



GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

ISSN: 1039 – 9062
 ABN: 82 428 110 028
Newsletter
August, 2021

116

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Newsletter Theme: 'Pruning for Design'

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Pruning is one of those garden procedures that can 'give nature a hand' through careful modification of plants to increase their aesthetic value by accentuating their best design qualities in form, size and flowering.

ANPSA Garden Design Study Group Newsletter

Published quarterly in February, May, August and November.

Copy Deadline: two weeks before the publication month, earlier submissions will be welcomed.

Newsletter Editor: Lawrie Smith, Phone: 0411 228 900 Email: displays@npq.org.au

There is no charge for Membership of GDSG annual period from July 1 to June 30

Newsletters are distributed to all members only by email

Please advise if you wish to change your contact details or to discontinue membership.

Newsletter timing & Themes

These are the 2021 Newsletter dates and themes:

<i>Issue</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>Theme</i>	
117	November	"Visual Attributes of a Garden"	
118	February	"Gardens in Shade"	
119	May	"Design for Climate Change"	
120	August	"Very Small Gardens"	

Please ensure to send your submissions at least two weeks before the publication month.

As I read through the past Newsletters from 2006 to decide which articles to bring to your attention in this Newsletter to whet your appetite and encourage you to delve back to the archives to see what members were saying in relation to design in their gardens fifteen years ago, I was impressed by the breadth of design issues that were covered.

The very interesting and informative texts in each of the four issues, revealed a deep interest and understanding in a very broad range of subjects, which are all still relevant today, such as: the use of the funds derived from publication of 'The Book'; understanding natural design; garden views inside and out; what makes a garden; several heritage gardens; and many comments on plants and their use.

Theme for the next Newsletter

These articles provide a great example for today's members to follow and I hope that reading them will encourage you to share your thoughts and experiences inspired by the theme for the next Newsletter issue "*Visual Attributes of a Garden*"

Remember this is your Study Group and it functions best with interaction and involvement from members located in all corners of the continent. So please take up a pen or keyboard and share your experiences and thoughts with us all for the next edition.

Newsletter #116 theme: *'Pruning for Design'*

For many of us our gardens aspire to be dominantly natural in character, where plants are encouraged to grow 'naturally' with minimal human assistance or training. While others take those extra steps to 'interpret' nature a little more formally, by a variety of horticultural practices. Pruning is one of those procedures that can 'give nature a hand' through careful modification of plants to increase their aesthetic value by accentuating their best design qualities in form, size and flowering.

Pruning seems such a regular process that we all do as part of the garden maintenance and respond to safety issues, but do we ever consider it as a design tool? If you think back through images of the many gardens you have visited in Australia or possibly elsewhere in the world, one aspect will most likely stand out regularly, and that is the way sensitive pruning can greatly enhance the character of a garden. There are so many ways to prune a plant and even more reasons why you should or should not attack a plant with shears or a pruning saw.



You could emulate some of the extreme sculptural hedge gardens like Levens Hall in the UK where it seems that chess pieces have come to life and run riot through a garden.



Perhaps you think of the endless formal hedges that define and divide the gardens of a European chateau into rooms by walls of regularly clipped foliage.



Maybe it is the unique 'cloud like' form of clipped trees in Thailand silhouetted against the sky, with many branches like arms supporting balloons of dense clipped leaves.



In Japan Azalea are clipped meticulously into undulating mounds of deep green foliage at just the right time to encourage thousands of flowers to pattern the stylised forms.



hedges to define spaces.

Some trees laid out in regular grids in the city squares of Europe are regularly pleached to create a very stylised upper level of interlocking



encourage temporary new canopy growth and to add insult to injury the lower trunks are often whitewashed.

Then there is the pollarding of Australian Eucalyptus in Greece whose upper branches are removed regularly to

These are but a few of the many ways that humans modify the natural forms and habits of trees and shrubs for design reasons.

From this a question arises – do Australian plants lend themselves to such modification, and is it ‘good design’ to do this? I guess it is possible make a case for some of these less radical procedures. However as the premise “design with nature” is generally applied in my landscape projects, it is hard for me personally to justify or be satisfied by any unnaturally modified plant management.

Of course there are situations, more particularly in urban inner city areas where a unique stylistic approach can be invaluable and logical.



It was considered to be a logical and realistic way to suggest a Queensland rainforest using our ferns, epiphytes, orchids

In a past issue of the GDSG Newsletter this ‘Epiphyte Forest’ was described as a vegetated forest of green poles, a design inspired by

and climbers to create a strong characteristic environment that is obviously completely ‘unnatural’ but never the less appropriate for its significant position and function in the landscape of World Expo 88.



Up-pruning a form of pleaching, is another method I find very useful, that in design terms is logical and

realistic. This hedge of *Callistemon* ‘Little John’ began life twenty years ago pruned as a low hedge, and over the years it has slowly grown upwards. It was never intended to assume the form it has now, but as it aged the network of trunks and branches were exposed and the ‘transparent’ qualities of the hedge began to emerge. Now the lower branchlets are purposely removed, leaving a canopy of foliage about one metre above the soil level. Although it still visually divides two sections of the Garden of Native Cultivars, the glimpses through the branches entices the observer to walk around to the opposite side to view that section of the garden. A very valuable way to conceal and reveal areas of the garden that would otherwise be hidden behind a dense formal hedge.



This example of sculptural hedging also in Roma Street Parkland central Brisbane, was used to

make reference to a landscape element that was about to disappear. The southern boundary of the parkland originally offered an expansive long view to the undulating mountains of the Great Divide some 50 km to the southwest. However this view was to be lost to the park by the construction of a series of multi-story apartment towers. The steep

bank was planted with a selection of hedge species that would be progressively pruned to reflect the topography and colours of the distant mountains. Over time the pruned 'mountain hedges' developed slightly away from the original more 'natural' concept but today still fulfil the original design intent.



