









## **STUDY GROUP LEADER / NEWSLETTER EDITOR**

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## Newsletter Theme: 'Microclimate and Design'

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## Microclimate & Design

Understanding the changing seasonal patterns of sunshine and shadow and using them as design tools to influence your garden layout and establishment is a major influencing factor invaluable to define the overall landscape planning and design, as well as determining the choices for the plants and landscape materials.

## ANPSA Garden Design Study Group Newsletter

## **Newsletter timing & Themes**

Issue	date	Theme
125	March	"Garden Peace & Tranquillity"
126	July	"Design with Geology & Rocks"
127	November	"The Dynamic Garden"
128	March	"Climate Change Impact"

#### Membership of GDSG is free .....

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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

Welcome to Newsletter #124 - thank you to members who contributed articles on this 'Microclimate' theme and other garden descriptions. Articles are always very welcome and it is easy to make space for your contribution however large or small. So please keep sharing your stories with us all.

## Local GDSG meetings are beneficial

As you know in almost every issue, I suggest that there is great benefit in forming a local group of GDSG members, then getting together on a regular basis to observe and discuss design in the various gardens visited. Importantly when you meet, after each visit please write an article for the Newsletter to share your experiences with us all.

Here in Queensland our GDSG group recently had a garden visit with a difference. One of our members had down-sized to a new home after several decades on acreage. immediately removed the 20year old exotic garden and then called out for our 'Help'! The day was very worthwhile as many were able to see for the first time how to approach a 'new' garden design from first principles, and Lyn really appreciated the suggestions of our members. I prepared a 'mud map' of the site, showed the North point, and together we identified the sunshine and shadow patterns, soil types and conditions, positive and negative views, and planned the diverse functional requirements. Then last but not least, we collectively suggested a selection of species to suit the functions and aesthetics of the various new garden spaces.

During the next twelve months, Carmel and I are considering doing a few short motoring trips to revisit some Australian regions that we have explored ages ago or others not at all. We want to do this while we can, and having just turned 80, thought we had better be quick! So don't be surprised if you receive an email from me to see if it is convenient to arrange a short visit to your garden. It may even be possible to have a get together with other members in the same locality.

## Finalising the 'Anthology' saga?

Investigating a viable method to utilise the invested GDSG funds for optimum benefit has been an extended process. Is it a second printed book or a digital eBook 'Anthology' based on 'fact sheets', or something else? Finally, after discussing the options and the technical side of e-publishing via a Zoom meeting with Heater Miles (APS NSW), Brian Waters (ANPSA web-manager), Ben Walcott and John Carter (ANPS Canberra), as GDSG Leader, I have come to a conclusion.

From their collective expertise it became apparent that for now, we concentrate on offering garden design knowledge through adding to the existing collection of garden descriptions in the GDSG section of the ANPSA website - filed under the headings: "Newsletter", " Articles", "Visit an Australian Garden" and "Garden Snapshots".

All of these records provide an excellent easily accessible resource offering very practical ways to plan, design and develop a native garden described by text and illustrations.

On reflection, the proposed 'Anthology' initiative was really duplicating in a new way, much of what already exists in the website within the "Newsletter" files, here past articles in each issue are easily accessed by reference to the comprehensive online subject index.

However, these invaluable resources have not been expanded in recent times, and currently they do not adequately cover the broad range of diverse garden conditions dictated by the climatic diversity of the bioregional zones throughout the continent. As could be expected given that GDSG was formed in Victoria, most of the existing information is based on temperate climatic conditions.

- "Articles" 49 Fact Sheets, wide subject variety;
- "Visit an Australian Garden" 6 gardens all in Vic;
- "Garden Snapshots" Vic 9, NSW 7, ACT 2;

Obviously, we need to include stories of more gardens to achieve a much wider national coverage to fully reflect our diverse Australian landscape and flora. Hopefully members will see the logic and the value in this decision. In almost every recent Newsletter there have been inspirational articles about established or new native gardens in most states, any of which deserve to have a comprehensive description prepared to add to the "Garden Visits" files, while others may be more suited to the simpler "Snapshots".

