



GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

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122

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Newsletter Theme: 'Diversity or Uniformity?'

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*Diversity or uniformity? So much to think about in garden design, in addition to the primary concern of choosing plants for the growing conditions of sun/shade, moisture and soil type. Is it possible to mix it up and have uniformity and diversity displayed in the one garden?
 Isn't that what nature does?*

ANPSA Garden Design Study Group Newsletter

Newsletter timing & Themes

Issue	date	Theme
123	July	"Garden Focal Points"
124	November	"Microclimate & Design"
125	March	"Garden Peace & Tranquillity"
126	July	"Design and Recycling"

Membership of GDSG is free

Newsletters are distributed to all members only by email. Please advise if you wish to change your contact details or to discontinue membership.

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

EDITORIAL

We are missing your contributions!

Celebrating the end of every year and the commencement of the next, is always a busy period with all sorts of family and community activities to enjoy. Maintaining the garden in the hot summer months always seems to be a never-ending procedure, and finding time to write about garden design matters is low on the 'must do' list.

We received three excellent, informative articles on the theme '*Diversity and Uniformity*' in garden design, which was introduced in the last issue November #121, with the intent to give four months to encourage members to prepare responses for publishing in this issue. As you know the GDSG meeting in Kiama suggested we trial this system, but I am not sure if it really works and wonder if you do too?

Members said they found the use of a theme for each Newsletter helpful; the next four subjects are always included at the bottom of the first page of every issue. I hoped that this list would give members plenty of time to jot down comments whenever they occur to them and send them through at your convenience. They would be collated under subject and reproduced in the relevant issue. It seems confusing to have the theme introduction and related past NL extracts in the preceding issue – perhaps you have found that already too? Please let me know your preference.

Banking matters

In relation to financial matters, we followed on in much the same way that Ben and Ros Walcott did before us – Ros did the Newsletter and Ben the membership & banking. Whereas Lawrie does the Newsletter & membership and Carmel deals with banking, (accepted by Westpac). We did investigate appointing a second signatory but as we have about three transactions to deal with each year decided to leave that to the next GDSG leader. The Term Deposit has been reinvested for a further twelve months and the interest rate has risen from a miniscule 0.38% to 3.25%!

Continuing the saga for 'the book'

Further to the ongoing discussions revolving around the publication of a second book or an eBook based on 'fact sheets', advice is that it may not be a simple or perhaps even cheap option, to use the ANPSA website for publishing. The Kiama meeting suggested we trial a proforma to guide preparing responses and 'fact sheets' on the newsletter topic - this was first included in the November newsletter and is also on the final page of this issue.

However, it has just occurred to me that in considering '*the book*', we have overlooked the fact that a very comprehensive library of descriptions, illustrations and facts about garden design with native plants, is filed away in our GDSG records and particularly in the Newsletter Archives. I'm sure members would agree, if they have delved into our archives after reading the short 'teaser' extracts from past Newsletters in each issue. Obviously, these gems of information are carefully stored away, and rarely (if ever) searched when you need garden design inspiration. It is certainly not the first place you think of when needing immediate garden advice! But who better to give this advice than our members who have been successfully growing native plants in garden conditions for decades.

All of the recurring recent proposals for a publication to follow on from the original GDSG book, have basically relied on the laborious task of preparing new descriptive texts and new illustrative photographs. Consequently, for your consideration and comment, I provide the following proposal to prepare '*the book*' from our existing resources.

- Basically, '*the book*' would be a compilation of the wealth of knowledge and experience contributed over the years by members, suitably classified under subject headings and indexed to make searching for specific design elements simple and effective;
- The 'book' could be either printed or digital; however, an initial economic evaluation would be necessary to ascertain what the existing financial resources will allow;

- An editor and small editorial team would need to be appointed to sieve through the NL records and select suitable articles;
- Articles would then be sorted into a series of 'chapters' each related to aspects of garden design; limited modification of the various texts would be needed to update appropriately;
- The existing photograph library would be similarly sorted and classified; it is likely that some new photographs may be needed and these would be sourced from members;

It is surprising to reflect back on the diversity of the themes that have been allocated to Newsletter issues since 2018, when I became GDSG leader. Obviously, these and the 101 earlier issues will inspire the basic format and content of any new publication.

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105	Coastal Gardens – Sun, Sand, Wind
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122	Diversity or Uniformity
123	Garden Focal Points
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This potential publication, seems like an exciting opportunity to share our invaluable GDSG experience and expertise to a much wider community in a simple, inexpensive, reader friendly format. It would probably find a home on any gardener's coffee table!!

Do you think this idea could germinate and grow to flower?

Next Newsletter THEME

"Garden Focal Points"

Newsletter #123 July



Hopefully, the following dot points will inspire you to share in the next Newsletter, your thoughts on the subject - better still include photos and design descriptions of focal points you have in your garden or have observed elsewhere:

- When planning your garden, do you consider including one or more focal points? Why?
- Do you see any value in incorporating such a visual attribute in the garden?
- Should it be very obvious, or something that is a surprise 'find' in the garden?
- Is it necessary for the focal point to be a physical object? If not, what could it be?
- Would you use a manufactured sculpture or something organic as a focus?
- Should a focal point contribute to the garden character?

In scanning through past issues of the Newsletter you will come across many comments and examples about focal points,

garden art, feature elements and sculpture in gardens, generally covered in wider discussions about garden design. These are a few, that I think you may find of value by reading the article in full.

Sculpture in Australian Gardens

NL 14 page 14 Diana Snape, Vic

. Smaller sculptures - abstract or figurative - could add to a suburban garden. They can add a nice touch of humour, be a striking focal point, or beautify a quiet corner. In a larger garden the scope is greater. I think sculptures don't have to have a particularly 'Australian' content but they should have their own integrity, not just copy ideas from other places.

Garden Art

NL 30 page 16 Jo Hambrett, NSW

. I suspect many growers of Australian plants are a little suspicious of the use of ornaments in an Australian garden. Especially if the garden is naturalistic in style, ornaments of any sort may be seen as unnatural in an environment which, although created, is still strongly influenced by nature. This is particularly true if their purpose is not functional but purely decorative.
. Any sculpture, whether realistic or abstract, should have its own intrinsic value through the skill and artistry of its creator. Its material - stone, wood, metal or glass, even concrete - can contrast with and complement foliage textures. Its shape can reflect, relate to, or deliberately differ from, nearby shapes in the garden. It can emphasize height, weight, intricacy, space. It can be a focal point in the garden, a feature' in a similar way to an outstanding plant, or tucked away in an inconspicuous spot where it can be discovered to "surprise and delight".

Gnomes!

NL 37 page 7 Nicky Zanen, Vic

. Those who want gnomes and bright flowers will have them, whatever the horticultural style gurus tell them they should like.
. Garden sculpture should mirror its environs. There is nothing wrong with pink flamingos or plaster gnomes, providing the

garden is located in flamingo or gnome country!

