle curves and clear pathways - make it the generous scale it needs to be to offset the house and reflect the size of your own hearts.

Sunday's combined meeting started at Thea and Jim McCarthy's home. Over the last few years these two have been busy indeed in the garden installing a water recycling system combined with John Hunt's hill and channel method of water harvesting. Most recently they have installed a water feature and adjoining garden as well as establishing other garden beds along a newly curved driveway. Bev Hansen helped them with some design ideas but they have carried out the work themselves and done a great job. The pond and simple, gentle waterfall is extremely beautiful and effective - one of the best ponds I've ever seen. The anxiety riddled next step is to choose plants to complement rather than overwhelm the pond and carefully placed rocks sourced from their own paddocks.

On Monday Helen gave us a tiny taste of the Warby Ranges before taking us to Glen and Heather Miles's straw-bail constructed house with its sweeping views all the way to Buffalo and other snow-capped mountains. Here the challenge will be to design a garden that preserves the view but isn't frightened to use some trees at height to frame it rather than leave it all completely open. As with the van Riet's garden they need to plan generously beyond the intimate areas of the garden close to the house; large ground-covering plants and shrubs should be given their heads in generously large beds.

After lunch on Monday we travelled on to stay with Jan and Alan Hall in their new home beside the Yarrowonga airfield. Jan and John have done a lot of work already - earthmoving, establishing raised garden beds, planting and developing a water feature with a permanent pond up near the house connected by a long creek bed ending in an ephemeral pond. When you start on a bare block there is so much to do and I'm sure the two of them feel overwhelmed by the task at times. They are taking pictures of their progress and I know from my own experience these can boost your spirits when you need to take heart from what you've achieved rather than stressing on what is still left to do.

On Tuesday we travelled home via Barb Buchanan's place and really didn't have enough time to do her large garden justice before we had to head for home. Barb has many unusual plants; several of them were of particular interest as I have pots of them at the moment and have been pondering how to use them in my garden. One of the real bonuses of garden visits is the opportunity to see the growth habit of a variety plants; another plus is coming across great plant combinations. Barb had several of the later but I stupidly did not take notes.

Thank you to everyone who was so kind to us over the 4 days of our visit. The people we met wanted to talk garden design all the time; they were keen to know how to design their own gardens or interested in how they could improve the design of their existing garden. We packed so much in it was exhausting and exhilarating. I'd love to go through all these gardens again in a few years time to check up on how they are progressing — but will I be able to wait that long?

Growing Native Plants for 30 years on Clay Soils

At the Howes Garden

by Jeff Howes

My garden is on a $\frac{1}{2}$ acre block of suburbia at Westleigh, which is a northern suburb of Sydney. The block has only a slight slope from rear to front and has a relatively thin (10 to 20cm) layer of good soil over a heavy clay base. The garden has been evolving and changing since the house I built the house over 30 years ago.

What have I learnt during my 30 years of gardening?