A similar contrived example inspired by a natural feature, was the central garden of a new parkland along the

Brisbane River which had originally been a wharf area and coral processing plant. Coral was extracted from the dead reefs of Moreton Bay and transported by barge upstream to be ground to fine powder, fired and converted to cement. The central garden was designed to simulate the sculptural forms of a coral reef by pruning a hedge of *Syzygium* 'Tiny Trev'. Granted this is an intricate regular maintenance process to shape and form the curvilinear hedge – one could ask is this really appropriate design?

So I plead guilty to using 'manicured' hedge forms as design elements! But these are rare occurrences for me as a landscape architect. However each of these have fulfilled a special design function which may not have been possible otherwise. Each in their own way, have influenced public perceptions and appreciation of landscape design as well as the innovative use of native species to achieve interesting unexpected design results.

Pruning is advantageous for so many practical horticultural reasons to ensure that a considered garden design is established and continues to be realised. For example most new garden shrub specimens I purchase are first 'decapitated' by about one third before planting to encourage a dense branching habit with dense foliage.

Specimen trees are immediately and regularly 'up-pruned' to encourage development of a strong trunk and higher level canopy which admits sun under.



Many shrubs in the centre of a garden are similarly 'up-pruned' to open up garden space under to be established with small shrubs and covers for added interest.

Tip pruning regularly will encourage density of foliage and promote more flowers as well as enhancing the visual relationship between specimens in massed shrubberies.

Where space is limited espalier comes to the fore, to form small trees flat and narrow against a wall by training and pruning all side branches to effectively create a green wall of foliage.

I'm sure all GDSG members have done most if not all of these varied pruning procedures and could also add many more personal experiences. In conclusion it is fair to say that pruning to form is an invaluable horticultural and gardening activity that with thought and imagination, informs and ensures good garden design. As for me, I justify these practices by saying that the sensitive pruning is inspired by the gentle grazing of a kangaroo or where more radical, as done by storm and bushfire.



Pruning comments from members

Pruning for Form *Pam Yarra, Melbourne*

Pruning is a topic "close to my heart" for many reasons, including its therapeutic benefits. I have sent you some photos and will soon write a piece to accompany them.



Lasiopetalum macrophyllum needs regular pruning to keep easy access along the edge of main pathway to the house.



Hibbertia scandens planted to grow up a dead trunk. It needs to be trained, and contained in a wire cage as well as regularly pruned to the form required.



Correa 'Portland Belle' / 'Split Bell'. Pruning *Correas* by picking flowers or regular tip pruning promotes a bushy habit and increased flower production.



Banksia 'Birthday Candles'. Most *Banksia* do not require pruning, however this one is on the path to the house and for safety reasons needs to be pruned. Apart from picking flowers, *Banksia* need little to no pruning.



Westringia 'Wynabbie Gem' was planted to screen a sitting area from the neighbour's boundary. A close by stand of *Allocasuarina* has been sending out runners, providing new plants (one staked in photo). So now the *Westringia* is being regularly pruned to combine screening with *Allocasuarina*.



I'm on a bit of a roller with my pruning hat on! This *Banksia spinulosa* was about 2m tall, when it was hit by a large falling *Eucalyptus* in August 2018. The remaining trunk (50cm x 12cm approx.) was trimmed by arborist. It recovered really well & has about 6 flowers this year. Every so often I prune a branch or two, not specifically for shaping, but more to enable plants near it to survive & thrive.



Pruning Issues *Jane Fountain, Brisbane*

At the front of the school where I work there is a small garden nicknamed the 'flagpole garden' which is in front of the sign for the Administration block. It was begun in 2019 and the poor soil has the advantage of being a sandy loam over clayey shale, but it required quite a lot of fertilizer and heaps of water in the long dry periods. Now with the recent rain (April May) it has all burst into life and I am faced with having to prune.



The *Graptophyllum ilicifolium* have been tip pruned since they were about a metre high and some of the *Baeckea virgata* branches have been taken out to open up views through. I would rather keep a natural shape than having the *Graptophyllum* formally hedged. Does that mean some hard pruning now to allow for summer growth?

LS: Don't prune too hard! Better to progressively remove emergent leading shoots deep down and maintain a naturally dense foliage mass at the height you want.



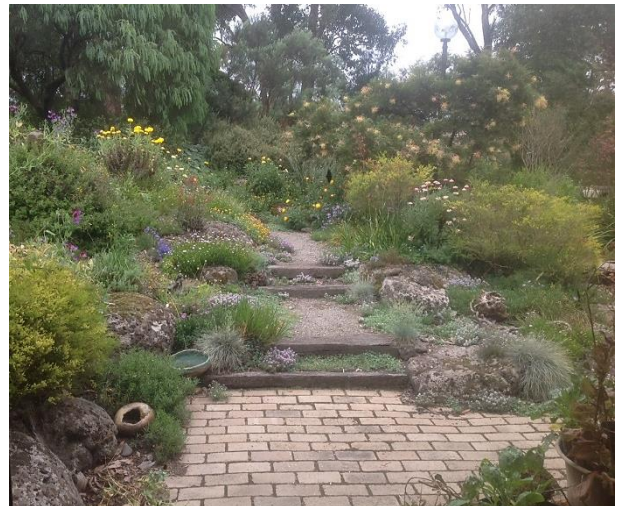
Graptophyllum was used because they are so hardy and attractive. The garden runs east-west and is shaded on the western end by the walkway roof and trees, so the *Baeckea* was planted on the eastern sunny end to encourage

flowering. The other plants are *Callistemon* 'Little John' or 'Little Sylvie', *Graptophyllum spinigerum* and *Lomandra*.

Pruning My Way *Bev Hansen, Melbourne*

While enjoying ourselves in sunny Queensland, beautiful Mission Beach in fact, I thought I would right something about pruning for the newsletter with a few photos to go with it.

