



GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

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Newsletter Theme: 'Garden Focal Points'

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Garden Focal Points

Is it likely that 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.

ANPSA Garden Design Study Group Newsletter

Newsletter timing & Themes

Issue	date	Theme
124	November	"Microclimate & Design"
125	March	"Garden Peace & Tranquillity"
126	July	"Design and Recycling"
127	November	"Bringing Nature Home"

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 still wanting your contributions!

As you know the GDSG meeting in Kiama suggested we extend the frequency to four months between Newsletters, to allow members more time to prepare articles for publishing in the next issue, but I am not sure if it really works and wonder if you do too?

Members also 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 and send them through immediately.

Apologies that this issue is Queensland centric but there will always be room for your article to be included. The Group works best with many contributions Australia wide – keep writing!

Continuing the saga for ‘the book’

Further to the ongoing discussions revolving around the publication of a second printed book or a digital 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. We will need to verify.

‘Creating a Native Garden’

John M Hunt SGAP NSW 1986

Jeff Howes forwarded information to Heather Miles (NSW APS President) about this book suggesting as follows

“In the 1980s this book made us all think about a different way of designing and growing Australian Plants. The second part of the book is just photos of plants. Many of our Groups visited John’s garden in the Dural/Kenthurst area. I assume APS still hold copyright on this book so why not scan the first part and place on our APS (NSW) web site as a resource. Maybe even on the GDSG home page.”

Heather asked me for comment, I replied:
“Good morning, Heather and Jeff,

I’ve not seen this book by John Hunt, but judging by the list of contributors (a ‘who’s who’ of early SGAP nationwide) it must include some excellent content. As you know GDSG has been considering for some considerable time now a follow up book from the original “The Australian Garden” by Diana Snape - but we are getting nowhere fast!! This book could be part of the solution!

In the last Newsletter I requested members to comment on the possibility of reviewing all of the articles in past GDSG Newsletters, specifically those on garden design, and using them as a basis (updated as necessary) to prepare what might be an ‘Anthology of Garden Design with Native Plants’. There is a wealth of knowledge ‘hidden away’ in these files, offered by our GDSG members from first-hand experience, which should be brought out front and centre for a new audience! John Hunts book could be a major component in this ‘Anthology’, given contributors in his book like Bill Payne, Ivan Holliday, Neil Marriott, Merv Hodge, Geoff Simmonds, Peter Olde, etc etc .

The suggested ‘Anthology’ would put into action a favourite landscape philosophy that I firmly believe in, ‘the past informs the present and the future’ Perhaps reviewing past garden design knowledge and practice, then applying this in text and photos to the contemporary Australian garden with all of its new demands and opportunities, will be invaluable? After all what our members have learnt from trial and error over many years is still applicable today and helps us to avoid reinventing the ‘wheel’.

So yes, extracts from ‘Creating a Native Garden’ could be included in the suggested ‘Anthology’ as described above. Let me know if you think this might have merit??”
Lawrie

Heather replied to me:
“I think the anthology concept is a good one. Are you thinking that the anthology is a digital book, hard copy book or series of webpages? If webpages, I think the anthology becomes a powerful and far more accessible resource to the public than the current GDSG newsletters are. Great as

these newsletters are, Google and others search engines favour webpages over PDFs and so I am sure they are probably not used much.

The work to review the articles can be done in bite sized pieces by a small team, and then peer reviewed and uploaded easily enough, with new images to create impact.

Lawrie, do you know if the ANPSA website is able to accommodate the addition of many pages of content which I expect the anthology might be?" Heather

This positive conversation (still continuing) has encouraged me to include a past newsletter article on "Garden Focal Points", in the following theme section as an example of what might be possible. Hopefully, the concept of producing this '**Garden Design Anthology**' might catch members imagination and importantly encourage some members to offer to be involved!!

If it does, please let me know if you think this could be a real possibility, and would like to offer to be part of the action.

Basis of the Anthology

To see what might be possible, I reviewed the extensive index of articles in past Newsletters, broadly rationalised it into a series of 'chapters', with each subdivided into specific but related 'subjects'.

General

APS NPQ etc

Designers

Books, references, etc

Botanic Gardens, Arboretum, Gardens

Conferences, festivals

Garden history

Planning & Design

Themes

Location

Landform, rock, soils etc

Botany & horticulture

Climate, season

Microclimate, sunshine & shadow

Ecology, environment

Water, wetlands

Wildlife

Plants & planting

Hard landscape elements

Art, sculpture, culture

Maintenance

This initial list requires radical revision!

Each article selected from the various newsletters, would be identified under a numeric chapter and subject numbering system, and stored in the relevant subject to allow easy sourcing of specific information; new subjects and articles from future Newsletters would be progressively added into the system. The '**Anthology**' would be progressively prepared as an online digital document, available on the ANPSA website (yet to be determined). Individual articles of interest could be printed off by the reader as needed.

This Newsletter THEME

"Garden Focal Points"

Newsletter #123 July 2023

The Newsletter #122 of March 2022, offered two pages of introductory comments about this subject to encourage members to share their experiences in deciding about using focal points in their garden design.

Few comments were received, so we can't report whether members feel if and how, focal points (of all sorts) are a vital component of their own garden design.

Obviously, such elements are able to add a variety of differing experiences, some will catch the eye for closer attention, sometimes the nose will be attracted, others will cause you to automatically stretch out your hand and touch a textured surface, or maybe trying to find the source of a pleasing sound, there are many more ways to stimulate our human senses as you observe a garden. Focal points take on many forms, not always physical or even permanent, but they do variously stimulate our human senses. Whatever the form they certainly add diversity, and can help to create or emphasise a specific garden area.