- Initially I did not undertake any soil improvements or raising of garden beds, I just planted native plants that I liked because they had attractive flowers. I soon learnt that most of the plants had no hope of growing in my soil and aspect and I lost many of them, especially Grevmeas. This taught me a valuable lesson (and nearly sent me broke) so I started to select plants that would grow in my soil and local conditions.
- I should have tried to improve my soil with Gypsum (calcium sulphate) right from the start and be patient enough to let it work before planting. What you need to do is to keep digging the Gypsum into the clay and then water. This needs to be repeated every few weeks for at least two months - then plant your plants. It appears that it is very hard to put too much gypsum into your soil. Gypsum works by breaking down the dug up clay panicles into smaller particles, hence the requirement to keep digging and then applying more gypsum until this happens. Interestingly, Gypsum does not change the alkalinity of the soil and will in fact gradually render the soil more acidic.
- Another important aspect of gardening on clay is to raise the garden beds with a good well-drained mix suitable for native plants, 250 to 400 mm is the optimum height to raise a garden bed. This allows the plants to have good drainage for their surface feeder roots, as well as allowing their main roots to travel down into the clay, where there are more nutrients and usually some moisture.
- I have used different ways to raise my garden beds. The easiest way, although not always the most practical on a near level site like mine, is to excavate a pathway and use the excavated soil to mound up your new garden. Another way for smaller areas, is to buy a few bags of potting mix or sand and mix them with the existing soils. For a large area, I once imported a few tonnes of "native plant" mix from a commercial soil supplier. I needed to first break up the existing garden soil with a mattock to allow the two soils to "blend" together better. This worked fine until the earthworms existing in the clay discovered the humus in the imported soil and promptly recycled it. The end result, was a mound of soil with low humus content that was particularly difficult to get wet after it had dried out. When I next create a raised garden bed I intend to use crushed sandstone, as it is cheap, readily available and appears to work very well. Another reason to raise garden beds is to stop the roots sitting in water logged soil.
- When to water - I have a problem deciding how much watering I should undertake. Some of our more experienced members advise to only water until the plant is established (when is that?), then not to water any more. Their theory is that if you continually provide water, the plant root system has no need to go looking for water. By not watering, the plant root system will need to develop extensively, as it goes looking for water, with the result of being better able to withstand dry conditions. While I have talked to people who adopt that practice I have never been game enough to try it.
- As clay shrinks and expands I have found that smaller plants often need to be staked, as they can be blown over in strong winds or fall over when the foliage gets to wet.
- Mulch - I am blessed with a good supply of leaf mulch. Mulch has a lot of advantages in that it keeps the soil cool, helps retain moisture, stops weeds sprouting from bare earth and with the slow break down of the leaves provides minute amounts of trace elements. Like all good things in life, there are a few disadvantages. Mulch used too close to the trunk can induce root and fungal problems. One of the main problems I have found with mulch is that after a while, especially if it is dry, it packs down to form a near impervious mat against water. Every 6 months or so, to overcome this, I rake it aside with my small hand spade and break it up before returning it. I am always amazed that after two or three days of good soaking rain the soil is still dry under places I have missed doing this

- Fertilising - I do very little. At time of planting I add a little Blood and Bone fertilizer at the bottom of the hole, add some soil on top and then plant. I may at other times give small plants a half strength application of fertilizer such as Osmocote or Nitrosol, but not often - apart from that they are on their own.
- Maintenance/pruning - this is an individual thing and you will need to decide on how much time you have and how neat and tidy you like the look of your garden. One thing is for sure, your garden will reflect the outcome of these decisions. The degree of maintenance will determine the degree of formality that is created. There is no doubt that regular pruning prolongs the life of a plant, makes it look much better and promotes more flowers. Care must be taken not to prune into "old" wood especially on Grevilleas, as you will often get no new shoots. How old is old - you will learn.
- Try to group plants that like similar conditions of light and especially water together. A basic statement, but one that is easy to break and will lead to plant losses through under or over watering.
- Select plants carefully to ensure that you have some flowers all year round. This is not as hard as you think and really makes the garden better to look at. I try to get away from having all my plants flowering in spring. Winter flowers are a great way of lifting your spirits.
- Gardening is an on going exercise and never at any one time can I say that my garden is finished and there is nothing more to do in it.
- Many of the plants that I have long term (eight years or more) success with are:

Acacia iteaphylla	Eucalyptus haemaastoma	Lomatia silaifolia	Zieria Pink Chrystals
Banksia spinulosa	Eucalyptus ficifolia var guilfoylia	Leptospermum petersonii	The following are successful rainforest plants:
Banksia marginatta	Grevillea Robyn Gordon	Melaleuca incana	Austromyrtus hillii
Baeckea crenatifolia Crowea Festival	Grevillea sericea Grevillea dimorpha	Melaleuca lateritia Melaieuca Snow Storm	Austromyrtus dulcis Acmenia smithii var minor
Chorizma cordatum	Grevillea speciosa	Melaleuca thymifolia	Anopterus macleayanus
Correa alba	Grevillea oldeii	Myoporum parvifolium	Archirodomyrtus beckleri
Ceratopetalum gummiferum	Grevillea Orange Marmalade	Pandorea pandorana	Backhousia citriodora
Callistemon Captain Cook	Grevillea Misty Pink	Prostanthera ovalifolia rosea	Dysoxylum fraserianum
Callistemon subulatus	Hibertia serpyllifolia	Pimelea ferruginea	Syzygium paniculatum dwarf
Calothamnus villosus	Hibertia pedunculata	Phebalium squammulosum	
Darwinia citriodora Eriostemon myoporoides	Indigofera australis Lambertia formosa	Scaevola aemula Westringia linifolia	

PLANTS

Melaleuca tamariscina

Sarah Caldwell NSW APS
Mole Station Native Nursey - Tenterfield

I am going to tell you about a plant I find incredibly showy, hardy and useful from a garden design aspect. So it is a real mystery to me why I don't see them in people's gardens! It is a hardy, ornamental shrub reaching 5mx 3m. Pendulous, super fine foliage and spikes of pink fading to cream bottlebrush like flowers in Spring. It is the plants beautiful foliage that really set it apart from other shrubs. Tolerant of poor drainage and frost it makes a stunning specimen plant throughout the year, its foliage weeping to the ground. It likes to be at the bottom of a slope and must have plenty of water. Ivan Holliday mentions it in "A Field Guide to Mellaleucas - Vol 2." And describes it as an ornamental weeping tree from central eastern Queensland.