Focal Points

NL 67 pages 17-19 Barbara Buchannan, Vic

. In any scene it is the unfamiliar which engages our interest, hence the quest for the new and different. So, our gardens need a restful background of the expected, with a dash of the excitement of the unexpected, which holds our attention. Through the seasons different plants and areas can change from background to focus and back again, but especially in smaller areas more permanent focal points make for more interesting gardens.
. One area which illustrates this well is the use and choice of features for focal points. I find it especially challenging because I feel our 'bush gardens' can so easily become diffuse and undifferentiated without highlights as exemplified by the difficulty of obtaining satisfactory photographs of garden scenes.

Cascading Fountain Focus

NL 117 page 10 Ray Benfer, Qld

As visitors enter our garden, attention is drawn to the multi-level cascading fountain. It has also developed into a focal point for wildlife, mostly birds, but also the occasional water dragon and carpet python.

Looking forward to receiving numerous paragraphs and photos for the next issue about your experience with 'Focal Points' in your garden or perhaps observed elsewhere!

Although, I do find it a little confusing to have mention of two differing themes one after the other in the same issue – do you agree?

This Newsletter THEME

'Diversity or Uniformity'

Newsletter #122 March

Lawrie comments

The previous Newsletter #122 of November 2022, offered two pages of introductory comments about this subject to encourage members to share their experience in deciding what character of garden they prefer to create

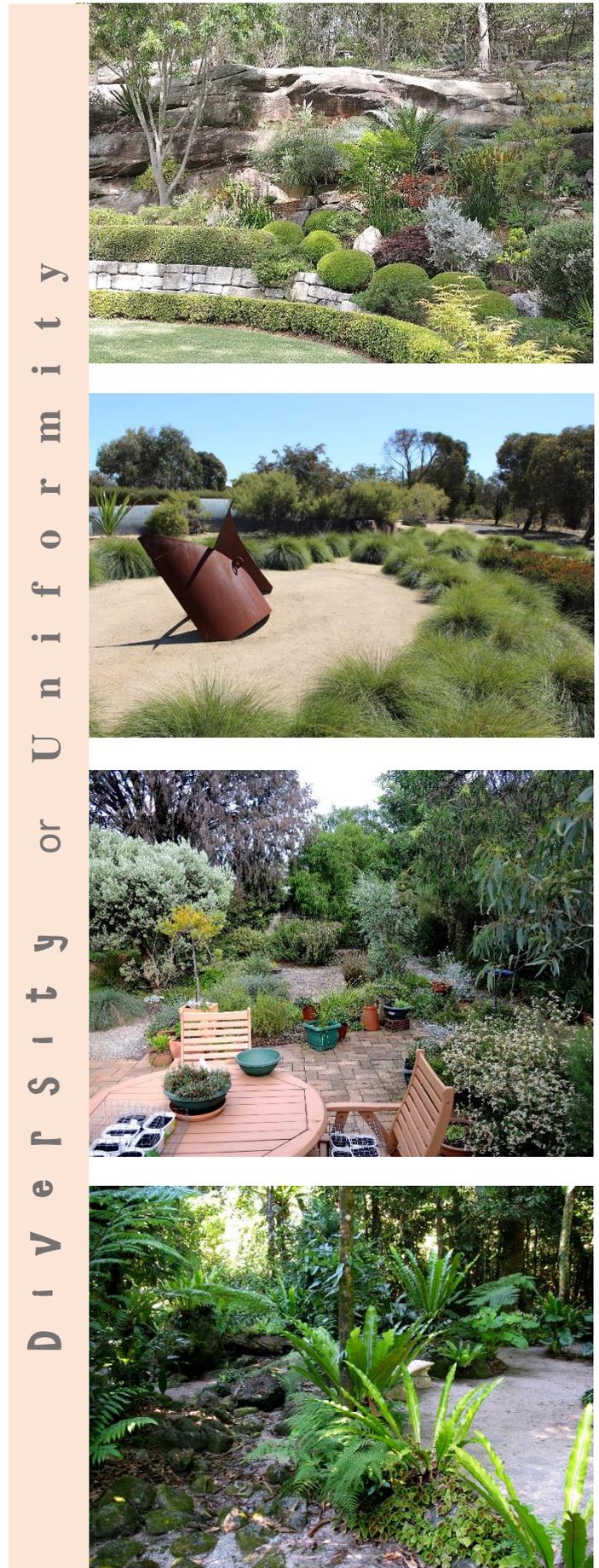
for themselves, or what they appreciate to see in others gardens. I hoped these would stimulate many thoughts and suggestions submitted in time for this issue! However, it is never too late to take up the keyboard and compose your thoughts – they will be most welcome whenever you find the time.

Remember, whether your garden is diverse or uniform in character makes a significant difference to the design process and to the resultant visual qualities. There are so many ways to interpret and apply the theme words “Diversity or Uniformity”:

- *Diverse or Uniform*
- *Repetition or Sameness*
- *Disorder or Order*
- *Discord or Harmony*
- *Messy or Neat*
- *Variety or Harmony*
- *Colour or Monotone*
- *Exciting or Boring*
- *Asymmetric or Symmetrical*
- *Random or Stylised*
- *Untidy or Tidy*
- *Complex or Simple*
- *Interest or Monotony*
- *Large and Small*
- *Many or Few*

Each of these statements compare and contrast opposing aspects, that if applied to garden design, will be viewed differently by each garden designer, and also by those who view the gardens. For the most part, either diversity or uniformity could be considered to be correct, but the end result will be a very different garden design and character.

As Gordon Rowland said (NL # 121 page 6) *“Lack of unity creates a sense of discord, although a lack of variety creates a sense of boredom. What we have to do is achieve a balance in which unity and variety can coexist. For people like ourselves with an interest in growing native plants, a lack of variety is not likely to be the problem. It’s much more likely that we’ll be tempted to use too many different species, with one of this and two of another, which is fine of course if you’re a plant collector but definitely to be avoided if you’re aiming for unity and a satisfying overall garden design.”*



Diversity AND uniformity – though entropy is winning!

Heather Miles, NSW

I started my native garden about 20 years ago from scratch, on a bare paddock on the top of a windy hill in the Hunter Valley. I've gone through various stages of design, embracing both diversity and uniformity, but as time goes on and entropy prevails, I think diversity is winning!

Stage 1: The first 7 or so years

The property is 100 acres, with a few acres of garden around the house. My original aims for the garden, which are still valid today, were:

- Create a walkabout garden full of fragrance, colour and texture to wander, sit and explore
- Create beautiful views from windows to uplift spirits
- Create a haven for wildlife
- Grow fruit and vegies

I also had to create privacy from the road given the 3 cars that go by each day, maintain a fire protection zone and not put in anything weedy (even natives) given proximity to the bush.