## Select a garden and start writing!

It is my intention to commence the process by writing assessments of several gardens in SEQ, and hope to encourage members in other states to do the same. I would like to think that our younger members, perhaps new practitioners or students of landscape architecture or horticulture, might consider using their design skills to prepare an indepth story of special contemporary gardens.

Perhaps this decision will spark your interest in preparing a "Garden Visit" article for your garden or another? A good starting point would be to check the website and see what authors have done in the past, Margaret James story about the Snape Garden is an excellent example to bring to your screen. https://anpsa.org.au/gdsg-snape-garden/

The recent Zoom discussion revealed that the ANPSA website team is in the process of preparing a specialised template to guide, but not constrain authors, by offering a method to make text preparation and page layout simpler, and more web suitable. This, technology, together with appropriate reimbursement of authors expenses to be funded from the term investment.

## Chris Larkin endorses this proposal

I think this is a good way forward because it will get 'the team' focusing on what should be in a garden description that is of design value. Too often garden visits do not elicit discussion of design, instead the focus is on individual plants, or having a nice outing, and not offending anyone by constructive comments.

Garden descriptions should ideally focus the mind on the type of garden and how it is achieved – design. This is good for the writer

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and meaningful for the reader. The pictures are very, very important. As the saying goes 'a picture is worth a thousand words'.

The importance of the words is in some senses, to analyse the picture by looking at its parts and how they work together. In fact, you can look at a part of a garden for this discussion – perhaps just tackle the front or back garden. Tying picture and text tightly together at times would be most valuable. This in many ways was what was able to be achieved in the workshop I ran at ANPSA Kiama. Bringing attention to the details and telling the story and/or how changes might be made in redesigning a space.

I completely agree with you about different bioregions needing different design solutions. With different plants the look will be entirely different, and this is where the idea of a 'sense of place' comes into it. A rainforest full of Queensland plants on my north facing hillside? I think not – even if it would be possible, it would be wrong.

Thinking about which audience you are trying to reach is still a question to ask over and over. I tend to think if big money is to be spent then a wide audience outside the APS bubble is what the aim should be.

I don't think you can rewrite and update the gardens that have been written up already. Several no longer exist. Any that still do exist will be different. Hard structure might not change but the feel of a garden can significantly change with how plants are used. I am finding this myself as I rework sections of my own garden. Cheers Chris

Chris has been integrally involved throughout the whole planning process for this initiative, and her in-depth input and experience has been invaluable.

It is important to receive her endorsement to make doubly sure that my decision as GDSG Leader is appropriate and will be generally acceptable to our members.

Lawrie

## Anthology – 2 draft 'Fact Sheets'

As a result of the 'Anthology' proposal in the July Newsletter #123, Jeff Howes APS NSW forwarded a copy of the book "Creating an Australian Garden" by John Hunt, published in 1947 by the Society for Growing Australian Plants NSW. Design issues covered in this book are as appropriate today as they were seventy-seven years ago. It deals in detail with a wide range of garden design issues and would be an invaluable resource to contribute texts to the Anthology. As can be seen from the following reproduced extract updating the language of the 1940's to today, would be appropriate.

## Mounding & Channelling Gardens

Mounding or the raising of garden beds, has usually resulted in successful plant growth and indeed with Australian native plants at times, very spectacular growth. I attribute this to the fact that one of the prime elements of good garden conditions exists initially – good drainage. In many natural soil profiles, over a period of time some plants 'go off', they grow well for a period, then suddenly die or alternately flourish in rainy periods, but become sparse and miserable specimens in dryer periods, often due to poor drainage.





To maintain favourable garden conditions, raise the garden levels to form beds and mounds. The raised garden mounds should also be channelled by the creation of shallow depressions forming gullies, holes and

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valleys which are open ended and shaped like a saucer or a swale to catch surface water. Below the surface water holding depressions in the mound, shape the subsoil to catch and retain excess water that in rainy periods soaks down to the lower levels. From here it is absorbed upwards by capillary action into the mounded garden.



Illustration showing use of mounds and hills to provide good drainage, and channels or valleys to collect the runoff and provide water retention.

This technique is also an effective example of garden design and construction responding logically to the drying effects of climate change. Lawrie

The following page contains an extract from the first issue of the GDSG Newsletter, May 1993. It has been prepared as a draft example to indicate the content of a typical 'Fact Sheet' to be contained in the proposed 'Anthology' in the ANPSA website. Contemporary photographs would be added to illustrate the suitably modified original text.