They might be ephemeral, and the short temporary 'star' of a changing season through vibrant flower or leaf colours. They may not be built elements, and more often carefully chosen living, growing and changing features. Focal points ensure a garden is ever changing, and always a remarkable, memorable and exciting place to be.

Consider some well known or even less known landscapes you know, where distinctive 'focal points' are the main element that cause you to remember and recall that special environment, park, garden or small green space, you have once experienced.

The 'Anthology' in action!

To illustrate the possibility of preparing the **Garden Design Study Group 'Anthology'** from our Newsletter records, I have used Barbara Buchanan's excellent article in the August 2009 Newsletter as a basis. The original text has been slightly modified, and recent photos have been added to illustrate the various focal point design elements that Barbara has referred to.

Focal Points in a Garden

Barbara Buchanan Vic.

On our gardening pilgrimage towards our own vision of Eden we progress through various stages. Many of us start by wanting to provide a garden for birds, most of us have a phase where colour is all, then maybe the collecting urge takes hold. Whatever our particular path, sooner or later an awareness of the role of design creeps in. Good design must include the best locations for the paths, the clothesline, the garbage bins, but goes way beyond these mundane particulars to an overall whole, which is instinctively satisfying to the senses.

Some people achieve this result instinctively, others, like myself, benefit from basic guidelines to avoid the worst mistakes and get better results sooner. These design principles are universal and not restricted to gardening, but there will be different emphases for each purpose, say designing tools or houses etc.

Within the gardening area the same principles apply whatever the garden style and whatever the size of the garden. Beauty may be in the eye of the beholder, but there are some underlying common features which neuroscience is beginning to explore. 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. There is

a comparative dearth of design literature specifically relating to gardens of Australian plants but this is not a great handicap because of the universal nature of the fundamentals. The real handicap is the comparative lack of knowledge on the behaviour of Australian plants and their variability, hence some unpredictability of results.



So, there is much to be gained from overseas books and articles outlining the principles and a challenge to interpret solutions with our plants. 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. Classical formal gardens with well-defined lines and contrasts are easier subjects. Such gardens used statues and urns at the end of a vista to draw the eye and tempt the feet to explore.



The Landscape Movement in England built follies and lakes to provide points of interest, cottagey gardens bred garden gnomes and of course fountains, elaborate or simple, were used widely in all garden styles.



These built structures survive longer than most of the plants, but Capability Brown also used clumps of trees in the landscape many

of which endure and these give us a clue for our own focal points.



In our suburban gardens it is hard to devise long vistas but clever planning can produce shorter versions. Even a view from a side window quite close to the fence benefits from having a centre of interest.

Alongside urns and small water features in garden supply outlets there is now a variety of specifically Australian ornaments, birds and animals from mammals to reptiles to insects available.



These are generally small and non-intrusive and can fit well into a background of our plants and small suburban yards. Gardeners are resourceful people and I have seen many ingenious home-

grown features. Each time I think "I could do something like that", say a nest on the ground built of twigs with banksia cones for eggs, or a serpent made from collected twigs. So far nothing has actually happened bar the odd planted rock to collect moss but I have good intentions aplenty. I think I lack the creative spark to conceive of and build these things.

Other examples include cairns of small stones, which can be reassembled in different ways if the original is knocked over,



but our rock doesn't seem to be the right type. Excuses, excuses. The focal points most suited to our type of garden are pots and feature plants.



Pots are a great solution for a small space, giving the chance to grow favourites which are fussy in their needs but also to switch them around as their season of interest comes and goes. Few

plants are high lights all year round. The content of the pot does not have to be a standout rarity, a pot of annual daisies can be a winner. The pots don't all have to be large, several modest ones grouped together

with some raised on bricks or logs can lead to all sorts of interesting combinations.

I am not yet very expert at managing plants in pots but it is something I look forward to learning. The collection has started especially of plants which dislike wet foliage as these can be grown under the eaves. These include Kangaroo paws, lots of *Eremophila spp* and grey woolly foliated plants generally. Then there are frost sensitive ones, mainly the rainforest species



with beautiful foliage often having brilliant red flushes of new growth, the Lillypilly group is a good example and otherwise tough. There are many other species now becoming available.



Then there are special feature plants that are permanently placed. These may be brilliant in flower but the prime requirement is to hold the eye by their form and texture

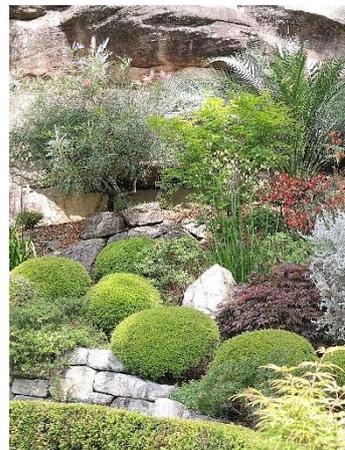
throughout the year. One can't go past the Grass trees for drama as long as there is sufficient clear space to set them off. *Xanthorrhoea quadrangulata* is one which flowers every year here, something the indigenous larger *X. australis* is reluctant to do. *X. minor* which grows in abundance in our paddocks has not yet come into the garden. It would flower every year I think but the cattle eat the flower heads first. In the aftermath of the fires of 07 when the cattle were excluded while the fences were being rebuilt each clump of *X. minor* had multiple flower spikes, the highest count was around 40! Now if we could reproduce that in the garden reliably what a triumph that would be.