I started with the 'hose on the ground' model of design, along with a bush garden feel and bought plants from the nursery that I liked – it was full diversity of plants, but without much consideration of size, structure, form, texture or colour and how these blended together – I was just in love with the plants!



Grevillea 'Honey Gem' and
Leptospermum 'Cardwell'



Boronia, Callistemon,
Grevillea and Corymbia

Stage 2: Time to get some 'Design' with a capital 'D'

Despite lovely growth and colour, and birds, wallabies and other critters visiting regularly and helping with the pruning, I was not all that happy with the garden! It looked messy, tall things grew on the edges of the garden and short things grew in the middle of the garden, stuff died and left holes, shrubs got leggy, I had no ground cover plants and the gardens didn't complement the shape of the house. There was a sense of discordance – we didn't fit into the landscape!

So I began researching design and hired a landscape designer, Michael Cooke, who

created a garden design with a thematic à la Roberto Burle Marx. For those not familiar, Roberto was a famous Brazilian landscape architect and conservationist with a modernist style modernist, and elements of cubism and abstractionism.



Landscape Plan

© Michael Cooke MAELDM 77 George Street, Sydney CENTRAL MANGROVE NSW 2220 ph (02) 4373 1212 email@miccooke.com.au www.miccooke.com.au ABER 20 000 744 750		Michael Cooke GARDEN DESIGN		CONCEPT PLAN Miles Residence 232 Bimadeen Road, Stanhope	
DATE:	SCALE:	DWG. NO.:	DESIGN BY:		
30/03/20	1:2000 on A1	1/3	M Cooke		

The design focused on creating uniformity with the shape of the house. There were angular garden beds and geometric shapes, along with mass plantings to create a sense of uniformity within the diverse shapes.



New Layout

Over the following 8 – 10 years, I adopted and adapted the design, with the addition of a gazebo and pond, the use of mass plantings and sculpted plants, and taking account of plant layering. I kept to the new

shapes of the gardens, although over time, shrubs obscure the sharp geometries. I keep experimenting with different plants and where they will look best within the overall design. Of course, like many of us experience, there have been deaths – the sculpted westringia has not thrived for more than 5 years, disliking our clay soil, I think. Overall, the new design worked.



Toona ciliata and *Lomandra hystrix* along driveway



Sculpted *westringia* with *Doryanthes excelsa*



Mass planted Kangaroo Paws, *Anigozanthos*



Harmony from a mix of uniformity and diversity

Stage 3: Sustainability and entropy – increased diversity?

A number of factors have influenced this third and current stage:

- A number of years of drought, followed by years of excessive rain
- Considerable and very rapid growth of trees and shrubs due to the rain
- The incursion of many local species, brought in by the birds
- My desire to reduce the labour associated with the garden (aging fingers etc).

The garden IS now becoming far more 'diverse'. I'd even say it's a bit messy! One of the most interesting aspects is allowing the indigenous species which have landed in the garden, to stay (as long as they are in the right place!). Plants like *Breynia oblongifolia*, *Polyscias elegans*, *Clerodendron tomentosum*, *Cissus australasicus* and others, are all finding their way into the garden. Some have beautiful foliage and form and I am leaving them be, creating more of a local feel to the garden and potentially making it more sustainable.



Mature garden and a bit messy

The outcome of all this is an increased diversity that I would never have planned. Yet I really like it and wait with interest to see how this new form of diverse garden evolves!



Garden now

Well done, Heather! A masterful garden (and description) that offers a harmonious balance between diversity and uniformity. Lawrie

Diversity or Uniformity?

Chris Larkin, Lysterfield, S-E of Melbourne

Diversity or uniformity – what are we talking about here? If we are referring to the materials used in the hard structure of the garden design, e.g., paving, gravels, stonework, retaining walls etc., then consistency is important to give a considered and unified appearance to the whole garden. If we are talking about diversity or uniformity with respect to the planting design, it is a different matter. The choice you make between them will create very different garden styles, possibly starting with the shape of paths and garden beds.

Like the extreme left and right of politics the extremes of plant uniformity or diversity may result in visual dullness in the case of uniformity, and a complete lack of cohesion in the case of diversity. On the other hand, I'm open to the idea that a garden fundamentally displaying uniformity or diversity could produce a well-designed, pleasing garden.

A garden of uniform plantings will exhibit a high degree of formality even if plants aren't clipped, or the shape of paths and garden beds don't follow geometric forms. I can imagine a curved path passing through a landscape with the same plants mirrored on each side. There could even be quite a diversity of plants so long as the rule of uniformity is adhered to. It would be quite an interesting design challenge. To succeed, other design principles, such as ensuring there is a balance of open and closed space, and the appropriate scale and placement of plants, will also need to be taken into consideration.

A garden displaying a great diversity of plants – my kind of garden – is a great design challenge. I would go as far as to say it won't succeed without repetition of the same or similar plants – size, shape, foliage type and colour, strap-leafed etc. The repeated plants, and there may be several in this role, need to be placed so that they connect visually to bring cohesion and order to the design. Grouping plants with

complementary foliage, interspersed with plants with contrasting foliage, will also ensure the garden isn't visually chaotic and unstructured while maintaining visual interest. Once again other principles of garden design already mentioned, such as ensuring there is a balance of open and closed space, must also be kept in mind for the design to work.

So much to think about in the case of both types of gardens, in addition to the primary concern of choosing plants for the growing conditions of sun/shade, moisture and soil type. Is it possible to mix it up and have uniformity and diversity displayed in the one garden? I don't see why not.

Thanks Chris, You have expertly dissected these opposing characteristics, and provided logical arguments that illustrate how either or both can make a valuable contribution to considered garden design. Lawrie

Diversity or Uniformity A matter of choice?

Janette Wilson, Melbourne

Many iconic garden designers, like Ellis Stones, Gordon Ford and Sam Cox, invested their energies and faith in natural style gardens - and succeeded. Other notable landscape designers have backed symmetry and been equally successful; proving neither style is wrong but simply that garden design is an expression of style. It is worth remembering however, that symmetry and uniformity in nature are not naturally occurring and plants in the wild do not form an orderly line.

Of course, nature does not make uniformity environmentally inferior. It is the mundane plant selection that render most symmetrical gardens less than perfect for me. The uniform garden is often created with European plants that are readily available and many landscapers trust, like *Pittosporum*, *Magnolia*, and *Ficus*! They are often weedy, too big for suburbia, or just without merit for our fauna. A garden, planted primarily with carefully chosen native plants, plus consideration of soil type, weather, and

the surrounding landscape, could easily replace inappropriate plants within these symmetrical landscapes and offer more to local wildlife and owners alike.