## Native Plants for Mini-hedges

Geoff Simmons, Queensland

Do those acclaiming the virtues of Australian plants really think of them in specific landscaping terms? The first priority in choice of plants is suitability for inclusion of a plant in a landscape feature. It is the selection of specific plants that should be emphasised. However, the data base, especially one's own knowledge, is limited. Hence a choice may have to be made on whether to use a frequently planted, well known species or a relatively unknown one. In many cases the SGAP member will be keen to include the unusual or little tried plant. This should be encouraged as data will be accumulated for the landscaper to plan a more rational garden.



Melaleuca 'Great Balls of Fire'



Acmena 'Allyn Magic'



Syzygium 'Tiny Trev'

I call small clipped hedges mini-hedges, although they may have a name designated by landscapes. Nowadays clipped hedges are not as favoured as they once were, no doubt because of the work involved in their cultivation.

Recalling famous overseas gardens containing mini-hedges of box, and watching Australian TV programs advocating exotic plants for this type of landscaping, one wonders where there is information about the use of native plants for this purpose.

To start the ball rolling, I recount my experience with *Graptophyllum excelsum* (Letter-leaf or Scarlet Fuchsia). I have several large plants of this species but about two years ago I decided to include a minihedge as part of my garden. Why use *G. excelsum*? Because I had a source of propagating material, it grew well in my garden, it had relatively small leaves and a good appearance.

The drought has not produced favourable conditions for growth and survival but nevertheless the plants are starting to assume the effect that I hope for. It is easy to propagate which is a bonus as about 300 plants were needed. Clipping seems to be possible. If someone could find a tiny leaf variety it would be an even better plant for this purpose.

What about other species? One that I have growing as single plants is *Citriobatus spinescens* (Native Orange). The dwarf *Baeckea* could be a candidate but I have preferred to let it grow naturally, so I do not know whether it could be repeatedly clipped and still look so attractive. The life span and hardiness are important factors for clipped mini-hedges because discontinuity and dead plants detract from the beauty of this garden feature.

Larger hedges of a metre or so in height are not considered here but *Backhousia citriodora* (Lemon-scented Myrtle) and again *Graptophyllum excelsum* are possibilities. *Leptospermum petersonii* (Lemon-scented Tea-tree) was being advocated as a plant for screening hedges some years ago but in my experience, it really did not prove a winner as it tended to become straggly and lose foliage at low levels.

In summary, we need to know much more about Australian plants for specific purposes in landscaping and to build up a data bank of information and experience so that future gardeners can have a better basis on which to make a choice.

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## Next Newsletter THEME *"Garden Peace & Tranquillity"* Newsletter #125 March 2024

## Garden Peace and Tranquillity?

Lawrie Smith, Brisbane It is likely that almost every garden is, or has, attributes that basically inspire peace and tranquillity, some more than others. It is a poor reflection on our society that typically today, so many of our suburban 'gardens' are often little more than a patch of un-mowed grass, planted if at all, with a few scraggly, drought tolerant, exotic specimens. In such a 'garden' there is no way to relax, to be at peace and enjoy some tranquillity away from the distraction and stresses of everyday life.

Glancing through photographs of members gardens there were numerous illustrations of this theme. Hopefully, the following observations will inspire you to write about how you created a similar special section of your garden that through design and careful plant selection, offers these and other special emotive characteristics.

Simply being in a garden creates a feeling of timelessness. A peaceful and tranquil garden generates a sense of well-being. A diverse, densely planted, layered garden, offers mystery and surprise. Set the mood from the first step into the garden and carry it through with a variety of sensory experiences - visual attraction, colours, textures, sounds, aromas, movement and change over time.

The key to a peaceful garden character is in overall simplicity of the layout, the physical forms and the use of a limited colour palette in both construction materials and plants.

Repetition in the garden gives a sense of cohesion —an essential ingredient to keep the garden visually 'calm'.

Continuity of 'hard landscape' is particularly important, avoid mixing unrelated construction materials, preferably use natural weathered rock, timbers, even old brick. Be inspired by the local landscape and plan the garden to provide a habitat for wildlife to share a natural sanctuary, to offer a place to experience a close connection with the natural world.