Nurserymen have been active in other areas and selecting special forms of species such as *Acacia cognata* for their shape. I love spheres and circles and collect as many of these as I find.

Leptospermum 'Little Bun', *Melaleuca armillaris* 'Green

Globe' and *M. incana* spring to mind. These need little attention to provide the roundness, but I have also been very taken by *Westringia* and Salt bushes clipped into tight balls, just like the clipped box of exotic gardens. The contrast of the tight smooth clipped surface and looser natural adjacent shapes is as effective as a stone or marble sphere and more apt for our type of garden.



The situation is important, an occasional perfect sphere can be a real highlight in a more relaxed setting, one per view is all it takes and it is essential not to overdo them. If we have satisfying round balls, then

something flat and something upright, spiky, will make the most of them.



Depending on the scale the flat can be low grasses, groundcovers or a flat-topped bush such as *Homoranthus flavescens* or *Melaleuca violacea*. The uprights are

harder to come by. At the smallest scale taller grasses, *Lomandra*, *Dianella* and Kangaroo Paws start off spiky but often finish up rounded shapes as they age. There is one form of *Micromyrtus ciliata* collected by David Sheills which is slowly climbing to 2m while still only 30cm across. I recently found a form of *M. decussata* labelled fastigiata but it is too early to say how it will grow here.



For trees, I have yet to find the equivalent of the Italian Cypresses which punctuate Mediterranean skies so dramatically, although there are some large shrubs which maybe will develop a mutant

with the right form given sufficient years of cultivation and selection. There's plenty still to do in our chosen garden world.

Bunya Pines are very distinctive sentinels in many Australian homestead gardens. There's lots of inspiration in Barbara's article; is the GDSG Anthology a realistic idea? Lawrie

Situated at the front of our house with a vista of the bush we can sit and listen to the sound of water in the fountain and watch the antics of the birds as they come in for a drink or a splash. We can hear the birdsong of the Butcher Bird, the call of the parrots, the fidgeting of the Scrub Wrens or the distant cry of the Black Cockatoo or the Whip Birds. Close by, a beautiful Chequered Swallowtail Butterfly lays eggs on the Cullen tenax in the garden and Plumbago Blue Butterflies flit across the flowers of the native Plumbago groundcover (*Plumbago zeylanica*). Maybe, if we are lucky, the wind will waft the fragrance of the flowers of an *Alyxia ruscifolia* plant.



This is the focus of our garden: "Experiencing the Wonder of Nature". The arrangement of the plants and paths or perhaps the placement of a rock or sculpture all add to the visual appeal, but it is the 'experience' of the garden that is most important for us.

Our Garden Focus

Wendy Benfer, Blackbutt, Qld



No, it is not the cut-out image of a Butcher Bird (given to us by our son for Christmas) that is the focus of our garden, but rather what it represents. It is an area where we can have a relaxed cup of coffee or tea, by ourselves or with friends.

Focal points in the Qld Outback

Lawrie Smith, North Lakes Qld

Recently drove around the amazing 200km Lake Dunn sculpture trail out west near Barcaldine, with over 40 unique sculptures highlighted against the flat sandy landscape



Next Newsletter THEME

“Microclimate and Design”

Newsletter #124 November 2023



What is Microclimate?

Encyclopaedia Britannica

“Microclimatic conditions depend on such factors as temperature, humidity, wind, and turbulence, dew, frost, heat balance, and evaporation. The effect of soil type on microclimates is considerable. Sandy soils and other coarse, loose, and dry soils are subject to high maximum and low minimum surface temperatures. The surface reflection characteristics of soils are also important; soils of lighter colour reflect more and respond less to daily heating. Another feature of the microclimate is the ability of the soil to absorb and retain moisture, which depends on the composition of the soil and its use. Vegetation is also integral, as it controls the flux of water vapour into the air through transpiration. In addition, vegetation can insulate the soil below and reduce temperature variability. Sites of exposed soil then exhibit the greatest temperature variability.”

Obviously, microclimate is a major factor that influences the site characteristics of all areas of your garden. Hopefully, the following dot points will inspire you to share your thoughts on the subject in the next Newsletter. Better still include design descriptions and photos of how you have considered the changing seasonal patterns of sunshine and shadow to influence your garden layout and

establishment or perhaps interesting design approaches you have observed elsewhere:

- Before commencing your garden design have you considered preparing a sunshine and shadow analysis drawing of the site? Ideally shade patterns should be analysed and noted on the garden plan at 9am, noon and 3pm in mid-summer, in mid-winter and the equinox? This will be a major influencing factor to define the overall landscape planning and design as well as defining the choice for the plants and landscape materials.
- Do you always choose and locate plants according to their tolerance of the specific microclimatic conditions of sunshine and shade around the various areas of your garden?
- Is a knowledge of the microclimate patterns first and foremost in your mind when you choose species for seasonal effect of flower or foliage?
- Is it important that you know which area of the garden receives full sun in winter mornings and/or where there is cool shade in the summer afternoons, in order to plan the optimum location for outdoor living areas to either enjoy a hot steaming coffee, or a cooling cold beer?
- Do you know how to determine the ideal position for a garden shade tree so that you control where its shade is cast to provide shade in summer but sunshine in winter? There is generally only one location that will allow this to happen.
- How do you cope with the relative scarcity of Australian deciduous trees to be used to ‘control’ the seasonal sun exposure in your garden?
- Which deciduous trees do you find most useful and why



Members Stories

A garden in Wanniasa

Maureen Mallard and Digby Gascoine, ACT

In February 2023 members of the Canberra Day Activity Group and Garden Design Study Group visited Len Dowling's Wanniasa Garden. The house and garden are oriented south with a spectacular view along the Tuggeranong Valley to Mt. Tennent. Len has cleverly landscaped the back garden to overcome the difficulties of the very steep slope by having meandering paths gradually leading to the back corner and returning uphill to the side garden.



foliage contrasts. It would be of great interest to make a return visit in a few years' time to see the further development of Len's plans.