Gardens, and nature in general, need to be viewed as shared space; humans, insects, birds, butterflies, reptiles, and other creatures all have their own needs and preferences within these spaces. The garden aesthetic is ultimately up to the owner and their preferences, but wholistic design should ensure that the environment suits the owner, as well as visiting fauna and the (micro)climate. These are the things to balance for success regardless of whether it is symmetrical or naturalistic. If the choice is between persuading the client on a style or on specific plant selection, then I would lean towards plant selection every time, because ultimately, it's their garden, and the style should reflect their taste, their home.

Plant selection is an area clients tend to lack confidence in, and they are often happy to take direction; this can provide some eye-opening knowledge to people unfamiliar with native flora. A discussion on the benefits of native planting can present a great opportunity to provide for fauna and showcase natives at the same time.

Natural landscapes are not monocultures. They are diverse and have naturally occurring design principles including repetition, unity, scale, hierarchy, space, and form (shape). To a degree the landscape dictates the theme because site, soil, weather, and location all play a role in the natural placement of plants and their germination (or not). Natural changes frequently coincide with changes in soil. In sandy coastal country diversity may be restricted to salt or limestone tolerant plants, while montane areas can support a larger range of plants and animals. Looking at the EVC of an area and checking the local indigenous nurseries gives us a great resource to work out what plants originated from the area, their growing needs, and hints at what else might do well in that location.

I regularly ponder substitute plants for those that irk me, usually prompted when I am in a nursery, and I see rows of Buxus and Polygala (a one-time garden escapee and now a major coastal weed). We all know that there are better and less detrimental options. *Melaleuca*, *Correa*, *Bursaria*, and *Callistemon* are fantastic natives to tame and would be equally at home in a garden with neatly clipped plants as a less formal one.

Here's the thing though: building any garden with these excellent substitutes provides much more enrichment for the fauna, insects and people through food sources, shelter, and aroma than any Cyprus or Box parterre you can think of. Imagine the aroma when clipping a native hedge of *Leptospermum petersonii*. What a pleasure. So, to me the true design aspect of garden design is in the selection of the right plants, in the right place, selected to compliment the owner's style. Plants that give back and futureproof gardens, fauna and our suburbs.

Thanks Janette, your comments have provided something of a summary for this theme, as they will no doubt reflect the thoughts of so many members of this study group. However, this message needs to be understood and applied by a vast audience who do not respect or understand the value of Australia's unique flora in design terms. Encouraging that should be our objective!

Lawrie



Members Stories

A garden in Queanbeyan

Alison Roche and Darryl Crapp, Karaba, NSW



On Sunday 16th October, the day after the Society's Spring plant sale, 18 members of the Daytime Activity Group (DAGs) and GDSG made their way up the long driveway to the home and garden of Alison Roche and Darryl Crapp in Karabar, NSW, there to be greeted by an extensive informal display of chrysocephalums, bulbines and wallaby grass. Having taken over a large battleaxe block surrounded by many neighbours,

Alison and Darryl set about clearing away the existing plantings of exotics while preserving a small stand of the eucalypts typical of the indigenous flora and opening up a fine view of the escarpment to the east of Queanbeyan. Prominent amongst an eclectic array of natives they have planted were a *Prostanthera incana* (?) in spectacular flower and several rich orange fabaceae glowing through the understory.



Tea and Alison's excellent cake rounded off a very enjoyable visit on a, for once, sunny afternoon.

Creating a "Wallum" Garden

Bonni Yee, Gold Coast, Qld

Those of you who know coastal heathlands, know what amazing and diverse ecosystems these are, containing a plethora of unique and wonderful plants; many of which grow nowhere else! Barbara Henderson championed these special ecosystems, forming the "Wallum" Study Group and taking members on guided tours whenever she could. These areas are now very limited due to human development and changing conditions.

In 2000, I decided to see if it was possible to create a "wallum" garden on our Nerang clay base. We live 72 M above sea level, but with clay subsoil, we hoped to create a "wet" pan area in our patio. We excavated a 4x5 M

oval in the patio area, to about 60 cm depth. This was filled with 7 cubic sandy soil from Hervey Bay (from Landscapers who use this as sand fill for making soil mixes).



Wallum has peaty, acidic soils, so we packed the newly poured concrete edges with peat to ensure a lower pH. This area is poorly drained, being on clay and at the base of a sloping section of our “ridge”.



Where to get plants? You cannot buy “wallum” plants commercially, but Barbara had a letter of permit to collect plants from a wallum area that had been bulldozed and was to be planted as a “Paulownia Plantation”! So we collected seedlings there, each taken with a plug of soil, wrapped in wet newspaper and transplanted immediately when we reached home.

As these pictures show, in the first 2 years, it did indeed look like “Wallum” with many seedlings flourishing: sedges, peaflowers, *Patersonias*, *Boronias*, *Sowerbaea* and things I still don’t know the name of...it was



wonderful! But droughts have taken a toll and some plants have died. Now in this wet season, new seedlings are coming up! After 20 years, I think you cannot really re-create a true Wallum outside of its natural state; but you can learn a lot by trying.



NSW South Coast – gardens visit

Ros Walcott, Canberra

Members of the Canberra GDSG and ANPS daytime activity group DAG’s, met together in Batemans Bay, Burrewarra Point Reserve walk at Guerilla Bay. Tom Jordan provided a brief history of the area which was a dairy farm as late as the 1950’s, extensively grazed before becoming a reserve. We spent a pleasant couple of hours walking through the mature *Banksia* forest and enjoying the coastal views. Quite a few flowering plants were spotted including *Kennedia rubicunda*, *Acacia* sp, large flowered *Scaevola*, *Glycine* and prolific flowering *Clematis aristata* winding to the top of trees.



Perfect weather for a visit the next day to the Eurobadalla Regional Botanic Gardens. We were greeted by Dylan Morrissey who outlined the recovery process after the recent bushfire which burnt through the entire area. We then spent time wandering through the gardens amazed at the regrowth and



tremendous effort of the staff and volunteers to have the garden areas looking so good. Dylan then took us behind the scenes to the propagation areas and into the Herbarium. He explained the design features of the building that enabled it to withstand the bushfire. We were very grateful to Dylan for the time he spent with us and would highly recommend a visit to the gardens.



It was then a short drive to the Broulee Bangalay Sand Forest. It was a pleasant walk through the threatened ecological community. Again we found *Kennedia*

rubicunda, there were large patches of *Hardenbergia violacea* scrambling over plants and 2 different orchids were spotted.

Thursday morning, again under sunny skies, at the gates to Horse Island where we were greeted by Christina Kennedy and Julian her head gardener. After an introductory talk about the history of the island and Christina's vision for the gardens we wandered through the superbly manicured garden beds around the 'old' and 'new' cottages. These gardens were started after completion of the first cottage in 1991 and the decision made to use only Australian native plants. There are both formal and informal aspects to the landscaping throughout the gardens.