Alphabet Soup {Extracts}

Leigh Murray APS Canberra

This is a soup of alphabetical snippets. The main aims are to attract wildlife, screen fences and cope with drought.

Acacias:

A. rubida, *A. implexa* and *A. boormanii*

Banksias:

We used to have trouble raising them, recently I've begun to have more success by better soil preparation[bigger holes, some organic matter], deeper watering and rabbit/wallaby guards.I've concentrated on the top performers, Banksias *ericfolia* *Integrifolia* ,*marginata* and *spinulosa*.

Cram planting:

Planting to a very high density is excellent for wildlife, especially if the layers overlap. We think it's the cram planting that attracted a whip bird to the densest part of the our garden at Tuross. An echidna also potted through eating helpfully an entire batch of biting ants.

Insects:

Grevillea Poorinda Jennifer Joy is by far our biggest bee drawcard. *Euc. viridis* attracts clouds of insects in summer and native bees like *Euc. diversifolia*. *Westrigia Wynyabbie Gem* is unrivalled as a butterfly attractor.

Lizards:

Plants we grow because their berries are listed as attractive to Blue Tongue lizards are

Enchylaena tomentosa, *Solarium linearifolium*, *Austromyrtus dulcis* and *dianella revolute* and tasty flower plants such as *Eremophila maculate* and *Brachyscome multifida*.

Vines:

To increase bushiness, cover fences and provide nesting sites we grow many climbers such as *Clematis microphylla*, *C. aristata*, *Hardenbergia violacea* and *Kennedia rubicanda*.

Ringing the Bluebells

Phil Watson Tas. APS

The Bluebell Family [*Campanulaceae*] rings out a series of interesting opportunities for producing landscape melodies.

The delicate bellflowers of the native *Wahlenbergia* species are commonly seen in summer as blue splashes within our grassy woodland. They flourish in the inter-tussock spaces amongst the native grasses and sedges providing tiny nectar pools for a variety of moths, butterflies and ground feeding birds.

They include, the Annual Bluebell *W. gracilentata*, the Sprawling Bluebell *W. gracilis*, the naked Bluebell *W. gymnoclada* and the Tall Bluebell *W. stricta*. All these species adapt to the protective care of a backyard native grass landscape, rewarding the grower with blue flowers for long periods. By late summer they die back to an undergrown rootstock, happily reappearing as young shoots in late winter. An unexpected bonus is that their tasty petals add interest to any garden salad. They are easy to grow, simply collect the seeds and store them in a refrigerator 3 months prior to sowing.

Eucalyptus magnificata

Warren & Gloria Sheather APS NSW

Euc. magnificata is known as the Blue Box and is a rare species from two small areas on the Northern tablelands. It develops into a small tree. We have a ten year old specimen which is about 4 metres high. Its foliage is its most attractive feature. The leaves are oval, 5-10cm long and 4-6 cm wide. It could be grown as a specimen tree in larger suburban gardens or as a component of shelter belts or windbreaks on rural properties.

SNIPPETS

Don't Forget:

the Australian landscape Conference 2005 on 10th - 11th September at the Camberwell Centre, Camberwell, Melbourne. Four international speakers and eight from Australasia - looks terrific. Tel: Sue Forge for reg. Check www.bloomings.com.au for more info.

Also, the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne have had a series of the most fantastic lectures, two have gone but the last one is on 14th Aug. - "Indigenous plants

Why and How Managing" and "Wildlife in the Suburbs: why are streetscape nature strips and other remnants so important?"