I am always tip pruning. Many plants growing in the wild are pruned regularly by animals such as kangaroos and wallabies so I find tip pruning garden plants essential to keep certain plants compact and looking good while others require a serious chop back and then manage the regrowth. Some, however do not need any pruning.

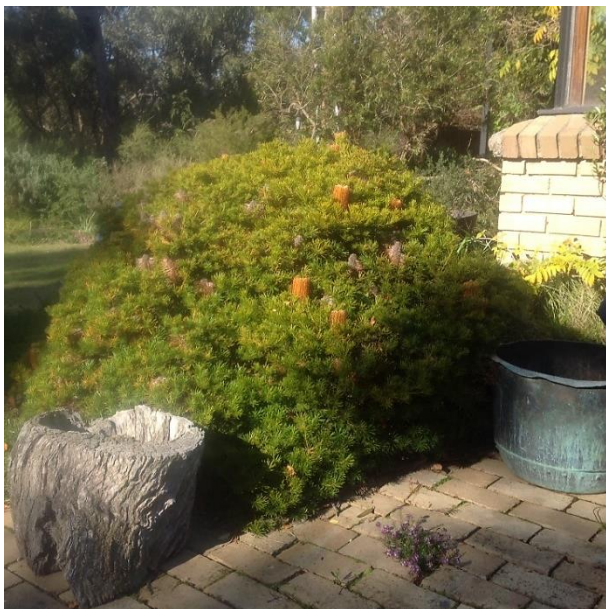


In the picture above, the *Thryptomene* in the extreme lower left with golden foliage was getting too large and open for the position so I cut the whole plant, which was about 1.5 mt high and wide, back to 15cm from the ground. The subsequent regrowth was carefully managed, the soft new shoots regularly being pruned with a pair of scissors or just bunching the tips together and pinching them out by hand. The plant is now dense and reduced in size.

The *Grevillea* 'peaches and cream' background, is also pruned regularly after flowering to keep compact and ensure new growth on which the flowers are produced.



Above... The plant in the foreground to the left is *Darwinia citriodora* which I regularly tip prune or it would be very open and untidy. There is ways a lovely aroma, as the name suggests, of citrus as you work. It would be about twenty years old. The rounded shrub next to it on the right is a *Baeckea virgata* dwarf which has never needed pruning and is now over 50 years old.



Above is a thirty year old *Banksia spinulosa* dwarf sp. that never needs any pruning. The flowers can either be over 100 in a good season or none in a drought. People often ask should the dead heads be removed from the banksia. I say no unless you don't like the look of them.

Pruning Why, When & How?

Pam Yarra, Melbourne

Historically, pruning has not been a feature of Australian plant gardening. In the 1960's, when I began a native plant garden, there was a lack of knowledge. Also there were misconceptions surrounding low care bush or naturalistic gardens. There was much inappropriate planting and also the bad press of "gums and wattles", as they were straggly and unattractive. And of course, in the bush plants were pruned by nature, fire, flood, frost and storms, as well as wild life.

Pruning maintains the shape and the health of plants, but knowing the when and how is important.

Tip pruning most of the year is ideal for many plants, especially correas. Picking flowers or pruning after flowering is another guideline. Not pruning or leaving it too late in the life span of the plant was demonstrated in my garden during a recent severe storm.



My hedge of *Westringia*, as well as *Phebalium* were not quite uprooted, but moved from the perpendicular. Will it be too late, as pruning back to hard wood may not be timely in the middle of Melbourne's winter and also is it basically too late to revive these old plants?

Pruning part of a plant that is dead or diseased can prolong the life of the plant and its shape, as I have experienced with *Eremophila*. Also pruning lower branches of trees and large shrubs can not only create vistas, but an illusion of distance in a small garden.

Another form of pruning is topiary. It creates a spectacular vision, as seen in Fiona Brochoff's Sorrento garden, as well as, a not to be forgotten drift of *Leucophyta brownii* on the tidal island St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall UK. However topiary comes at a cost, usually, the loss of flowers.



While pruning has many advantages, over pruning can reduce or eliminate the habitat for many critters. For example in my suburban bush garden I retain areas of thicket, as safe havens for small birds.

Pruning plants can also create a specific design feature, the individuality of a plant or the dramatic effect of topiary or retain a habitat suburban bush garden.



Unless regular pruning is your mission, pruning can be made easier by having secateurs in hand or on your body, in a pouch, when

gardening. It need not be hard work, and as I have found quite therapeutic.

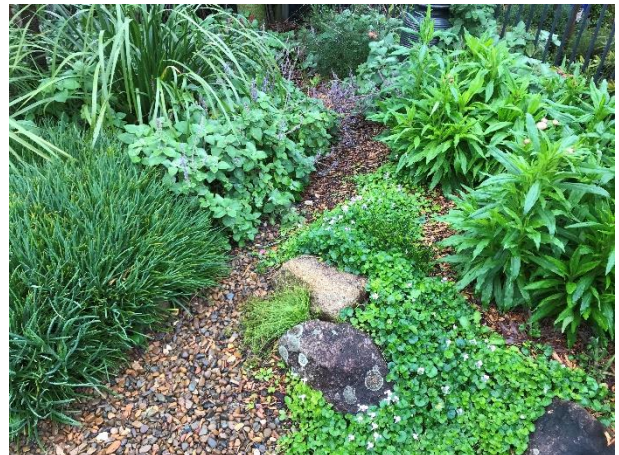
LS: This is the follow up article that Pam promised us in her first text, earlier in this section. I've added a couple of photos taken when I visited Pam's garden in February 2020.