Melaleuca hypericifolia 'Ulladulla Beacon', *Thryptomene saxicola*, dwarf *Baeckea virgata* and *Syzygium* are some of the plants that have been clipped to provide a formal look. Christina decided that *Grevillea* sp would be the foundation plant of choice for the gardens with different selections for hedging, height and floral colour. We were lucky that many of the large *Grevillea* hybrids and standards were flowering. *Grevillea* 'Royal Mantle' standards, some up to 20 years old, were placed either side of steps or were used as feature plants throughout the gardens.



After morning tea on the veranda of the 'new' cottage we were free to wander down the long expanse of manicured grass and the golf greens towards the 'Big House'. On our way we passed the Pavillion with the tennis court and swimming pool areas. It is a real suntrap and there were some spectacular flowering grevilleas and an extremely long perfectly clipped Lilly Pilly hedge. The 'Big House' garden is expansive and more formal

with repeat plantings. In the gravel driveway at the entrance to the house there is a central circular garden planted with large Grass Trees *Xanthorrhoea australis* and underplanted with various flowering kangaroo paws.



There are many interesting features throughout the gardens, too many to mention, but they include a stone rill linking circular ponds at either end, vine covered walkways and pergolas, lots of places to sit and admire the garden and strategically placed sculptures. As suggested by botanist Peter Olde, Christina has set up a garden area for rare and endangered plants, many of which were collected by Peter.

We were all very grateful to Christina for being such a generous host not only in providing morning tea and lunch but also for being so generous with her time and spending the morning with us as we walked around her truly inspirational garden.

GDSG-Q Christmas Gathering

Mel Niblett, Queensland

It was the best of times.....and it was the best of times! The Pine Rivers group had themselves a Merry Little Christmas get-together on Sunday 11th December, with Helen and George being the perfect hosts. Around 20 members gathered at their home to enjoy each other's company, with a native garden backdrop, and on a (thankfully) breezy, not-too-hot day.

The nibbles, which included a tasty selection of cheeses (surely everyone's favourite) was provided by Charlie. Marilyn snuck in a tasty avocado dip, which was delicious. Everyone contributed a main course and a dessert

plate to the buffet lunch, but I'm getting ahead of myself because Lawrie made us work for it with some brain teasers.

First, 'Amnesia' a Who Am I, 20 Questions game to bring us out of our shell. Closely followed by 'Genus Crosswords'; finding 22 plant genus names hidden in a grid of letters. It's a good job there was a time limit or we may have been there until midnight.

We had a very healthy and diverse mix of dishes to choose from for lunch, but again, had to earn our dessert by 'Sensible' guessing the plant in ten separate cloth bags, mainly by their seeds. Frustrating and exasperating, and with no extra points for species or sub-species (as if) – and with the distraction of those desserts calling to us from Helen's kitchen, it was tough – especially (thank you Lawrie!) for the two bogus entries; a gardening glove and stones! Nevertheless, a winner was declared, and with much joy and relief we queued for the third course.

The party didn't end there (and a good job I had my ute), because next was the 'Plant Swap' and I picked up half a dozen carefully selected plants for a small garden – but not the *Araucaria bidwillii*; nonetheless thank you to the kind person, with a good sense of humour, for steering me in that direction! I will try it one day, with some heavy pruning.....



Lastly, George gave us a tour of the garden, and he was dispatched early on to return with secateurs, which speaks volumes. Thank-

you George, for the time and effort you've put in over the year to get this ready for us! We loved the orchids, and there were lots of oohs and aahs at the beautiful flowers. It was also great to see the intact eucalypt canopy in one area of the garden, and what a surprise, a Geebung! *Persoonia virgata*



On reading this article, if you're wondering if food is as close to our hearts as native plants, you may be right. As a newcomer to Native Plants Queensland, the Pine Rivers Branch and Garden Design Study Group, thank you for all being there when I arrived. I hadn't read the instructions. The street was empty of parked cars and I thought I must have had the wrong place and time, and I was calculating how many days it would take me in the week ahead to eat the Sweet Potato Salad I'd brought. What a relief when I walked up the driveway; you were all parked around the back! Christmas Merry, New Year Happy, and Many Thanks.

I simply had to share Mel's story with everyone, as her 'in depth' account catches the companionship of the day perfectly. It was a wonderful social time, of fun, games and food within a native garden! Lawrie



Corymbia ptychocarpa

Bev Hanson's garden stays true to native concepts

This story was written by Megan Backhouse for the 'Melbourne Age' in August 2022 and forwarded by Bev's daughter Christine Zigga

The Staying Power of the '70's

If she was starting her garden over, Beverley Hanson says she would not do anything differently and that's saying something because she has been tending this patch of earth since 1969. In this age of high-frequency house moving, Hanson has stayed put for 53 years. When she and her husband John bought four hectares in Warrandyte, she was just 27. She has no idea where the boundaries were, but knew exactly the sort of garden she wanted.

Hanson was part of a band of designers and horticulturalists who, in the 1960's and 70's started changing perceptions of what gardens could be. At a time when English style borders and hard-line hedges were the prevailing norm, Bev zeroed in on wattles and wildflowers. Her garden shines a light on a natural landscaping style that emerged – more than half a century ago – in the bushy environs of Warrandyte and Eltham.

And in a sense, it also opens a window onto the work of Ellis Stones, one of the pioneers of this creative movement, who Hanson names as her biggest influence. Bev worked with Ellis Stones for five years in the 1960's and his way with rocks, water and native plants not only permeated her own garden but also the many gardens she went on to design in her own practice.

Just as Stones was a master at restraint, one of the first things you notice about Hanson's garden is how unobtrusive it feels. There are few hard structures, no dramatic pruning and an overall atmosphere of calm. The landscaping around the house has been fashioned into a series of naturalistic garden "rooms", permeated by winding paths that gradually lead out into the wider more forested parts of the block.

While Bev has included some exotic plants, including Camellias, Rhododendrons and Wisteria close to the house, her main aim

was to make a garden that gradually merged with the indigenous bush. Her advice to anyone embarking on a similar project is to take your time and “tread carefully”. *“Don’t immediately bring in bulldozers and other equipment that scrapes the ground floor but wait and see what plants come up.”*

The next step is to think about the trees you want and where. *“They are the important things because they are going to be there forever. You also need to get rocks, steps and hard landscaping in. I call that the backbone and, if you get it all right at the start, it shouldn’t need changing.”* It also helps if you have the ability to look at a parcel of land and imagine how it will look once landscaped.