Suitable Trees for the Streetscape

I have been copied in on a discussion of late, between Cas Liber [ASGAP Publicity Officer and Banksias SG leader] and Lawrie Smith [Qld Leader GDSG and landscape architect] . Cas has been approached by several Councils to provide them with a list of suitable species for street and park planting. Lawrie agrees there is a real need out there for such a list to be made available to councils, landscapers, architects etc. In Sydney this week a diseased eucalypt fell onto a passing car and killed the driver. I personally love eucs. but have never thought the use of [the majority of] them as street trees as particularly inspired. Could we as a group think about this and get a list together to add to Cas and Lawrie's research? If we choose not to influence and inform professional and governmental bodies we should not complain when native plants are replaced in public spaces by exotics, with which people feel more familiar. Hopefully I'll have *lots* of feedback by next NL! PLEASE!

Report on SYDNEY MEETING 29th May 05 Ferntree Court Retirement Village design opportunity.

A group of GDSG members, low in numbers but not energy or expertise, met at Ferntree Ct. retirement village to plan the refurbishment of particular outside areas. It is a huge job which will be on going for many years, so, after much consultation with residents, we have isolated the areas most in need [of both a visual makeover and practical solutions to problems] and have concentrated on those .These three areas surround the entrance to the building and with a deadline of August [the village has a gala day in September and the manager would like to have the garden looking wonderful by then] we have quickly assessed the design, plant palette and number of plants needed.

As Ian Cox commented, it is such a different thing to doing one's own garden! We must stay mindful that the tastes of the residents [colour! no water features, no messiness, retain lawn space] are not necessarily ours and that there are issues and legalities for large institutions that do not affect the private gardener.

- OH&S issues loom large, such as gardeners are not to use secateurs too much for fear of RSI ! placement of plants becomes important for practical as well as aesthetic reasons, eg; those with berries should not be put near pathways as berry spillage onto the pathways could cause residents to slip on them etc.,

- availability of skilled labour and

- a democratic process so the majority of the residents feel engaged and have ownership of the decisions affecting their living spaces.

For your interest, some of the plants that survived the process include, *Cyathea cooperii*, *Asplenium bulbiferum*, *Blechnum nudum*, *Dendrobium kingianum*, *Acmenii smithii* var. *minor*, *Syzygium* "Cascade", *Syzygium paniculatum* dwarf, *Chorizema cordatum*, *Austromyrtus dulcis* and Blushing beauty, *Cryptandra scotechini*, *Lomandara tanika*, *Dianella caerulea* Little Jessie, *Grevilleas Lanigera* Mt. Tamboretha, Honeybird, Autumn Waterfall, Peaches and Cream, Forest Rambler and *Juniperina*.

All of us are mindful that we have rather a lot resting on the results of our labours, not least the reputation of Australian native plants in garden design! Also hundreds of pairs of eyes will be the judge on a daily basis! Oh well, garden design was never for the faint hearted - we will keep you posted!

October 21/23 COOTAMUNDRA WEEKEND

Join GDSG members Win Main, Paula Rumble and Irene Stocks 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.

Thank you so much all of you who have responded, in the affirmative, that you are joining us for what promises to be a great weekend.

We will leave you to make your own motel [or alternative] booking, the ph. no. of which appears below in our Itinerary. We will, however, need numbers for our two restaurant bookings on the Fri and Sat nights. Could you email Win and cc me in, so she can make a group booking at both restaurants ASAP. I'm sure that everyone who is coming will have dinner with the group but we do need confirmation of numbers. Any problems don't hesitate to contact myself or Win.

*All set for a visit from the **Garden Design Group** for the weekend of the **22nd October**.*

*Arrive **Harden**, and visit **Stocks Display Garden and Native Nursery Lot 3 Simmonds Rd. Harden, 0263862682** on the **Friday afternoon**, meet there any time from 2.00pm.onwards. Dinner at the **Terracotta restaurant Murrumburrah** (local produce), then proceed to the **Southern Comfort Motel at Cootamundra 0269423366** (half an hour from Harden).*

*Saturday morning a tour of Coota then morning tea at **Art -Fax gallery** before proceeding to **Treetops** (us) for lunch and a ramble around our garden before visiting **Paula Rumble's garden "Weventure" Muttama**. Afternoon tea and then to **Harrison Deep restaurant** for evening meal.*

*Sunday morning depart for **Grenfell** to visit another **garden with Western Australian plants** the main feature. Return to Sydney that day via Cowra, Bathurst (incoming trip Hume Highway).*

GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP NORTH-EAST BRANCH.**June 2005**

Next Meeting....Sunday June 26th. This will be a combined meeting with Wang APS, hence the Sunday.