Deb McMillan's 'Rosella Rise' garden, Melbourne

A vital part of a cool and peaceful garden are places to sit - somewhere both in the sun and in the shade, to rest or read a book in silence without feeling watched or interrupted.

The sounds of running water is one of the most calming effects offering - a filter to unwanted noise, the soft patter of raindrops on a pond, or the dancing reflections of light.

Dappled light sparkles through shimmering leaves; golden light highlights plant forms and textures; aromas waft from hidden flowers; each gives a sense of peacefulness.

Colour in all landscape components is the most significant contributor to overall aesthetic qualities and garden character.

Green the ultimate colour to relax mind and body, is a simple palette of many tones.

Minimise or avoid multicolour effects, subtle dashes of colour through greens enhance rather than overpower.

Dark colours, like blue, mauve and purple, tend to create a calming and serene atmosphere, cool even in extreme heat. Complementary colours produce a feeling of tranguillity and harmony.

Garden art, formal or informal, or sculptural rock grouping or interesting artefacts integrated into a garden setting provide visual focus and interest to an outdoor space while enhancing the opportunities for relaxation, interest and contemplation.

## **This Newsletter THEME** *'Microclimate and Design'* Newsletter #124 November 2023



It was intended that the 'Microclimate and Design' focus, would result in descriptions and images of at least one garden in each of the seven climatic regions of the continent, particularly those gardens appropriately designed to respond to the specific site 'microclimate'.

- Tropical wet Far North Qld, NT;
- Tropical dry Central Qld;
- Subtropical humid SE Qld & Nth NSW;
- Temperate maritime NSW, Vic, Tasmania;
- Mediterranean Vic, South Aust, WA;
- Semi-arid hinterland all states;
- Arid interior South Aust, West Aust, NT.

Within each of these diverse Australian climatic regions, local site conditions will dictate the site-specific microclimate pattern, a major factor that influences the physical characteristics, the planning and design, and the ongoing establishment of any garden. Understanding the changing seasonal patterns of sunshine and shadow and using them as design tools to influence your garden layout and establishment is fundamental. Before commencing garden design have you considered preparing a sunshine and shadow analysis drawing of the site? This will be a major influencing factor to define the overall landscape planning and design as well as determining the choice for the plants and landscape materials. These are four of the more important questions.

- Do you always choose and locate plants according to their tolerance of the specific microclimatic conditions of sunshine and shade of the various garden areas?
- Is the knowledge of microclimate patterns first and foremost in your mind when selecting species for seasonal flower or foliage effect?
- Is it important to know which area of the garden receives full sun in winter mornings and/or where there is breezy, cool shade in summer afternoons, in order to plan the optimum location for each outdoor living area?
- Is it possible to determine the ideal location for a shade tree, in order to control where it provides shade in summer, but sunshine in winter?



Shade on the south, sun on the north - always

These and many other questions about ways to respond to microclimate influences in design have been considered by our members in the following descriptions of developing and managing their gardens.

## Gardening in Townsville … *a journey through time*

John Elliott, NPQ Townsville

Originally from northern England my wife and I spent 5 years in Tucson, Arizona before arriving in Townsville NQ in 1986. So, the change in environment couldn't have been more spectacular. Townsville at that time was rightly referred to in the vernacular as 'Brownsville', but there were glimpses in the wet season of vigorous tropical growth. I will always remember the luscious expanses of 'buffalo grass' and the deep shade of mango trees in mystifying tropical humidity.

I started gardening in one of those quarter acre blocks in an old, established suburb. The soils were typically deep clay, and I began with showy tropicals such as Heliconias. Not only did this give quick results but I found that within a short space of time the vigorous root and rhizome activity brought in worms by the bucketful which converted the soils wonderfully.

An old-time neighbour had a garden that doubled as a tropical fruit tree arboretum - a wonderland of dark leaves and strange fruits that he generously shared. So, my garden lent in that direction for some time, augmenting the Common Mango and Bowen Special that were already there.