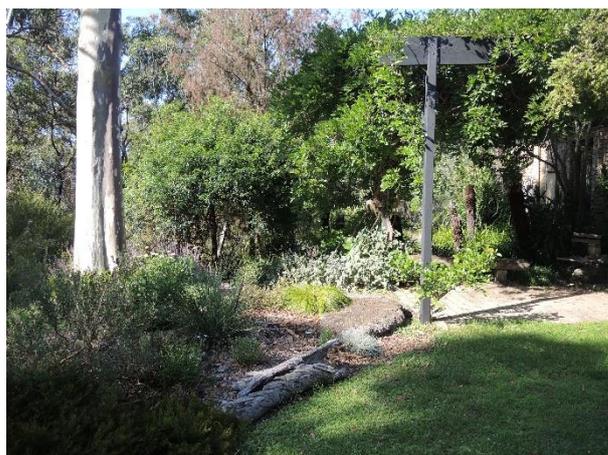
She grew into her Warrandyte land, which although cleared in the 1850’s had retained intact many of its ground floor plants. In her first seasons on the property, Bev watched in wonder as 27 different types of ground orchid appeared, an expanse of chocolate lilies erupted, carpets of Hardenbergia spread and other local plants flourished.

Over the decades since, the Hanson’s kept weeding the more bushy parts and generally kept close tabs on the garden she made around the house they built in 1972. It’s been a long and rewarding experience. While her age, a bad back, and the fact that her husband is unwell, now limits how much gardening she can do and she has started to employ people to help, she is still pulling weeds and striking cuttings of paper daisies in her kitchen.

“If I have a bit of time and something needs doing, I will do it. I would much rather be out there than here, in the living room. I just love the outdoors. I could not live without a garden. But not many 27-year-olds embark on one of this scale now.”

These four photos catch something of the character of Bev’s garden but you will find many other articles and images of her garden in past issues of the GDSG Newsletter.

Lawrie



Plants in Design

A tiny, tiny and small courtyard in Sydney's northern suburbs.

Geoff Howes, Sydney

My few words are about my small courtyard between the front of my house and a pitched roof carport that now exists as a result of building works.

Site constraints and size:

- Overall courtyard paved and garden size approximately is 7 m deep and 3.5 m wide.
- Garden size is 3 m deep and 3.5 m wide.
- The front of the house receives dappled sun most of the day
- In winter the carport cast a sun shadow and the left-hand half receive no sun for all winter and then increasingly more sun until in December/January it receives a few hours of the hot afternoon sun.
- Soil is heavy loam that retains moisture and can also dry out.
- Neighbours have an old ugly carport that would ideally be screened out.
- My overhead power mains are one metre above the wooden panelling at the back of the patio garden.

My design thinking:

- Need to make the garden a pleasant backdrop to the house entrance and when seated at the table enjoying coffee.
- Flowering plants would be ideal but not practical due to limited sunlight. So, it will tend to be a foliage garden.
- As it is a long thin courtyard you eye will be drawn down the centre to the far end. So, I have tried plant accordingly and have a feature plant at the end.
- Due to the patio gardens small size, a high degree of formality will be needed to make it work.
- I have tried to plant group plantings in uneven numbers as that works best.

Reality

Plantings commenced 3 years ago. The back end of the carport (LHS) is clad with

floral pattern steel sheets from Stramit Building Products to frame the courtyard.

Left hand side plantings. A tree fern was planted in back left-hand corner and in front of that are a few seed raised native hollies *Graptophyllum ilicifolium* to offer some afternoon shade to tree fern. Thinking about it now the tree fern should not have been planted there, as that back corner ideally needs some



height to it. In front of the tree fern is a very successful *Correa baeuerlenii* that flowers with no sun in winter. The three multi stemmed plantings in front are *Carex quadrichidians* that thrives in the damp heavy soil and also tolerate dryness. To prevent prolific seeding, I trim the plant back after it sends up the flowering/seed storks (culms). There are also many smaller ferns planted in this area to fill in the ground area.

Centre plantings. At the back are two *Acmenia smithii* var Minor shrubs, planted either side of the centre line and in front of that is a yellow flowering grafted grevillea, not sure of name, that was to be the centre feature but is a bit to straggly in its growth and flowers sparsely at present. I await summer sun to see if growth thickens up. To help lead the eye down the centre of the courtyard, I have planted five *Lomandra* Blue Ridge as they the thinner leaved *Lomandras* appear to do better in my heavier soil.

Right hand side plantings. These are years old plants that I have left in place till the newer planting have established. The foreground is a white flowering *Babingtonia* (was *Baeckea*) *crenatifolia*. In front of this plant are a few smaller hybrid *Grevilleas* struggling in Sydney's wet and overcast present conditions



and will need replacing, I suspect with *Grevillea* Ruby Jewel. The foliage of this plant better matches the left-hand side leaf texture and colour. It also appears to be hardy in my garden. In the background is a heavily pruned and old *Grevillea* Misty Pink that flowers well despite its age.

Summary

- I have tried to balance foliage shape and texture, how successful have I been?
- Is the garden too formal?
- Should I remove the *Grevillea* Misty Pink on the right-hand side and replant to better balance the left-hand side foliage or is it a welcome contrast?
- Any comments appreciated in the next newsletter.

Two Useful & Attractive Covers

Lawrie Smith, Queensland

In southeast Queensland successfully growing small dense ground covering plants can be a hit and miss situation, due to the climatic extremes between seasons. These two species have proven to be extremely hardy in my garden, and both offer very attractive and easily manageable characteristics as garden fillers or edging specimens. Best of all they are perennial, and naturally reproduce to create

layers of dense foliage which insulate the ground from hot summer sun and so conserve moisture. Both offer attractive displays of massed yellow flowers held above the foliage to compliment any garden setting.

Bulbine bulbosa

Rock Lily



Bulbine bulbosa grows slowly laterally to provide a very dense mass of upright, fleshy, tubular, succulent like, grey green leaves, which inhibit any weeds. The foliage remains attractive throughout the year, with best colour in part shade; in full sun leaves become more yellow green. Does not mind dryish conditions but keep moist in hot summer.

The dense clustered yellow flowers display at top of tall stems and persist over a long period from spring, the only maintenance required is removing the spikes after flowering. It is easily propagated or transplanted, from the tuber like rooted stems. A really invaluable garden plant that lends itself to several design uses.



Leiocarpa brevicompta
Plains Plover Daisy,
Flat Billy Buttons



This small herbaceous perennial typically has a tangle of much branched wiry stems, supporting blue-grey, felty, twisted leaves. These provide a

smoky background in contrast with the prolific small golden-yellow button flowers, displayed terminally above the foliage for most of the year. This is a very suitable plant to establish in drifts through the garden, to cover and shade open areas, to conserve moisture, as well as complimenting the garden aesthetic.

Fortunately, this is one of those plants that is easy to propagate from cuttings and will also self-seed. It is very easy to maintain by occasional clipping to encourage more leaf growth and maximise flowering. Loves dry conditions and full sun, to mirror its natural habitat west of the great divide in Queensland, NSW and South Australia.