We start at 10.30am at Thea and Jim McCarthys

We have been to Thea and Jim's before and some of the changes we discussed have been implemented. The entrance area was then due for a facelift and Bev Hanson was called in to offer suggestions. Works carrying out these ideas are well under way. Thea will explain the new plans and also their pragmatic permaculture programme.

We lunch at van Riet's new home

This site, of some 5ac, has fantastic potential, and good friend Paul Davenport has offered to practice earthmoving skills using his new machine, so John and Helen are looking for suggestions as to the best way to proceed. They are actively clearing out unwanted plants, piling up great bonfires and generally rearing to go.

The next meeting will probably be at Datsun's new place at Baranduda. I think we picked a provisional date but I have filed my notes so successfully that I simply cannot find them.

As the June meeting is a combined one (in two senses) discussion will be limited to business matters.

The Booklet is now in the hands of the printer for setting up, with a somewhat mauled text but covering most of the points we wanted included. We felt it most fitting for a booklet of this nature to give more emphasis to water maximization techniques and soil preparation rather than the finer points of garden design, but Kay and Gloria's plans with brief notes are still a central feature. We hope the public will receive an overall message that native plants can make beautiful gardens. I understand big launches are planned for Council publicity.

Our last meeting was at the Hall's new home to see the block in the 'before' state, although some planting is already in. Shelter from wind is an urgent priority together with provision of shade while not losing the sun the eremophilas need. The rain that has finally arrived will push the established perimeter plantings on to greater visibility and effectiveness. Some of Jan's eremophila collection are already installed and flowering on the well prepared mounds in the entrance area where the centerpiece is the pond which will receive run-off from part of the roof and drain into a mostly dry watercourse. The search for pebbles is on! A lot of thought has gone into the whole water problem, how to maximize the benefit of any rain and reuse of household water after an oxidizing septic treatment. John van Riet surveyed the block, including the contours and left marker pegs so that Jan can record where all her plants go in a logical manner. It has tried Jan's patience going through the long preparatory work but I am sure she will be well

rewarded. If we ever do another booklet similar to the current one we will be able to use Jan's garden during its development as an illustration, which would be a great way to catch public interest.

Hoping to see you all, ready to come up with a range of bright ideas for the van Riets.

Last Melbourne Meeting - May 29th - visit to the home and garden of Faye Candy

We had a beautiful sunny winter afternoon to visit this lovely garden. Faye and Bruce had clearly worked hard sweeping paths and neatening garden beds for our visit. The grass garden attracted quite a lot of interest although it is just not possible for the casual observer to appreciate the number of small plants that are growing among the more obvious lomandras and grasses. Faye is clearly fascinated by this part of the garden saying that if she spends 4 hours outside in the garden then she would spend 3 of them in this quite small area as it provides the most interest, fun and experimentation.

As with all gardens there are many challenges to be met - and at opposite ends of the spectrum. The front garden is extremely wet; despite raised garden beds and an effective use of rocks (thanks to Roger Stone) Faye has lost many plants over the years due to high moisture levels that persist even in dry months of the year. On the other hand along the side of the house adjacent to the driveway, garden beds largely under eaves, are extremely dry. Screening from neighbours is another challenge and the loss of several large plants in the back yard has left sizeable gaps on the fenceline that Faye is anxious to have filled as soon as possible so that she can increase her privacy.

Care of plants, pruning and an active engagement with the garden were evident everywhere, resulting in a vigorous healthy garden of interesting plants with differing foliage textures and colours. There are plenty of medium and large shrubs in the garden but Faye is careful to plant low plants close to pathways and elsewhere to keep a feeling of space in the garden. This is a complex garden of plants which is always a joy to visit. I just couldn't believe it when Faye said she would be quite happy to start another garden anytime. Her sense of adventure is alive and well. Thanks Faye and Bruce.

Next Melbourne Meeting - August 28th - Jacobs Garden

By special request of members attending the last meeting I have arranged for us to visit Elspeth Jacob's garden in Montrose. It was said that the group had never visited this well known garden. The Jacobs Garden is usually in the Open Garden Scheme but I believe it will not be in it this year so please take this opportunity to visit. Many of you may have seen the garden, as I have myself on several occasions, but if you are anything like me you will be happy to look at it again. In fact one of the strengths of a beautiful garden is you never tire of looking at it and learning from it.