By 2000 I had moved house (another generous quarter acre) and was well on the road to working with native plants. I had long wanted to identify native trees whose abundance provides the backdrop to our surrounding landscape, and this led me to the wonderful world of bushwalking off track. As a result, my garden slowly changed from native plants bought from nurseries to plants which I had seen and admired in their native habitat, and which reflected a much greater understanding of local environments.



The front garden now has only plants of the Dry Tropics; the intention being that once established they will need no watering. Mostly local plants such as *Acacia chishomii* with its showy canopy of golden yellow spikes, but I make exceptions for the exceptional. The fabulous red flowering Cape York tree, *Xanthostemon youngii*, and the bizarre *Macropteranthes montana*, from way out Irvinebank way.



At the back of the house a larger area showcases a collection of dry Tropics 'rainforest' plants, whose shady effect creates a microclimate and reduces the need for water. Successful local plants that I have introduced include: *Glycosmis trifoliata*, a small handsome tree with attractive berries, *Hedraianthera porphyropetala*, a shrub with dazzling small red star like flowers, *Wrightia versicolor*, an unusual small tree in Apocynaceae with splendid but short-lived flowers, and of course *Backhousia tetraptera*! Apart from my interest in plants for their aesthetic qualities, I have always been interested in their history. If we examine, for instance, *Persoonia falcata*, a fabulous flowering local plant that I have so far been unable to cultivate, one can learn the meaning of the scientific name, and that it is known by an indigenous common name, 'geebung', whose fruit was 'greatly relished'. It is a member of the Proteaceae family, a family with a history that can be traced back say 150 million years. To have such a plant in your garden gives a lineage of an almost unimaginable time span. A thing of wonder.

Despite its 'industrial' reputation, Townsville is blessed by being surrounded by large areas of mountainous country which has resisted development and is largely reserved as National or Conservation parks. My bushwalking has led me to explore large parts of this area, particularly south of town at Cape Cleveland and the foothills of Mt Elliot where I began to wonder how differently this country must have been viewed by the indigenous peoples that had lived here for tens of thousands of years.



There is considerable physical evidence of Aboriginal presence, mainly in the form of rock art, but the demise of their traditional life was so sudden and fateful that very little of their cultural beliefs was recorded. But with a little diligence, there is much that can be

learnt about what was 'a rich cultural world and sentient landscape'. I increasingly wanted my garden to reflect the local native flora, history and cultural richness that I witnessed, but how to represent my appreciation of those experiences in a relatively small garden?

Using the rock art images and colours I started using poles painted with Aboriginal motifs as a focus for my growing appreciation of the long history and cultural significance of the landscape and to promote a respect of culture and country for us all. This



development has come as a surprise to me – the result of a natural progression. I am, however, very pleased with the result – more so than I would have been by following, for instance, neoclassical fashion and displaying 'La Ballerina'!

## Mediterranean Garden in Kojonup

Chris Lewis, Kojonup, WA

I live and garden in Kojonup WA we have an average rainfall of 500mm per year, that occurs normally in the winter months, no rain or very little falls during the summer months. This is a typical Mediterranean climate.



My garden is given no or very little water during the summer months. I have long since given up trying to grow the Tasmanian alpine plants brought from "big green shed".

Acacia denticulosa, Grevillea intricata, Conostylis candicans, Chorizema cordatum, Dampiera,

I do most of my own propagating

and concentrate on local species. Some only live a few years in my garden even though they grow for decades a few Kilometres away in the bush. I find mulching my garden soil very important for the summer survival. Over population limits the amount of moisture available to each plant. It is hard to resist just adding another plant to an already crowded garden. Large shrubs and trees while giving shade also use the available moisture.



The beautiful sand loving Banksias only grow in the sand pad put down for the house as they don't like the heavy loam of the rest of the

Ptilotus obovatus

garden. My most successful group of plants come from areas that are dryer than Kojonup. E.g. *Hakea, Eremophila, Chamelaucium, Melaleuca* along with members of the Pea family.



Hakea multilineata back, red Grevillea thelemanniana, pink Thryptomene saxicola

I feel that as water becomes a scarcer commodity, we will be choosing plants from the thousands of wonderful species that grow further inland in the dryer climates of Australia. We must 'garden with nature', work with our climate, our soil, our rainfall, the available water, temperature and humidity.