Brenda Meehan Collectors Garden

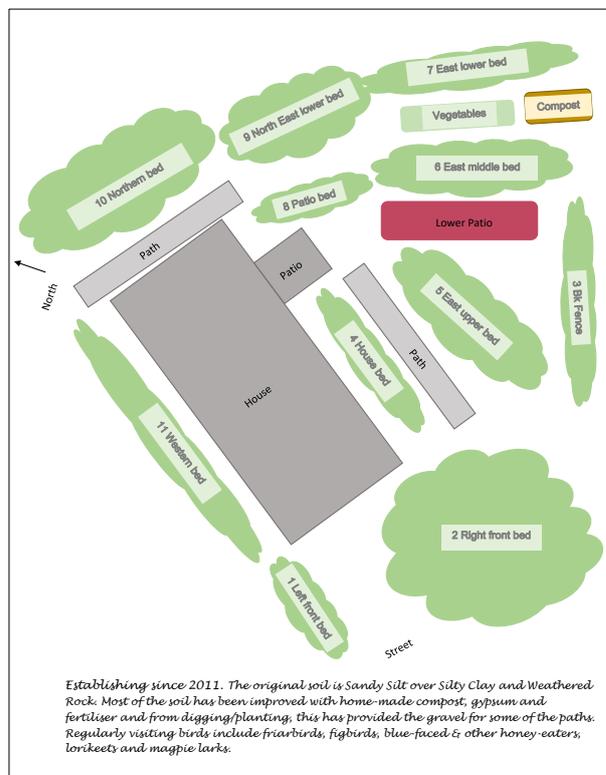
Lawrie Smith, Brisbane

After almost five years, GDSGQ paid a return visit to Brenda's garden developed on 800 square metres of a rocky hillside in Albany Creek, northern Brisbane, and were amazed at the progress of this mini botanic garden, which she been establishing since 2011.

Brenda is an avid collector of smaller native plants, but also a gifted designer, as is demonstrated by the diversity of the collection and the relationships between the plants and the varied site microclimate zones. She



dismissed the term 'designer' saying that the garden is really a "trial and error" process and if any plant is not responding well, it is swiftly relocated or removed. The result is that the garden plant palette is visually healthy, aesthetically pleasing and obviously responding positively to the differing design issues and site microclimate conditions.



The most important component of her garden design skills is, the preparation of detail records for the plant species and the planting location. Brenda continually records the botanic and common name for each new

garden plant in excel spreadsheets, with the location of all specimens keyed back to a simple garden bed layout plan, (drawn as a Word document). An excellent way to keep tabs on plant position, age and growth over time.



Given the large number attending, we walked around in groups guided by her documents, and closely observed the collection. Brenda explained that she initially commenced by planting basically small plants in the open exposed site but quickly realised that shade and shelter was a necessity. Now the garden has matured providing a good balance of sun and shade, with walls and rocks creating numerous small 'garden rooms' each with a special character, all linked by enticing steps and walkways.



This was a great opportunity to see how effectively that more than 180 species of native plants were used throughout this 800 square metre site, where possibly half the area is house and driveway – remarkable!

Thankyou Brenda for your inspirational small suburban garden.

The MAILBOX

Forest Therapy

Nicky Zanen, Melbourne

This advertisement in the brochure of summer activities at the Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne caught my eye. These workshops run throughout December and January 2023.

WELLBEING

Connecting to nature and spending time outdoors is more important for our mental and physical wellbeing than ever before.



Forest Therapy

Originating from Japan, Shinrin-yoku, or "forest bathing," is a preventative health practice that improves and strengthens mental and physical wellbeing. Recognised as a public health practice in Asia and Europe, Forest Therapy is gaining global acclaim as an evidence-based, cost-effective and natural remedy – a 'green prescription' for a healthier you.

This guided wellbeing experience is slow, intentional and immersive, supporting you to mindfully connect with nature. You will learn simple nature connection, sensory and creative practices to help calm your mind. Other proven health benefits of Forest Therapy include boosted immune system, reduced stress levels, regulated pulse and blood pressure and better sleep.

Presented by Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria and In My Nature and the International Nature and Forest Therapy Alliance (INFTA)

Thanks Nicky, this a good reminder as to why we so enthusiastically establish native gardens – it would be rare to find a GDSG or APS member who would disagree about the benefits of a 'green prescription' for health.

Lawrie



ANPSA Kiama Chat Room

Ros Walcott, Canberra – Oct 2022

Dear Chris and Lawrie, Thanks so much for the link to the ANPSA Kiama Chat Room. I found Chris' presentation and the interaction from the audience terrific. So sorry to have missed the conference, but circumstances were beyond our control. Thanks again. Cheers, Ros

Terra Australia - Update

Ros Walcott, Canberra – Nov 2022

Hi Lawrie, Some information about GDSG Canberra activities and some photos. We were at the National Arboretum this morning, with Fran Middleton and others - all enjoyed the Terra Australis Garden in full flower - *Scaevola*, *Chrysocephalum*, *Chamelaucium* 'Paddy's Pink', white flowering *Eucalyptus leucoxylon*, *Senna barronfieldii*, *Anigozanthos*, *Callistemons* 'White Anzac' and Brogo Overflow', amongst many others. Cheers, Ros



- testing and strategic interventions in the microbial populations in the soil; and
- the direct seeding of cool and warm-season native grasses.



The plant palette was composed of plants indigenous to the Canberra region, with some 66 species in total.

DAG committee.

DAG & GDSG Activity, Canberra

ANPSA Canberra, December Bulletin

November Activity Ben Taylor (Slow Growing Trees Pty Ltd) hosted 22 members when they visited the Wild Native Landscape planted earlier this year in Fyshwick. The planting on the industrial estate has been an opportunity to experiment with using some of the stewardship and care practices drawn from Charles Massy's body of work.

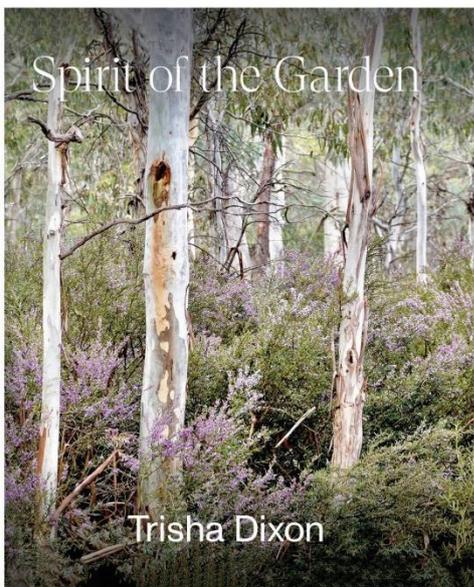
Some of these practices are:

- allowing the presence of weedy species amongst native plantings;
- passive rainwater harvesting through subtle earthworks;



BOOKS etc

This is a new section for the Newsletter. If you find an old or a new book or other publication that would interest our members let's know by writing a review.