PLANTS IN DESIGN

Symphony in Green

Lawrie Smith, Brisbane

Walking around the garden today, in showery overcast conditions, it seemed that in this small area many tones of green were competing for attention and inviting my closer inspection. This small triangular garden (3m x 2m) beside the pool, receives sun for most of the day, even in mid-winter. Most of the plants are now just starting to flower to welcome the coming spring.



It has an interesting story to share. When modifying the courtyard paving with new sandstone twelve months ago, I decided that this narrow section of concrete was useless and would be far better as a garden. Instead of removing this section of the concrete slab, boulders were placed carefully to contain soil / sand mix mounded to a depth of 300 - 400mm, profiled to allow excess water to drain to the edges through a gravel bed & path. Initially the new plants 'existed' but it was not until decomposed granite (about one third of the original volume) was cultivated in several months ago, that the plants really decided to perform well. Species circling from left to right - *Bulbine bulbosa*, *Plectranthus argenteus*, *Lomandra hystrix*, *Xerochrysum* spp, *Hibbertia vestita*, *Viola banksii* and *Dichondra repens*

Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne

Nicky Zanen, Melbourne

Recently I attended a talk presented by Prof Tim Entwisle, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne. I thought I would share a couple of points that could be of interest to GDSG members. The first was to consider how a public botanic gardens welcomes its visitors. Seeing signs forbidding dogs, bicycles, skateboards etc is just not the way to be welcoming. A valid point.

The 7th Global Botanic Gardens Congress will be held in Melbourne in September 2022. The Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne are 175 years old this year. Amongst the notable events the Observatory will have the original telescope returned.

A masterplan, launched in December 2020, outlines the Nature and Science Precinct, which along with the Arts and Culture and Sports and Entertainment precincts, is intended to be one of Melbourne’s three major destination by the Birrarung (Yarra River). The precinct will be located at the site of the existing herbarium.



The masterplan includes the underground herbarium and vault, which will house the 1.5 million plant species in the State Botanic Collection. The 1988 extension to the herbarium will be demolished

and the original 1934 herbarium building refurbished.

A new gate between the existing A and H gates will become a new major entrance to the gardens and will celebrate Indigenous landscapes, plants, animals, landforms and people. Gate A will be redeveloped into a



terraced garden with a focus on health and wellbeing.

An under-used piece of land between the northern border of Government House and Alexandra Avenue will be re-contoured to create a new amphitheatre venue for small theatrical performances, and the Hopetoun Lawn will be redeveloped into Wild Wood, a natural bush children’s area and unstructured play space.

The masterplan will be delivered in stages, culminating in the construction of the New Lakeside Conservatory on the existing site of the Terrace Tea Rooms. The masterplan describes the proposed conservatory as an “indoor pleasure garden, sitting sensitively in the landscape as a grand folly, this structure would become a major new landmark and destination in Melbourne.”

Masterplan information was extracted from an item in architectureau.com.

Visits to Carn Garden, Monbulk

Nicky Zanen, Melbourne



Shirley Carn’s garden is well known to Melbourne members. She was an amazing plants woman and in the time I knew her had developed at least 3 gardens. The last two

gardens were within cooe of each other in the beautiful volcanic soils of Monbulk.

Shirley passed away last year and her garden is now in the safe hands of her daughter, Rose. I thought it would be interesting to have a 'then and now' series of photos. Rose is still as judicious in pruning her plants as Shirley was, but maybe a little kinder to the plants.



The photo (left) was taken in 2018 and shows a number of smaller plants at the base of this eucalypt.

The photo (below) taken in 2021 some plants at the base have decreased and others grown.



This photo (below) taken in 2015 is from the footpath looking at the patio.



The photo (below) is from the patio looking towards the footpath in 2021. During her last few weeks at home Shirley was spending a lot of time in her bedroom and it was a joy for her

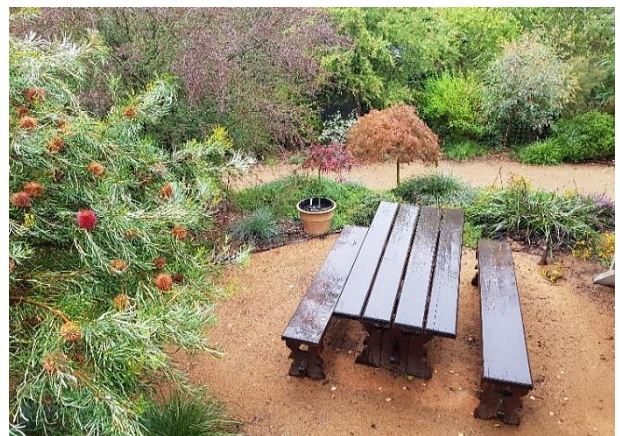


to look out the window and see her visitors seated in the garden. This was COVID time.

Another two photos (below) show how the garden has grown and evolved. The first was taken in 2017 and shows the young plantings.



The second photo illustrates how the garden is being used more for reflection and seating.



The garden has grown so much that it has a lot of microclimates, which in turn protect plants from hot and cold winds. Rose spends a lot of time in her garden, and consistently prunes as she wanders around with secateurs always on hand. A truly habitat garden.

Our garden at Crystal Brook

Pam Pilkington, APS Brinkworth Member

This article was first included in the APS South Australia Journal in 2021 and has been reproduced here with permission.

We started building our home on the northern fringe of Crystal Brook in 2003. The block of land at that stage was only six acres, and in its past life had been used by livestock agents for pig sales, and then used by a horse owner. The topography was flat, and the soil consisted of heavy cracking clay, and in places, limestone gravel which formed the driveway into the pig sales area.