Over the past decade or so Len has progressively introduced native plants to an existing garden of exotics, such that the natives now comprise about half of the intensive planting. Of particular interest were a number of mature *Eremophila* as well as plants brought from Sydney, including rock orchids, Lord Howe Island dietes, bird nest ferns, Gynea lily and a spectacular flowering begonia. Len has a very keen interest in a great variety of plants and has created an interesting and diverse landscape. Members enjoyed the late flowering that is a consequence of the south-facing slope, and marvelled at the overall harmony that Len has achieved in positioning plants and in the



Celebrating the first 20 years . . . Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens

Lawrie Smith, Brisbane Q

SGAP Mackay Has a Vision!

It is an understatement to say this dedicated local community group – SGAP Mackay – has been simply ‘involved’ with the development of these Botanic Gardens. Quite simply without their determination and very willing assistance, the Botanic Gardens would never have been commenced. It is obvious that their efforts will continue to be of immeasurable value and assistance to Council and to the community, as the group continues to accept every opportunity to ensure through the development of the Botanic Gardens, the preservation of the bioregional vegetation by collection, propagation, research, interpretation and demonstration!

You have my sincere admiration!!

Of all my projects over the past five decades this one stands out as the most successful, due primarily to the initial foresight of a small local group of native plant SGAP enthusiasts led by Irene Champion and Meryl Ritchie, all sharing the same common vision. Inspired, they commenced in 1985 to take every opportunity to promote the value of a botanic garden to the city, and finally the Council agreed. Planning and design commenced in 1999, and the first stage was opened on May 24, 2003. In the years since the first planting, continuing Council support and strong community involvement has established a significant botanic repository and educational facility for the unique Central Queensland Coast bioregional flora.

Regional Network of Botanic Gardens

Australia now has numerous botanic gardens in the various bioregions of the continent, but that was not the case in 1984. When a conference of botanic garden curators and managers, together with members of SGAP and other interested people, met together in Coffs Harbour to discuss the new botanic gardens under establishment there. The particular focus of the conference was to review a report prepared by the Royal Australian Institute of Parks and Recreation that investigated the current status of native flora collections in the botanic gardens of

Australia. Not unexpectedly the report found that, apart from the capital city botanic gardens and others in several regional towns, there were huge regional areas of the continent without a suitably representative botanic garden. The report defined the locations recommended for the establishment of a network of new regional botanic gardens throughout the regions of Australia. Now thirty-nine years later most of these, together with others have been established.

As a young landscape architect, I valued botanic gardens to inform my professional expertise and attended this conference as I had just been commissioned to plan a new botanic garden ‘Tondoon’ in Gladstone in regional Queensland. I accepted the challenge to promote the planning, design and establishment of these proposed new regional botanic gardens throughout Queensland, increasing the network from south to north and inland by adding new or expanded gardens in - Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Hervey Bay, Bundaberg, Gladstone, Mackay, Whitsunday, Townsville, Cairns, Emerald, Longreach, Goondiwindi, and others. This promotion in the regions always included local members of SGAP who shared similar visions.

Mackay RBG Timeline of planning & development



One of the more significant Regional Botanic Gardens of this period, is located in Mackay within the Central Queensland Coastal Bioregion. The local branch of SGAP commenced the promotion for establishing a botanic garden in 1985 with a feasibility study funded by the SGAP Qld Region and although some financial support was offered by the

Bicentenary Authority there was insufficient other support and the project lapsed. Undeterred, the local SGAP members continued to promote the vision and in 1995 the local Council offered a small section of land beside a large lagoon for them to 'have a go'! A representative garden of bioregional forest species was soon established, and by 1999 was clearly demonstrating that a botanic garden could be a viable use for the balance of the extensive site. Consequently, my company Landplan landscape architects were appointed to carry out the master planning and design, and for me this offered a much appreciated and continuing personal association with the local community for the next several decades as together we established the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens.

The twentieth anniversary of the opening of stage one was celebrated on May 27, 2023. However, it is really thirty-eight years since 1985 when SGAP members commenced promoting the establishment of a botanic garden, followed by the first plantings of the CQC Regional Forests, which successfully lead the way to creating today's nationally significant Regional Botanic Garden. The first two stages are now almost complete and the third stage is already planned and designed, just waiting to happen.

This will complete the establishment of a comprehensive and dynamic garden that preserves, researches and demonstrates the botanic and horticultural value of the bioregional flora, and at the same time integrates the environmental context, regional history, cultural heritage, as well as the agricultural and industrial influences. Together these components make an amazing diverse and expansive environment to explore and to appreciate.