“Spirit of the Garden” Trisha Dixon

Book review by Booktopia

Gardens can be formal or wild, serene or ostentatious, native or exotic, colourful or monochrome -according to Trisha Dixon, if we like a person, we will probably like their garden

In a series of written reflections, interwoven with her evocative, painterly photographs, Trisha explores the relationship that exists between ourselves, our gardens and the natural landscape. Beyond the design and the plants, there is the feel of the garden, which captures the heart from the moment you enter a landscape and stays with you long after you have left.

In a chapter on *Gardens of the Mind*, Trisha explores how artists, thinkers and writers have acknowledged and found value in the spirit of gardens and landscapes. Socrates found truth and beauty beyond Athens' city walls in a sacred grove. Closer to home, Jorn Utzon, designer of Sydney's Opera House sought inspiration and solace in a sandstone beach

cave and Arthur Boyd experienced the Shoalhaven as a Wagnerian opera or a Mozart symphony.

In *Our Ancient Land*, Trisha writes about landscapes full of stories, songlines and tracks. She welcomes the shift away from an Anglocentric approach to landscape design to one that shows an intimate engagement with the spirit of place, an acknowledgement of the Aboriginal history and mythology embedded in the land. This is not just to be found in the ancient heart of the country. In Melbourne's Royal Park, for example, bounded by noisy traffic and high-rise buildings, landscape designer Gordon Ford has created a bush pool that you'd feel fortunate to find in the interior of the Kimberley.

Her message is the need to understand and respect the environment in our garden making. By approaching nature with humility, rather than a desire to control it, we can make our gardens places of beauty and peace, which nurture body and soul. She explains different approaches to garden design, exploring the teachings of landscape architects and designers of renown. And she frames this in the context of a harsh and changing climate that we need to embrace.

“It suddenly dawned on me that gardens possessing this elusive ‘spirit of place’ are those where nature’s hand tips the balance, where our human touch is not the overarching imprint on a space.”

Full-colour photographs show the golden glow of seed heads, a Eucalypt reflected in a still pool, magnificent angophoras and mossy outcrops in an escarpment garden on Sydney's Northern Beaches. Here is Annie Snodgrass' Jilba garden in Young, bursting with a Mediterranean palette of greens, purples and white. Here is Philip Cox's South Coast retreat, showing a total harmony of landscape and understated, rustic architecture.

Spirit of the Garden is published by the National Library Australia - March 1, 2021

Archives

Issues 73 to 76

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.

Incredible as it may seem May 2023 marks the 30th anniversary of the first GDSG Newsletter!

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 from the GDSG Newsletter archives in the ANPSA website.

<http://anpsa.org.au/design/des-news.html>

Newsletter #73 February 2011 ***Suggestions for Recording Gardens***

Pages 5-11

Jeff Howes and Ros Walcott share their individual thoughts on a structured basis to describe the process of design, establishment and nurturing of a garden, each applied this to their own gardens.

'At One' in a Garden Nicky Zanen, Vic
I am still trying to get to the crux of what it is that makes me feel 'at one' in some gardens and strained in others. Does it include the involvement of several senses like sound, vision and smell, and therefore provide interaction and action.

Newsletter #74 May 2011

Daniel's Paddock Win & Jim Main, NSW
We thought about drawing up a plan but soon decided that this was not for us. To a larger extent our garden since we came here in 1977 has just happened ~ like Topsy. So we've decided to stick with the topsy approach.

The Dynamic Garden(er) Chris Larkin, Vic
I love the creative aspects of gardening. In some ways it seems like working with a living sculpture – guiding its development without being entirely in control of which direction things will go in next.

Newsletter #75 August 2011

The Mood of Gardens and Gardeners

Pam Yarra, Vic

Good garden design includes how the garden is to be used and the mood of the garden is allied to the style. Many variables impact on the atmosphere created, not just trees and birds, but also the surrounding environment.

Merely soothing ... a few steps from boring

Jo Hambrett, NSW

Words like thrill, provoke and excite, when used in the context of a garden, made me re-examine my gardening style and philosophy and the relationship I have with my garden.

Vertical Gardens

Diana Snape, Vic

The tallest green wall in the world, adorning the Trio apartments building in Camperdown, Sydney. Quoting the article, "At 33m high and 5m wide, across 12 stories, the wall comprises 4,528 Australian plants from 71 different species, all planted from 50mm tubes . . .

Newsletter #76 November 2011

As Time Goes By

Chris Larkin, Vic

Over 20 years the garden has been evolving. An old shack of a house & other outbuildings on an acre of north facing hillside, with nothing one could call a garden, has gradually, over 29 years turned into a hillside of terraced gardens, a small orchard and vegie garden with a lovely house somewhere round about the middle of the block.

What makes an Australian Garden

Geoff Howes, NSW

For many years I have been growing native plants, reading gardening books, listening to garden gurus, advising people on what native plants to grow and listening to other peoples gardening problems. During this time, I have come to the conclusion, that there is only one important garden principle that one must endeavour to obey to maximise your gardening success and it is:

Membership Matters

A warm welcome to all our new members

We look forward to your active participation in your study group

- Barry Jahnke, Brisbane Qld

Current Membership: 227

Treasurer's Report – February 15, 2023

General account:	\$ 3,194.47
+Donation:	\$ 5.00
- Payment:	\$ 264.00
(Glenda Browne – indexing Newsletters 2022)	
Term Deposit:	\$ 28,520.39
(incl interest \$107.97 - reinvest @ 3.35% for 12 mths to 25/01/24)	
TOTAL:	\$ 31,714.86

Membership of GDSG is free ...

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Newsletters are distributed only by email.

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

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Check List

The GDSG meeting in Kiama 2022, suggested that a contents guide be prepared to assist the writing of more complete and informative articles generally, and responses to the Newsletter topic particularly.

The following check list may be useful as a reference as you write, to ensure that readers are informed of the main physical issues that have influenced the design of your garden.

Resulting articles written on the Newsletter theme or on other topics, when reformatted as 'Fact Sheets', may also be more suitable for a broader readership, once potentially available through ANPSA website.

Potential site influences:

(Other items of influence may also need to be considered)

Topic: Nominate the Newsletter theme, or alternatively another subject

Author: Name and preferred contact details

Site location: Town or city, street address, State

North: Aspect, influence of sun and shade, microclimate

Climatic Zone: Tropical, sub-tropical, temperate, mediterranean, arid, etc

Topography: Coastal, riverine, plain, foothills, tableland, montane, etc

Slopes: Level, gentle slope, steep slope, undulating,

Soil Profile: Subsoil type & depth; Topsoil type & depth, pH

Geological: Local rock type: sandstone, limestone, granite, basalt, other . . .

Drainage: Surface & subsurface; seasonally dry, occasionally moist, always wet, etc

Environment: Special botanic or ecological site relationships

Photographs: Send as separate high-resolution attachments, not embedded in the text - Maximum resolution 2 - 3 MB; Add a caption to each photograph if necessary, or otherwise state No Caption.