Our home wasn't completed until mid-2004, and while the building was in process, I started planning the garden design, and made a start on a few plantings well away from builders and their vehicles. We engaged a local truckie to transport in some red sand from our other property five kilometres away, and together with his bulldozer, he carefully crafted geometric mounds with perfectly level tops, despite my protesting that I wanted irregular, natural looking mounds. He even had his young daughter raking the sand level, so after he had left, I started the arduous task of trying to reshape the mounds into a vaguely more natural landscape. The water pressure on our block is very poor, so by default, the garden was always going to consist of mainly hardy species which could survive on limited supplementary water. However, I still wanted a back lawn for grandchildren to play on, so Santa Anna couch runners were planted to fill in that space and I've always loved picking roses for indoors, so a small selection of roses were planted in a secluded spot.

Our block of land is bordered on two sides by roads, so my priority was to set about planting screening trees and shrubs for privacy. On the western side of the car shed I wanted shade, so two *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* found their home there.

Over the period of a few years, the garden evolved with many and varied Australian plants, but particularly dominated with numerous *Eremophila* species, mainly due to their hardiness in our hot, dry climate, but also

because of the wonderful diversity of shapes, forms, sizes, foliage and flowers.



I was lucky to be given three *Xanthorrhoea quadrangulata* by a colleague who had propagated them from seed from her property. Two are still living today, one of which I relocated several years ago because it

had got lost under neighbouring shrubs, and for the first time this year, it has flowered. The other one has flowered on a few occasions and has a magnificent spike on it currently.

I've been a regular supporter of the APS Plant Sales over the years, and would not like to calculate the value of plants which I've purchased. The Arid Lands Botanic Gardens has also been a great source of plants, particularly *Eremophila*, and our own Brinkworth Branch APS regularly has member grown plants for sale, and I've even been the lucky winner of several raffle prizes of plants over the years. Other plants have been gifted by friends, so all plants have their special story of why they became part of the garden. In the early years of planting, as the shrubs and trees grew and spread, some encroached closer than they should have to the fence with the cropping paddock on the northern side, thereby reducing the fire break. My husband dutifully moved the fence several metres away from the garden, but I was warned that it wasn't ever going to be moved again, so I had to ensure that the garden was contained well inside the fire break. I've stuck by the rule, so the plantings have been restricted to around one and a half to two acres in total.

The older surviving plants are now approaching seventeen years of age. Many plants haven't lasted the distance, but they quickly get replaced with something else, so the garden is forever changing and evolving.

As the years go by, I'm learning which plants should flourish and what won't, and I no longer waste time, expense and energy on plants that I desire, but know won't survive in our conditions.



Last year when we were asked to stay at home due to COVID 19, the garden received the most attention it's seen for many years. A lot of shrubs had become overgrown and spindly over time, and the view from the house of the

surrounding hills had become totally occluded. I researched which plants were suitable to being heavily pruned and proceeded to saw and trim away the excess growth and dead wood. About a dozen tandem trailer loads of clippings were carted away, and in the following months the plants rejuvenated exceptionally well with fresh new growth.

The garden is informal, and my planting is spontaneous and without organisation. In 2010, we added a pond and water feature out the back, to encourage frogs and insects and add an element of relaxation and serenity. The garden has diversity to encourage bees, birdlife and reptiles (some wanted, others not so welcome), and to provide them with shelter, flowers and seeds, and food and water, throughout the year.

It's not the typical structured garden that beautifies many modern homes today, and it probably doesn't appeal to everyone. However, to experience the excitement of witnessing a plant flower for the first time, or something germinate in a random place, and to be able to leave it in that space to grow and thrive, is to replicate nature as its meant to be, and it's that very element of the unexpected, that gives me great satisfaction and delight in my garden.

An Enchanted Paperbark Forest

Lawrie Smith, Brisbane

This is nature's handiwork at its best, a garden like no other! Come with me, I want to share a walk through this magical environment in Central Queensland near Agnes Waters and the Town of Seventeen Seventy.



Be enchanted by this unique all-encompassing experience created by thousands of closely spaced Paperbark trees, rarely seen in such pristine condition. Stop to wonder if Joseph Banks was equally impressed when he came ashore here from HMS Endeavour in 1770, to make this the second landing on Australia's east coast.



This enticing 400 metre walking trail and boardwalk is specially designed to make it possible to penetrate the decorative lush undergrowth, requiring careful balancing on stepping stones winding through the wetlands (without getting your feet wet), until you're completely surrounded by thousands of white paperbark tree trunks *Melaleuca quinquenervia* and the majestic trunks and green fronds of the cabbage palm *Livistona decora*, all festooned by the membrane thin, filmy, climbing fern *Lygodium microphyllum*.



Seasonally a kaleidoscope of butterflies swarm around the forest, and richly coloured fungi wait to be discovered. Everywhere frog calls provide nature's soundtrack as you weave your way around this amazing trail in Reedy Creek Reserve.

Monitoring Water at Depth

Bonni Yee, Gold Coast

When watering our gardens, have any of you wondered how much is enough? How many litres per sqm is enough water to get moisture to the root level? Wonder no more - now there is a simple way to measure soil moisture at root depth! I am using the Chameleon Card System from CSIRO:
see viashop.csiro.au/chameleon-card-system

After the 2019 drought, I decided to install two new 30,000L water storage tanks to supplement the 15,000L tank for the nursery. To do this, we had to excavate a pad for 2 tanks at 1m depth, so the tops of all tanks would be level. The picture below shows the typical poor clay/rock profile of my natural soil.

Excavation in February 2020 - the tanks were installed by crane in March.



It took us about a month to manually back-fill around the tanks with sand, weeds, compost + natural soil. The front tank had 1m depth and the 2nd tank was almost at ground level. For every planting, we dug holes and used compost and soil additives to improve the poor clay.



Large rocks were used as edging, Medium rocks were used for terracing. Small rocks were taken to the tip ~ 10 loads.

By late April 2020, we had planted a garden which would hopefully hide the tanks! But by Aug 2020, there was a striking difference in growth: the side nearest the shed was thriving and the sides away from the shed were doing poorly - yet they were watered equally!