BGANZ Ambassador, Costa Georgiades was guest of honour for the twentieth celebrations and offered the following sincere and complimentary comments:

"It is really important to recognise the importance of our Regional Botanic Gardens because they do an incredible and priceless task preserving and educating about the plants and plant communities that make up our

bioregions. Volunteers play a massive role in botanic gardens all around the country and none more so than in the regional and smaller botanic gardens - they bring so much passion, time and above all else commitment in keeping our Botanic Gardens thriving.

"Five years before the Mackay gardens were opened in 2003, landscape architect Lawrie Smith began the design process and worked tirelessly from day one with local specialists from the SGAP Mackay Branch, in order to ensure the best possible plans. It is clear to see how the staging for the gardens over the past twenty years has enabled the design to not only be achieved, but to be thriving - the skills, understanding and ownership are there to be seen everywhere you look.

"Big thanks to everyone in Mackay for a wonderful welcome from the moment I arrived - what an awesome twentieth birthday celebration! You really do have a Botanic Garden of national significance - a priceless asset to our generation and all those who follow." Costa

The following photographs offer a quick overview of the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens in May 2023 – they capture the essence of the bioregion, and also opportunities for using the local flora in landscape and amenity horticulture.



View north along Eulamere Lagoon to the Cremorne Visitor Centre and lookout



One of several pathways meandering through the Central Queensland Coast Bioregion Regional Forests



The Rainforest Liana Arbour provides an avenue of shade beside the Timber Trees Forest



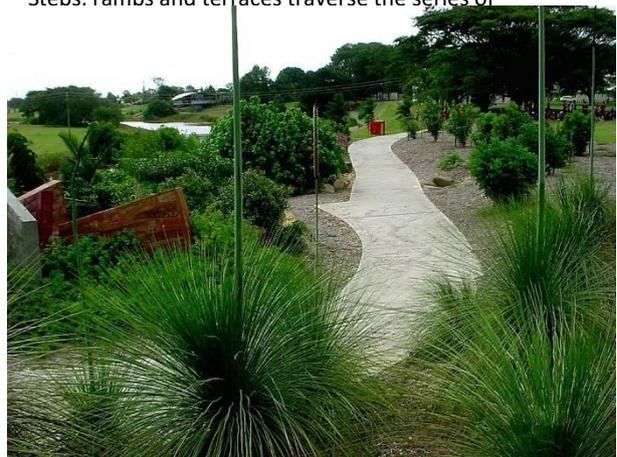
The 'fossil' textured Coal Garden path interprets the transformation of foliage into coal over millennia



Steps, ramps and terraces traverse the series of



'Rawson's Hollow' an 1800's Heritage Homestead Garden was reconstructed from reference to old photos



The 'Sarina Proserpine' community extends from the upper levels to the lagoon edge along a winding pathway.



GDSG-Q Two Diverse Gardens

Our Brisbane members visited two extremely different gardens last month.

A Sustainable Sandstone Garden

Firstly, we revisited Dennis Cox & Jan Glazebrook Logan Village garden established in 1992 on one hectare dominated by a dramatic Jurassic sandstone conglomerate outcrop sweeping decoratively across the property – the reason for the purchase. The soil is a very well drained gravelly soil, overlaying a clay layer then bedrock. For each planting hole two handfuls of bentonite clay is mixed with the soil. It is a true collector's garden, inspired by the informality of the local bushland. It is registered as Land for Wildlife and is an excellent model for sustainability in terms of water.



Jan outlined their planning philosophy behind the garden design, which I would term 'design with nature'.

Some of the interesting garden strategies they follow include:

- Planting is done only when rain is expected.
- Water retention crystals are not used as these were found to quickly lift plants out of the soil.
- Wide and shallow holes dug for all planting.

- All pruning's are cut to small size and dropped in location as a surface mulch – to also provide an excellent home for wildlife.
- The first plantings were Leguminosae, pea plants and Acacia for quick nitrogen soil fixing.
- The 'front' garden within 10-15m on the north to east side of the house, has small shrubs and covers with taller background shrubs and a few special trees to maintain a sunny garden area.



- The extensive 'back' garden north to west & south contains taller shrubs and trees as a dense screen to deflect the westerly winds, and shade the western veranda. This allows for extensive rainforest planting along meandering tracks.



- They regularly travel the continent to observe and collect native species, with particular focus on small plants, which are then trialled in their garden. Jan also heads the 'Small Plants Study Group'. This will be our 'go to garden' for information about plants for our smaller gardens.
- They propagate extensively and now have amassed an extensive knowledge bank

about rare and unknown species now known to be suitable for use in cultivation.

- Every few steps throughout the garden you find an interesting artistic creation by Jan, that adds so much interest and invites you to keep on meandering through the everchanging displays of small plants. We discussed how these additions so simply increase the natural attraction of the garden. One of our members Barry Jahnke, made the observation that the artistic items are invaluable as it *“Puts the Human Finger on the Garden”* integrating man and nature.



At the top Dennis had built a large timber deck among the tree trunks more than twenty metres at its greatest height above the sloping embankment. We really needed the afternoon tea he provided there! That was not all, his house was an architectural gem surrounded by colourful plants and foliage, but it was the retained heritage farm buildings that caught our attention. Dennis had repurposed them for horticultural use and as a unique bird enclosure. If that was not enough, he gave a demonstration of whip cracking with two whips!! That was the Third Dimension!

A Three Dimensional Garden

The second gardener Dennis Higgins, I met recently when presenting a lecture to the local garden club. He enthused me with his description of his garden and as a result unseen, I termed it *‘A Three Dimensional Garden’*. That was an understatement!! Dennis has several hectares on the steep banks of the Logan River, south of Brisbane. Here he has singlehandedly built the most dramatic ‘walkway’ up and around several giant *Eucalyptus tereticornis* Blue Gums, probably 30 metres tall, so you get to experience being a bird flying high among the branches. That was the First Dimension!