## El Nino, Climate Change - impact Microclimate & Design

Heather Miles, Sydney NSW

## Exploring ephemeral arid plants of NSW

The arid and semi-arid plants of NSW demonstrate some extraordinary adaptations to climate, soils and microclimate!

With El Nino on its way as well as long term climate warming, it's good to understand

which plants might cope with the tough, hot and dry conditions.

Here are some of the plants seen on a recent 3200 km trip to western NSW and north west Victoria, including White Cliffs (the white opal town), Broken Hill, Menindee Lakes, Mungo and Mildura.

Note: Happy to be corrected if I have plant names wrong!



Arid ecosystem covered with plants

#### What's an arid plant?

Australia is considered to be 70% arid/semiarid, with arid defined as receiving under 250ml of rain pa and semi-arid being 250 – 350mm pa. Rain is not necessarily seasonal but occurs over longer-term cycles characterised by a boom/bust cycle of droughts and floods and hot dry summers and cold winters.

The so-called 'deserts' of NSW include grasslands, shrublands, woodlands and swamplands. They are dominated by chenopod and acacia shrublands, with species that are drought and salt tolerant such as *Sclerolaena* (burrs), *Atriplex* (saltbush), *Maireana* (bluebushes and cottonbushes), *Chenopodium* and *Rhagodia*, as well as the wattles. (https://www.anbg.gov.au/photo/vegetation/c henopod-samphire-forb.html).

The flora of these regions shows some wonderful survival and reproduction adaptations. These are both physical and behavioural and include modified leaves and stems for storing water and preventing water loss and deep penetrating roots with water storage capability and ability to re-sprout after fires. Here are some of the plants you might see in these regions, many with broader horticultural potential.

## Around Wilcannia and White Cliffs



*Eremophila* duttonii, near Wilcannia - a definite candidate for the garden with its lovely red/yellow flowers



*Dissocarpus paradoxus*, (Cannonball, Hard-headed Saltbush), Wilcannia - looks attractive but that fluffy fruit breaks down and 5 nasty spines appear, perfect for sticking into feet or animals. Maybe we'll leave that where it is!



*Maireana* - beautiful with soft delicate flowers and succulent looking leaves. There are 57 *Maireana* species in Australia, all endemic. The fruits superficially resemble flowers, being small flat discs, which are often red or yellow in colour. Already in cultivation and good for a wide range of conditions



*Ptilotus* (possibly *P. spathulatus*) amongst the diggings at White Cliffs. *Ptilotus* contains about 120 species, with most coming from the Pilbara. They are herbs or small shrubs often with pink flowers that hang down like a tail, hence their common name of pussycat, lambs or fox 'tails'. One of the Aboriginal names that has stuck is 'Mulla Mullaa'. They are endemic to Australia.

#### **Broken Hill and Menindee**

A highlight of Broken Hill was the Living Desert State Park. Nestled amongst the Barrier Ranges, it is a 2400 ha reserve which includes the Living Desert Flora and Fauna Sanctuary. The area includes the Sculpture Park, which is also worth a look-see!



The restricted range *Eucalyptus gillii*, with a common name of Curly mallee or Silver mallee. An attractive small tree and grows naturally in sandy soil and may be worth a place in the garden if you have room. The lovely yellow flowers and attractive buds make a lovely addition.

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Acacia tetragonophylla (Dead Finish) a rather straggly shrub growing 2 - 3m. with each flower on a single stalk. Its common name is believed to have two causes i.e. 'when the cows start eating the Dead Finish bush, everything else has died' or 'in a bad drought, this is the last bush to die'. The Aboriginal name for the plant, from the Warlpiri language is 'Kurara'. The Arrernte name is 'Arlketyerre'.



Solanum sturtianum, Thargomindah Nightshade, Broken Hill - probably not a good candidate for the garden, given its poisonous berries, but it does make an attractive shrub in this environment



Enchylaena tomentosa, Ruby Saltbush, Menindee - small berries with a crisp, salty-sweet flavour. The leaves can be made into a tea but only if cooked & used sparingly

#### Mildura, the Australian Inland Botanic Garden

I really enjoyed this garden with many of the arid and semi-arid plants on display. There was a magnificent field of Swainsona formosa, Sturt's Desert pea, with its bloodred flowers. I was surprised to learn that there are about 85 species of Swainsona globally with all but one endemic to Australia. Most are prostrate. Some produce a phytotoxin that causes disease in cattle when ingested, with the sickness referred to as 'peastruck'.