I read about the VIA system on a CSIRO blog site. I ordered and installed 3 sensors in this area: one in the "good" area and the other two in the poor areas. The sensors are buried ~24 cm deep, average root depth. The sensors are

connected to wires above ground and held up on posts for easy access. To use the Chameleon Reader card, I just insert the two end wires into the card and press a button on the card and a light on the card turns BLUE if there is enough soil moisture for root uptake (don't water); GREEN if soil needs water soon; and RED if it is too dry for root uptake (water now!) I can tell in minutes what the moisture level is in 3 different spots. The Chameleon Card showed clearly that the poorer areas were not getting enough water!!!

Now that I am watering according to the lights on the Chameleon Card, the plants are all thriving! Knowing the actual soil moisture at depth has solved this garden's water problems. In case you are wondering, the mesh surrounding this bed prevents deer damage!

GDSG-Q June Excursion

Lawrie Smith, Brisbane

Brisbane Botanic Gardens – Mt Coot-tha was the venue for 12 members of the GDSG-Q. The forecast was for 80% chance of rain and after a quick canvassing of members it was decided that in true native plants style we would not let this discourage us, and so armed with all the necessary wet weather gear we assembled at the Visitor Centre and proceeded our walk. Not surprisingly the bureau forecast did not eventuate and the soft misty atmosphere was ideal to view two interesting but very different gardens.



The first stop was the Japanese Garden as Lawrie wanted to introduce it to members and tell the story of its

original construction around the Japan Pavilion at World Expo 88, and more particularly to describe some of the garden design concepts.

The garden was designed by a distinguished landscape architect Kenzo Ogata - designated as a 'Living Japanese Treasure' - it was Lawrie's responsibility to assist him in finding just the right contorted trees and shrubs in local nurseries, as well as the most appropriate rocks for the garden. Lawrie explained this was a learning experience never to be forgotten. We meandered around the garden observing the various views and glimpses that caught the eye, discussed the role of the typical intense hedging of the banks of Azalea, and the specialised up-pruning of trees to reveal and frame otherwise hidden views across the lake or garden.



Even though the Japanese Garden was very foreign to we native plants people, it never the

less opened up discussion as we traversed the Queensland Conservation Collection Garden nearby, of how or if this 'structured informality' might translate to Australian landscape design. In fact as we walked there was considerable sharing of the various ways to prune garden plants for horticultural reasons, for plant health, to achieve a specific specimen character and particularly for garden design reasons.



The Queensland Conservation Collection Garden is planned to contain as many of Queensland's threatened species as climatically possible. The QCCG is an extensive area added to the Botanic Gardens as a result of the construction of



the Legacy Way twin road tunnel extending 4.6km from the inner city to the Gardens, which was opened in 2015. More than 1.3 million cubic metres of spoil were excavated and most placed in the adjacent quarry pit as well as being used to create the landform of this specialized new garden. We intended to do the garden circuit in about two hours but at our typical snail speed detail inspection rate we returned to the start three hours later.



Grevillea Honey Barbara



Phebalium notii

Then we drove up to the top of the Botanic Gardens to enjoy BYO lunch at the Australian Collection and walk around the 'Plants for Brisbane Gardens' which was giving promise of the coming spring flowering. All agreed that this was one of the

most interesting and informative of recent excursions and if nothing else it inspired members to take out their secateurs and perform some perhaps much needed surgery in their own gardens.

North from Cooktown

NPQ Cairns July Newsletter – Stuart Worboys

Having just read this, and green with envy, I thought of our southern members enjoying very different weather conditions and thought that you might like to be warmed up a bit!! This region is a native garden par excellence and surprisingly many of the species are commonly used in gardens much further south. Lawrie

In early June, SGAP members from Innisfail, Tablelands and Cairns combined to visit one of north Queensland's most colourful localities. Peter Radke, of Tablelands Branch, had organised a four day tour from Cooktown, across to Elim Beach, then to the Mclvor River and finally across to Lakefield National Park via the Battlecamp Road.



Using the beautifully situated Elim Beach campground as a base, we were able to venture into the Cape Bedford sand dunes, a vast area of rolling silica sand covered with heath and patches of low dry rainforest. We arrived at the start of the peak flowering, and were able to see many of the local beauties in full flower. Like heathlands to the south, the dunefields are rich in Fabaceae and Myrtaceae (although Proteaceae are not so diverse), with several locally endemic species such as *Labichea buetnneriana* and *Xanthostemon arenarius*.



In a small swampy patch we found four *Drosera* and two *Utricularia* species, growing alongside the blue-flowered *Burmannia juncea*, a species not seen in the Cooktown region before. Sadly, we learned this area is being investigated for its potential as a source of pure silica sand.

The Mitsubishi-owned mine at the nearby Cape Flattery dune fields is already exporting in excess of 2 million tonnes of silica each year, and it seems the Cape Bedford dunes, with their rare endemic species, sensitive groundwater systems and fragile sand-based ecosystems, are destined for the same fate.

The following day, we followed a well-formed road to the Mclvor River. The road was bordered to the west by sandstone ridges, and lovely thickets of *Livistona muelleri* dominated the understory in places. We came to a high ridge offering views of the country to the north.

The ridge vegetation proved to support an unusual dry rainforest community, with tall *Araucaria cunninghamii* overshadowing *Xanthostemon arenarius*, *Styphelia*, *Acacia* and *Niemeyera antiloga*. The community was rich in weird and wonderful epiphytes, with



three colour varieties of *Dendrobium rigidum*, the ant-symbiont *Dischidia major* (a close relative of *Hoya*), and an enormous, out of place *Platyserium hillii*.