Looking down (if you dare) all around you is a semi mature rainforest now some twenty years old which Dennis first planted himself. We were enticed to follow the extensive track system cut into the river embankment through the towering rainforest, zig zagging down the steep slopes probably another twenty or thirty metres to and along the river edge. Then back up to the top of the escarpment. That was the Second Dimension!



None of us had ever seen any garden quite like this before, and no doubt will accept his offer to come and visit again!

The MAILBOX

MIFGS - That's a Wrap 2023!!

Nicky Zanen, Melbourne

Crowds flocked to our Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show stand this year to see a very special display garden, called A Place for Us, designed by our student grant winner, Emma Sheppard-Simms.



And we weren't the only ones who thought it was special - Emma's stunning garden helped Open Gardens Victoria win the Best Visual Display (Exhibitor) Award at the show. We are beyond thrilled and so incredibly proud of Emma and her history-making all-female team, pictured with MIFGS Event Director Marcus Gale.



The garden drew in more than the crowds and judges! Costa from Gardening Australia joined Emma and her team for a proper chin wag. Chloe Thomson from Bean There Dug That interviewed Emma about the garden, and Melissa King from Better Homes and Gardens stopped in to say hi and

congratulate the girls on their beautiful build. Michael McCoy from Dream Gardens popped by for a visit, along with our favourite gardening writer from The Age, Megan Backhouse. AB Bishop, horticulture editor at Gardening Australia Magazine and co-host of the Gardening Show on 3CR, visited too. Thanks also to OGV supporters Jac Semmler and Stephen Wells for showing your support.



The OGV marquee was a step above this year, and we are so grateful to all who volunteered throughout the show to help promote our wonderful organisation and what we do.

A Place for Us

Emma Sheppard-Simms, Vic

Emma Sheppard-Simms is the successful recipient of our inaugural 2023 Open Gardens Victoria (OGV) Student Garden Design Competition. The grant provided \$10,000 to design and install a garden as part of our MIFGS stand this year. Emma is a landscape architect and University of Melbourne (Burnley) horticulture student.

Emma's winning garden design was built and installed by an all-female trade team, a first in the history of MIFGS. The girls worked tirelessly to secure extra sponsorship and build the garden on a very tight timeline, tending to the garden throughout the show so it was always looking its best.

'A Place for Us' showcased the creative diversity of native plant species while encouraging biodiversity, water-wise gardening, and the use of sustainable, locally-sourced materials.



Emma explains: "Gardens are often described as healing and calming spaces that provide an escape from our worries. But they can also be positive, energising spaces that remind us of the resilience and power of the living world. In celebration of this vitality, I have designed a garden that hums with colour, sensory and textural interest—an inviting space that attracts visitors, insects, and birds alike."

Climatic Differences!

Margaret Lee, Adelaide

Couldn't help commenting on your reports in a recent Newsletter of a 'measly' 95mm of rain in a month in your Brisbane garden. We would have been lucky to have 9.5mm! Plus, temperatures in the high 30s for several weeks. And this has been a relatively cool summer!

My garden has been largely experimental to see what will survive or thrive on rainfall without additional watering in our clay soil with a pH of 8.5. Answer – not much. It has been difficult to buy or raise all the plants that were here before European settlement. However, some *Eucalypt* and *Melaleuca* have survived well when watered for initial establishment and probably now have their roots in the aquifer below.

I've planted many *Eremophila* and some that grow well and remain attractive are:

Eremophila glabra – several forms, e.g. E. Kalbarri Carpet, Mingenew Gold

Eremophila drummondii - low growing form making a neat low hedge along the footpath

Eremophila "Summertime blue" – flowering when everything else is resting in summer.

Eremophila maculata – prostrate form. Planted 60+ years ago and still spreading in a very large neat low bush.

Eremophila nivea

Eremophila psilocalyx – grafted onto *Myoporum* stock

Eremophila freelingii

Hakea "Burrendong Beauty"

Maireana sedifolia

Acacia acinacea

Several *Callistemon* also.

I also have a grafted *Macadamia* about 40 years old which does get a couple of waterings – one in spring and another in autumn. It bears well some years, but the lorikeets have now worked out just when to eat the nuts before the shell hardens! Best wishes, Margaret

Native Bauhinia Confetti!

Shelly Gage, Sunshine Coast, Qld

As a snippet for a newsletter, I would like to share one of my favourite plants. *Lysiphyllum hookeri*, the native bauhinia. It has attractive flowers, lightly scented, for much of the year. The new growth is coppery. It is ideal where garden design needs a medium well rounded shade tree. The butterfly shaped leaves strip off easily to make a natural confetti which we used at my daughter's wedding on the farm recently.

Their shape meant they floated gracefully over the bride and groom without getting stuck in their clothes. It is hardy at my place and self-seeds readily. I will pot some seedlings up for a future GDSGQ meeting giveaway.



Mounding Garden Soil?

Jennifer Fisher, Maroubra NSW

Nothing to submit I'm afraid. Very much at the beginning of my garden journey. I look forward to reading the next newsletter.

Actually, I do have a question. We're putting in a new garden, very small. Are there any good references for mounding the soil? We're in a sandy area and I'm planning to plant indigenous plants for this area, primarily Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub.