This property was originally owned by Roger and Gwen Elliott; the Jacobs have lived there for 13.5 years with Elspeth expanding and developing the garden in sympathy with what was already there. I have been told that Elspeth has been reworking sections of the garden; although this may not be obvious to us she says getting rid of some large plants has been quite liberating. Elspeth has a special interest in small eucalypts which are

mainly grouped in one section of the garden (and I know of one beauty from Tasmania in a pot), but she does not believe her garden relies on eucalypts for its structure. My initial impression of this garden was how well it had maintained an open sunny centre to enable sun-loving plants to grow and thrive while still achieving scale from the size of its garden beds and use of tall plants mainly on the perimeters - and this, of course, is all helped by the garden being nestled inside a larger bush block. Please join us for the afternoon and if possible phone Chris to let me know that you will be there.

Time: 2pm to 4pm

Note: I have not as yet made any arrangements for afternoon tea so please come prepared with your own refreshments and a chair. I will however see if we can boil an urn and have a hot drink.

Last Meeting for 2005 - Nov 27th at home of Pam Yarra in Heathmont

TREASURER'S COMMENTS and NOTES

Although the accounts show a healthy surplus for this year, this is due to the royalty income from sales of "The Australian Garden" and the income from the term deposit t which is currently reinvested].The Newsletter production expenses greatly exceeded the membership subscriptions received.

Book royalties are expected to decline as sales taper off so they cannot be expected to fund the shortfall in subscription income for much longer. For the GDSG to continue to fund the full range of activities we will need to increase subscription income and/or decrease the Newsletter costs. The indications are that we will need to do both. NL costs can be reduced if we distribute a significant number by email as a pdf document. The basic subscription will probably need to rise to \$15 if we continue to provide a printed Newsletter to all members.

Would GDSG members be happy with an electronic Newsletter with colour pictures?

Bryan Loft

GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

FINANCIAL STATEMENT 1 July 2004 - 30 June 2005**INCOME**

Royalty on Book		\$ 4,230.00	
Bank Interest - Society Cheque Account		\$ 14.48	
Bank Interest - Term Deposit		\$ 569.59	
Unsolicited Donations		\$ 25.00	
2004/05 Subscriptions received		\$ 735.00	
2005/06 Subscriptions received		\$ 235.00	
2006/07 Subscriptions received		\$ 10.00	
			<u>\$ 5,819.07</u>

Less EXPENDITURE

Newsletter Expenses:

Printing	\$ 1276.00		
Postage & envelopes	\$ 487.95		
Ink cartridge	\$ 25.00	\$ 1,788.95	
Sub to Friends of RBG Cranbourne		\$ 25.00	
Sub to Friends of Kawarra Gardens		\$ 20.00	
Sub to Friends of Eurobodalla Botanic Gardens		\$ 20.00	
Gifts to meeting hosts		\$ 115.15	
Digitization of photographs for Website		\$ 276.00	
FID Tax		\$ 11.00	
			<u>\$2,256.10</u>
Apparent Operating surplus for year			<u>\$ 3,562.97</u>

Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2005

Balance 1 July 2004	\$21,146.36
Plus Operating surplus for year	<u>\$ 3,562.97</u>
Balance 30 June 2005	<u>\$ 24,709.33</u>

Represented By:

Westpac Term Deposit (maturing 2 August 2005)	\$ 20,569.59
Westpac Society Cheque Account	\$ 4,079.74
Cash in Hand 30 June 05	\$ 60.00
Balance 30 June 2005	<u>\$ 24,709.33</u>

B. G. Hoff

A.S.G.A.P. GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

Membership Form: Financial year 2005 / 2006 (Please Print Details)

Surname _____ First name _____

Address _____ Post code _____

Telephone No _____ Fax No. _____ Email _____

Are you a member of APS (SGAP)? _____ [Non-members are classified as Newsletter Subscribers.]

Which APS (SGAP) District Group (if any) do you belong to? _____

Which other Study Group(s) (if any) do you belong to? _____

Are there any aspects of garden design in which you have a special interest? _____

Professional qualifications &/or particular expertise or specialisation you have related to Garden Design:

if you have professional qualifications &/or particular expertise or specialisation, do you wish to have your name put on a referral list for enquirers seeking professional garden design advice? _____

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

Enclosed is a cheque/money order for \$ being the full / concessional* membership subscription for the 2002/2003 financial year. ("My concessional category is.....")

Signed.....

Date / /

- For our records, please complete all details on this form and return it with your subscription (if not already paid)
- Cheques should be made payable to the Garden Design Study Group. Subscriptions will be acknowledged in the next Newsletter - please let us know if you would like a receipt as well.

Comments & ideas _____

_____ P.T.O. if necessary