After a lengthy drive through tropical woodlands we stopped just short the Mclvor River ford. Before venturing down to the river, the convoy stopped to enjoy lunch. Not far from our stop, we discovered an enormous candy-striped flower that we suspect was *Hibiscus sankowskyorum*. After lunch, we



ventured down to the ford, where the river was shallow enough to be crocodile free. The splendid tall gallery forest lining the river was dominated by a single multi-stemmed *Ficus virens*, with an assortment of canopy trees

typical of these forests - *Castanospermum australe*, *Syzygium tierneyanum*, *Terminalia microcarpa*, *Alstonia scholaris* and *Nauclea orientalis*, with Alexandra palms scattered along the river banks. After exploring the river banks for a while, we returned to our Elim

Beach campsite for a beautiful sunset followed by food, wine, fire and good company.

The next day was the final day for my driver and I - some of us still have to work for a living! We drove with the crew as far as Isabella Falls, where Isabella Creek tumbles over a broad sandstone ledge on its way to join the Endeavour River. Hidden amongst the undergrowth lining the creek is the southernmost occurrence of the unobtrusive shrub, *Polyscias zippelliana*. The creek is lined with *Melaleuca*, *Pandanus* and *Tristaniopsis*, but away from the creek transitions rapidly to woodlands on shallow soils over sandstone. The creek that provides a safe cool swimming opportunity in an otherwise dry hot landscape. After morning tea, the crew carried on their way to Lakefield National Park, whilst my driver and I started the long drive back to Cairns.

PAST NEWSLETTERS - EXTRACTS

(Issues 53 to 56)

The GDSG Newsletter index on the ANPSA website is a great way to search out specific ideas and recommendations offered by members in relation to garden design over the years since the first Newsletter in May 1993. There are many gems of inspiration similar to the following excerpts below that are worth repeating as they are still as relevant today as they were when first published.

Make sure you read the full article for these references as well as other articles on the GDSG Newsletter archives section of the ANPSA website.
<http://anpsa.org.au/design/des-news.html>

Newsletter #53 February 2006

Money from the Book *Ehna Snape, Vic*
 I like Barbara's idea of APS setting up a Garden Preservation Fund for Australian Gardens - their preservation is something I have always been concerned about. However for several reasons I think this is a very difficult thing to put into practice. One way our gardens can be preserved to a limited extent is by keeping good photographic records ("a picture is worth 1000 words"). Not as good as

the real thing and the record will of course be incomplete but what is the alternative?

To Spend or How to Spend, that is The Question! *Chris Larkin, Vic*

There are lots of ideas for how to spend our accumulated funds, (largely from the sale of the book) First of all - what's the hurry, do we need to allocate this money quickly? Wouldn't it have been useful to have had the money when we needed help with publishing the book - we would have avoided having to go cap in hand to APS Vic for a loan? And we may want to have another book published at some future time;

Heed the call of nature *Elizabeth Farrelly*

A friend of mine, a successful London landscape architect, rails passionately against what she calls "landscape as a verb" This mystifies many people who see nothing wrong with the notion of landscaping something. The red rag, though, is the idea, hidden within that popular assumption, that landscape is something you can roll out around a building, like Astroturf perhaps, or carpet, and cut to fit.

Newsletter #54 May 2006

Designing a garden for views from inside the house *Margaret James Vic*

. I wondered what the landscape designers had to say on the subject of views and front gardens and looked up Edna Walling and Ellis Stones. In 'The Vision of Edna Walling', I found that 'creating views from inside looking out, not just within the garden itself, was of enormous importance to Walling'. . . . She wrote that 'I think it is always desirable that a garden should be made liveable by screening it from the public gaze, rather than to make it a means of flaunting one's horticultural abilities.

What is a garden?

Answers by members of NE Vic Branch

Some of us opted to try and express it in one or two sentences, others had a list of points which sometimes extended into what is a good garden, or our other query, what do we mean by design? While there was as expected a lot

of similarity, there were varied ways of expressing the basics

The Russell Garden *Shirley Pipitone ACT*

. The garden made a number of subtle appeals to the senses: mint fragrance from a *Prostanthera* wafted down to the courtyard, the sound of trickling water, the touch of shrubs as you brush past, the noticeable contrast of sun and shade in the courtyard compared with the quiet shade of the back corner. Overall the Russell garden was a delight to visit.

Newsletter #55 August 2006

Renewal and Garden Design

Chris Larkin Vic

Every year some parts of the garden need renovation. I would love for everything to be 'perfect' for a season but the reality is quite different and something for me to get my head around. I need to 'zen out'; accept that my large garden is going to need constant reworking both on a small and large scale.

Do odd numbers count? *Leigh Murray NSW*

We love our two scruffy, higgledy-piggledy gardens (one is inland on a few acres of bushland, the other on a 900 sqm coastal block). They're a great success at achieving their main goals of attracting wildlife and providing privacy for us. But show ponies they are not. Appearance - quite clearly - ranks a distant third in our priorities. Years ago as novice gardeners, we tried one of every feasible plant.

Spirit of the Sydney Bush Garden

Jo Hambrett NSW

. . . . it was a pilgrimage really, to the Frenchs Forest garden, created by Betty Maloney Betty's house and garden were lucky to find their new owners - young, sensitive and environmentally aware, they understood clearly the garden's conversation; they have an ongoing dialogue with their house and the garden based on a respect for and understanding of, its previous owner's environmental and design philosophy.

Newsletter #56 November 2006

A Small Wildlife Garden Leigh Murray NSW

Despite being a rank amateur with no formal training in design, I found the idea of designing a small 5m x 5m garden such an appealing challenge that I decided to have a go. What would I do if the only garden I had were just such a small space? As someone who often has to stay indoors for long periods, my primary aim would be to attract wildlife, to have movement and sound that could be appreciated from indoors. I've imagined

The Elliston Estate Margaret James Vic

. As the landscape was recognised as crucial, Ellis Stones was brought into the team as a consultant to design and develop the landscape. He used rocks, gravel and timber for the hard landscaping and - with Bev Hanson - planted native trees and shrubs to create a flowing unified effect, connecting visually with the parkland.