Note from Lawrie: Jennifer is a brand-new member, and is keen to establish a new native garden and has asked this question of us. If you have some proven methods, please send a quick email to me and I'll immediately forward your information to Jenny, as well as put all members replies in the next Newsletter. I've added a couple of ideas to start the ball rolling.

Landform is something that we often do not consider in sufficient detail, and Jenny's request encouraged me to make these few comments: When people commence a new garden on a virgin level site (such as a sandy coastal flat) they don't always consider introducing some appropriate change of level. An undulating site can offer much more visual interest. Your best example is to take a walk through a natural local sandy area and

observe what nature has done. Note that there are subtle changes of level caused by natural processes like rainfall, water flows, windblown sand ridges or simply fallen logs that catch sand and form mounds. Use all of this as inspiration to guide you as you form the physical base for your new garden. If you are lucky, you may have a site that remains relatively undisturbed, even pristine. Or perhaps you have a garden site that shows evidence of the destruction that building a house and services leaves as a legacy!

Look closely at the undisturbed soil profile or cross-section, on your land to see the composition of the various layers from the mulch, top soil, subsoil and to heavier base layers – use this knowledge to guide you. Don't just dump a trailer load of imported sand or sandy loam without knowing how you want the garden to function. Try to emulate the layered strata of the soil profile as you create any new landform.

Consider the physical impact of excess water on your site, it may be of falling heavy rain or a surface water flow that is concentrated and may erode soft surfaces. Importantly consider initially location of gardens, lawns (maybe), pathways, structures, views and vistas etc etc. Make sure you know the implications of surface form or placement of logs, rocks, etc as these will define where heavy rainfall flows and distributes. Don't overlook the possibility of using landform to collect and slow water flow over the site in order to conserve (or harvest) soil moisture absorbed from rainfall.

Height and slope of landform is important - steep slopes accelerate water flows and assist consequent erosion, and subsurface moisture is stored deeper down under higher landform - so minimise this. Shallow slopes still provide visual interest, and subsurface moisture remains within reach of the roots. Most importantly do not over use landform, keep it subtle and flowing without abrupt changes of level or direction – draw your inspiration from nature! Remember 'form follows function' applies in the garden as much as in architecture. *Lawrie*

Plants in Design

Recently I came across an interesting internet site 'The Botanical Planet', and was very pleased to see that a very special Melbourne native garden 'Rosella Rise' was the focus of a question and answer article.

The author Rae Basset and also Deb McMillan the garden owner, were both pleased to give me permission to share their article with you in our Newsletter.



Rae said 'This garden is one of my favourite Australian native gardens and a great demonstration of the floral spectacle that can be achieved with our unique flora. Deb's garden is on a suburban sized block but she packs in a lot of plants.

Using smart plant layering and garden design practices that make the most of every inch, Deb has been able to create an Australian native garden that delivers colour all year round as well as providing abundant nectar and habitat. Rosella Rise is a garden that inspired me when I was beginning my native garden journey. I hope it will inspire you too!

Rae, I agree wholeheartedly with your comments, I am always totally impressed by Deb's garden, but as yet have only seen it through her photographs. Lawrie

Deb's 'Rosella Rise' Garden

Rae Basset 'The Botanical Planet'

Location & Climate:

Located in Croydon North, an outer east suburb of Melbourne, Victoria. Temperate climate with warm summer and cold winter.

Site & Soil:

A suburban block of around 750sqm with neighbouring houses in close proximity. The back garden is set on a steep slope facing north. The front garden is terraced with large landscaping rocks facing south. The soil is a sandy grey loam with pockets of clay rock.

How long have you been gardening at Rosella Rise?

Around 12 years. When I first moved in the garden had pockets of Agapanthus, succulents, Yuccas, exotic Pittosporum and Kikuyu grass as lawn. Other than these drawbacks, I've had a relatively blank canvas to work with.

Do you remember the first native plant you bought? What attracted you to it?

Yes, it was a *Grevillea* 'Superb' which I planted outside my dining room window. I used to enjoy sitting inside at the dining room window, admiring the visiting nectar eating native birds. That cemented my love of Australian plants (and wildlife/habitat gardens in general).



How would you describe your garden design style?

My plan was for an all year around colourful, habitat garden, but it has also evolved into a

collector's garden as I have some endangered WA Grevillea species and some normally hard to grow and source plants. I do have lots of colour in flowers and foliage and the garden can sometimes appear as an Australian cottage garden (especially in spring).

What are some surprising successes you've had in your garden?

Lechenautia spp. I'm able to successfully grow *Lechenautia biloba* and *L. formosa* in the ground, and surprisingly they continue to flower as perennials each year. I also have success growing other WA plants such as *Banksia menziesii* and *Eucalyptus synandra* which normally require very specific environmental conditions for them to survive. I believe in experimenting with growing plants, and if one doesn't survive, I give it a few goes in different positions before I give up. Experimenting with plants helps me to understand my garden's capability more.



I remember you saying you have a challenging spot in your garden that's in full shade in winter and hot sun in summer. What native plants would you recommend for that position?

I've have been fortunate and had good success with *Chorizema cordatum*, *Correa pulchella*, *Crowea exalata* and low growing forms of *Grevillea* like *G. 'Cherry Cluster'*.

You are well known for using an up-pruning technique to fit more plants in your garden. Can you explain how that works?