#### Here are some other species in the garden:



Rhagodia spinescens (Spiny Saltbush) attractive silvery foliage, good for a hedge, many soil types tolerated and purportedly fire retardant



Maireana sedifolia (Pearl Bluebush) - silvery or succulent leaves, attractive bracts



Exocarpus aphyllus unique looking plant with no obvious leaves, grows as a shrub or small tree with tiny red berries

A garden well worth a visit, explore the many arid and semi-arid plants with potential for east coast gardens over the next 20+ years.

The full story of this trip can be found on the APS NSW website:

https://resources.austplants.com.au/stories/explorin g-ephemeral-arid-plants-of-nsw/

## Microclimate & Native Plants What the Australian public wants to know

Rae Bassett, Woombye, Qld

On a daily basis, Australians collectively search for something on Google more than 300,000 times. In 2022 the most searched for included such diverse things as Wordle, Shane Warne, Ukraine, Monkeypox, Drunken Chicken and Dahl recipes.

We go to Google to answer every conceivable question and our searching habits provide a wealth of information regarding the daily challenges we face, what ails us and the problems of everyday life, as well as our hopes, dreams and wildest ideas.

Australians also go to Google in droves to answer their garden design questions. I learned from my own small blog that Australian gardeners have questions about native plants and colour. Sitting at home, dreaming about the gardens they are creating, many go to Google to ask - what Australian shrubs have purple flowers, show me some yellow native Australian flowers, and many colourful variations on this theme.

So for this garden design topic, I set out to discover what the Australian public wants to know about native plants and microclimate. I hope you find this as interesting as I did!

Australians make 700,000+ native plant related searches on Google every month! Their questions about native plants include 'How to', 'When to', 'Where to' variations, as well as 'Which plants' questions and, 'Are they', 'Can they' and 'Will they'.

For this research I segmented over 440 microclimate related Google search phrases totalling 19,860 searches per month in Australia on average. Here's a look at some of the top questions they have about native plants and microclimate.

77% of all native plant + microclimate related searches were about LIGHT, of these:

- 8,590 searches per month were about native plants for FULL SUN locations, and
- 6,440 searches were about native plants for SHADE.

The most Googled individual microclimate questions were also LIGHT related, with:

- 720 people searching every month for "Australian native shade loving plants" as well as for full sun plants, and low maintenance full sun plants.
- 590 people per month searched for "Australian plants for shade".

The second most searched for microclimate category was TEMPERATURE with the overwhelming majority of searches related to COLD temperatures (1,200 per month).

- Frost hardy native plants
- Drought and frost tolerant native plants
- Frost hardy climbing plants and ground covers

The next popular category of searches was related to MOISTURE.

- 84% of moisture related questions were about WET microclimates.
- Popular questions were about small native plants that like wet feet, as well as trees and hedges for wet areas.

SOIL type only featured in 3% of searches, dominated by questions about plants for clay soil. Searches including "native plants clay soil", plants for shallow soil, alkaline soil and very few searches related to growing native plants in sandy soil.

The final categories were ASPECT related searches, that amounted to

- 510 searches a month for questions related to plants for north, south, east and west aspects.
- With WIND related searches amounting to just 250 native microclimate searches in Australia each month.

I hope you found these statistics interesting, and in case you were wondering, *Syzygium* Lilly Pillies are the most googled native plant in Australia, surprisingly beating *Eucalyptus* and *Acacia* Wattle. Happy gardening!

Rae, you have really captured the essence of this NL topic from a completely new and contemporary viewpoint that will surprise some members, but will likely generate comment too. It is surprising that there were so few searches on preferred soil, for me this is fundamental, and suggests that when initially selecting plants, people do not sufficiently consider the natural habitat of the species they try to grow, therefore often unsuccessfully!

However, it was good to see that a large majority searched the most important opposite aspects of microclimate – plants most suited for full sun or full shade.

In garden design Considering the effects of temperature and moisture are basic, important microclimatic components, particularly the extremes of heat, cold, drought and rain, as your research discovered.