Six plants for a very small garden

Chris Larkin Vic

This was the topic for our last Melbourne Meeting and it elicited some quite different responses. Now that the exercise is complete I think it might be valuable to ask members to select 6 different plants and design a small garden bed, as I'm sure in thinking about associations this would in most cases produce a different listing. This might in turn be of even greater value to Melbourne members, at the very least.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Upcoming 'Garden' Events – check out the ANPSA Website for specific details and other native garden activities

Please send any information for 'Garden Events' in your region to promote in the next Newsletter.

There is no charge for Membership of GDSG and the quarterly Newsletters are distributed by email.

Warm welcome to our new members

We look forward to your active participation in your study group

Tegan Nock, Carcoar NSW

Current Membership: 194

Treasurer's Report – July 9, 2021

General account: \$ 3,960.40
Expenses: \$ 0.00
Term Deposit: \$ 28,341.57 (incl interest of \$392.36 - reinvested for 12 months to January 25, 2022)
TOTAL: \$ 32,301.97

The Newsletter for the **ANPSA Garden Design Study Group** is published quarterly in February, May, August and November.

Copy Deadline: two weeks before the publication month, earlier submissions will be warmly welcomed by the Editor.

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STOP PRESS

Seasonal native gardens seen recently on Facebook



Pruning for design

Chris Larkin, Melbourne

Pruning is another area of gardening where practical concerns butt up against design considerations. Even at its simplest, for instance cutting ground-covering plants back from a path, decisions must be made on the practical and aesthetic. You may see a need to cut back the plants for safety reasons but in tandem with this is how you want this path to look. Just to linger on this example of the path and the overlapping plants a little longer with respect to the look of the path. The question that needs answering is - does this path need to have clearly defined edges, or can those ground-covering plants be allowed to spill to some extent at least, or at different points, onto the path? The answer to this question is all about design. Sharp edges fit with a formal design or lawn edge; allowing plants to spill onto a path suggests a naturalistic look.

Choices you make as you go about your pruning will affect the look of a plant – its shape or its design. **When** you prune with regards to the age of a plant and **how** you prune will have effects on the health and appearance of a plant as well as maybe limiting what can be achieved in the future with the plant's appearance. In my own garden there are good and bad examples of the 'when' and 'how' coming together to affect the future design possibilities of a plant.

If you are going to topiary a plant into a rounded shape then you need to start early and keep up the practice of regular pruning realising the plant is most likely going to have good growth tips and a dead centre. I have now learned this lesson and kept after the very many *Westringia rigida* 'Milky Way' plants in different parts of the garden. I have kept them small because that look works for me. I've removed a few large specimens so I do know they can grow very big given the right conditions. Before I learned to topiary regularly starting on young plants I let a form of *Westringia fruticosa* variegated just grow and grow in a place that is difficult to access behind a rock, behind a pond, on a strong slope. Now I need to remove this plant due to age and lack of sustained maintenance. Unfortunately it is in a key position where I see it as I look out my



living space windows. Many years ago I planted a cascading *Kunzea ambigua* behind it so I can only hope this helps to disguise the fact there is a plant missing. Action on this will be taken either this year or next but this plant's days are numbered.



I have spoken (newsletter no. 112) before about looking laterally at a plant not working because of its size. Consider whether it could possibly be trunked rather than removed. Once again I have had success with doing this but wonder what the limits of pursuing the idea might be when I look at where it has now taken me with a *Kunzea ambigua* dwarf. It may be time to remove this plant as there is too much view of the exposed spindly branches in proportion to the mop-top. And then there is the size of the space the plant is growing in to consider. Has it outgrown the space? For years I liked my creative solution to dealing with the size of this plant, what had been achieved by exposing the branches of the plant, but time moves on and garden plants do not stand still. Remove or not to remove the plant is another design decision because the plant is perfectly healthy.

Many years ago now Elspeth Jacobs spoke to our group on the topic of pruning – and she also brought in a largish pot plant to demonstrate what she was talking about. I learned so much from this talk and practical lesson. It gave me the reasons and confidence to do more than cut back a plant, i.e. working on the outside of the plant only. What I learned was to prune internally to correct the structure and to allow light and air into the centre of many of the plants we grow. Allowing light and better airflow is all about the health of a plant, correcting its structure if branches are rubbing against each other will also be about this. But correcting or rationalising the structure goes beyond this to improving the appearance of the plant to make it more pleasing to the eye.

I see pruning as not just a maintenance job but as a creative exercise. The decisions about what I'm trying to achieve with a plant and how it relates to surrounding plants in a particular hard landscaping spot in my garden, are as important as my understandings of how to preserve the health and longevity of a plant. There are limits of course in most instances in what can be achieved. Some of these limits are the age of the plant, changing growing conditions as a garden matures and how well the plant responds to pruning. Long gone are the days of the false mantra - native plant gardens are low maintenance. Pruning is by

far my biggest job and unfortunately the more regularly you prune the more you need to prune as you unlock the plant's growth response. On the other hand pruning will reward you with a healthier better looking garden, evidence of your care and plant design aesthetic.

(I wrote two articles for this newsletter in 2020 on pruning, or more specifically topiary. The first was in the May (# 111) called 'A bit of formality, a bit of fun' and in August (# 112) 'More topiary, more fun and contrast')

Lawrie: Thank you for your article Chris sorry it is not with the others on pruning but did not want to disrupt the layout when the issue was basically completed. Chris said she wrote the article 'on a miserably cold and wet day in Melbourne but I did achieve something!' So I thought in contrast, to fill the space, I would share a couple of photos of our Brisbane group excursion on the same day – we circumnavigated Mount Tibrogargan one of the distinctive Glass House Mountains just north of the city – a 6km trail.