Up-pruning is the process of pruning the lower branches from a shrub to encourage

one (or more) main trunk(s), so I can achieve a standard form (or mini tree shape). When I up-prune it allows me to underplant with different colours and textures. I can add understory plants, or garden art, or a bird bath, or a chair to sit and ponder the garden.

For me, up-pruning adds more interest to a garden. I can up-prune a plant from a young age or wait until it matures, it all depends on the look I'm are after. For example, on my *Grevillea* 'Lollypops' and *G. Superb* I wanted a straight, single leader trunk – so I needed to assert some influence and stake the plant in early years to keep the main trunk straight. However, more mature plants can be up-pruned too, but their trunks might have some bends and curves in them – this can add to the character too.



What is delighting you the most in the garden this week?

Correa pulchella really shines through a Melbourne winter, *Banksia ericifolia* and *spinulosa* are pushing up some beautiful candles and the low growing, cool tolerant, south eastern Grevilleas are looking a treat. *G. 'Strawberry Smoothie'* is a real winner.

What do you wish you had known when you first started your native garden?

1. Not to believe plant label dimensions.
2. Also, don't always accept people's advice or opinion, get to know your garden environment. If someone says that a plant won't grow in your area, plant it anyway and see for yourself – experiment, experiment, experiment!



and learn all about endangered Australian species.

Bob & Dot O'Neill (Narre Warren Sth, VIC) for the sheer colour array of Australian plants and to be amazed at their Australian plant collection and what can actually be grown in Melbourne.



If you could trade places with one gardener in the world for a week, who would it be and why?

I don't think that I could pick one gardener, I would need to rotate around four of them. These are all the gardeners that have influenced my gardening style: Gill Muller (SA) for her extensive pot collection and clever design skills in small spaces – Gills potted garden takes my breath away and her extensive plant knowledge is second to none.

Carolle Gadd (Gympie, Qld) to learn more about her amazing garden design skills and walk in a Grevillea wonderland.

Brian & Lorraine Weir (Wallan, VIC) to walk through their wildlife and habitat gardens. Marvel at the collection of grafted standards

Did you enjoy reading about Deb's Garden, Rosella Rise? Please drop Rae a comment below and make sure you follow Deb's garden on Instagram and Facebook too, so you can enjoy a steady stream of flowering Aussie treasures in your feed. Rae Basset 'The Botanical Planet' thebotanicalplanet.com.au



NL Archives

Issues 77 to 80

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.

Read the full text for these references, as well as other articles you find in the GDSG Newsletter archives on the ANPSA website.

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

Newsletter #77 February 2012

Gardens as a photographer's subject

Laurant Kalfala; Gary Web

. . . . Garden photography can be much more than a description and it can also show some of the feelings one can experience in a garden at different moments of the day or the year. . .

Complexity in a Garden

Diana Snape, Vic

Viewing one of the formal gardens shown on TV in Monty Don's series on Italian gardens, I started to think how complex it looked, with all its geometric patterns and arrangements of plants. On further thought, it occurred to me that in terms of garden elements, it was actually quite simple.

Design with Landscape (book review)

John McInerney, NSW

For decades until the late 1960s, much of the shoreline of one of the most beautiful harbours in the world languished in a semi-industrial state, ignored by the municipal governments of the day. And then came Bruce Mackenzie.

Newsletter #78 May 2012

Recording Significant Gardens Project

Margaret James, Vic

A small subset of the Victorian GDSG met several times last year to draw up a format for recording significant Australian plant gardens in private hands. We created an extensive list

of factors to consider. The next step was to try out the format on a real garden and Bev Hanson's Warrandyte Garden was chosen for the trial

A visit to Nicky Zanen's Garden

Nicky Zanen, Vic

Four years ago I hosted the GDSG members for the first time. It was winter and we were sitting around my dining room table, looking out at the backyard. Suggestions included moving the clothes line out of view

Newsletter #79 August 2012

Sky Gardens: the green roof fad comes to town

Helen Young, NSW

In Sydney's Pyrmont, we're standing on the rooftop of a heritage listed building, surrounded by a vast garden sitting in the sky. Greening a city's roofs offers multiple environmental advantages and is one of the best ways to combat the urban heat island effect, a phenomenon that causes

Seasonal Change

Diana Snape, Vic

In a recent program on Lake Eyre, the presenter commented on the vast seasonal changes that occur there – not seasonal as in the four seasons of the year, but irregularly seasonal as in droughts and floods. The seasonal changes in our garden are nothing by comparison but I started thinking that

Newsletter #80 November 2012

Cloudy Hill Garden: four & a half years on

Fiona Johnson, NSW

. We have learnt a lot over the past four and a half years, and continue to learn as we go. I still hesitate to say with confidence whether any particular plant variety will grow here (but can't resist the opportunity to try new and different ones whenever I can).

Planning and Designing Australian Gardens – A few ideas to get you started.

Jeff Howes, NSW

. Keep what's there: Retain any rocks and creeks and remaining bush plants. Trees - especially those that are framing any distant views you have. Dead trees too, providing they are not dangerous, they are any ideal habitat for wildlife.

Membership Matters

A warm welcome to all our new members

We look forward to your active participation in your study group

- Trevor & Faith Eiser, Bunya, Qld
- Jennifer Fisher, Maroubra, NSW
- Shayne Leslie, Wyoming, NSW

Current Membership: 230

Treasurer's Report – February 15, 2023

General account: \$ 3,194.47
+Donation: \$ 5.00

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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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 a useful reference as you write, to ensure that readers are informed of the main physical issues that have influenced the design of the subject 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.