Your research is a very useful reference to sharpen the way ANPSA and our various APS, NPQ etc branches, promote the value and suitability of native plants to the general public. *Lawrie* 

## 'Reidsdale' garden in the southern tablelands NSW

Anne Keaney, Stanwell Park NSW

It's another horrible spring day in Reidsdale. Eleven degrees at 3.00pm, winds from the west gusting to 60km p/h and once again no rain. Frost forecast for the next 4 four days. Here in the southeast corner of the NSW Southern Tablelands at 750m, the winters and springs are cold, dry and very windy. The summers however are mild and bring rain.

My property sits on top of a ridge. The land slopes away to the north, but the ridgeline bends in a semi-circle so that one end faces north west, the middle due north and the other end, north east. The property is on open farmland although the south east corner is wooded with *Eucalyptus viminalis*, *Eucalyptus radiata* and *Acacia melanoxylon*.

Overall, the position of the property leaves it highly exposed to the prevailing north westerly winds. These winds cause severe wind chill in winter and are very drying in spring and early summer. In addition, any plants not well rooted are blown over or grow sideways. The degree of exposure to this wind is the most significant climate variable across my garden and the three different aspects arising from the shape of the ridgeline give rise to three distinct microclimates.

## Western Aspect – Dry Arid garden



The north western facing slope to the western side of the house has no shade. It is fully exposed to the afternoon sun, and the wind, which blows straight onto the slope. It is the hottest and driest place in my garden, with the lowest humidity. After trialling Eremophila species in this garden, which largely failed due to the cold, the garden has been filled with very hardy cold climate Grevillea, Banksia and Hakea. These plants need to withstand the driest, as well as the coldest and hottest conditions in the garden. Despite these conditions, at the top of the slope and next to the wall of the house are a very healthy Banksia serrata, Banksia integrifolia and Banksia aemula.

Neither the *B.serata* nor the *B.aemula* are suited to cold conditions but clearly have benefited from the warmth and shelter provided by the house. They also grew up surrounded by established non-native plants, since removed, that gave shelter when they were young. Both plants suffer frost burn on their tips and the *Banksia aemula* cones are frost damaged each year resulting in very pretty pink tipped cones, but are otherwise healthy and vigorous. Northern Aspect – Open Heathland Garden.



The middle section of the slope which faces north and is without shade or wind protection is almost as wind affected as the western slope. In some ways the wind is a bigger issue here because the wind blows across the slope. This slope has more protection from the afternoon sun.

My vision (I have only planted out a small part so far) is to plant out a large low growing grassy garden of *Lomandra* interspersed with a few local growing plants such as *Grevillea arenaria* and *Daviesia leptophylla* with a smattering of a taller plant – possibly *Hakea sericea.* I am hoping to create something that looks like an open heathland which is low growing enough to retain my northerly views from house.

**Eastern Aspect – Under story woodland Garden.** The north eastern facing slope on the eastern side of the house is the most sheltered from the wind and afternoon sun. It also benefits from sitting within the woodland part of the property. It is divided into three glades, with rows of eucalypts and acacias dividing the three sections.



On the most eastern facing glade which has good draining loamy soil I am able to grow waratahs. Originally, I grew only Braidwood Brilliants due to their supposed superior frost hardiness but I have found all the cultivars to be fine. I also grow Monga Waratahs *Telopea mongaensis* which are a bit harder to coax into flowering than the cultivars, but grow quite well.

My plan this summer (if we get some rain) is to entirely plant out the middle glade with Monga Waratahs and attempt to mimic the conditions in which they grow in the forest only 5kms from my house.

The third and most westerly glade has the least wind protection but is still semi shaded. My plan is to plant out a belt of *Banksia marginata*, local *Hakea* and *Grevillea* on the western side of this glade to build up the wind protection. Last summer I started planting *Prostanthera, Pomaderris* and various local *Lomatia* in this glade. So far, they have grown well, but being more exposed to the wind than the waratahs in the most easterly glade, are starting to show the effects of the current drought conditions.

Although admittedly the garden on the north facing slope is mainly still in my head, the three microclimates resulting from the three different aspects along my bending ridgeline have given rise to three very different styles of garden and the opportunity to grow three very different groups of plants.

Anne, the semicircular ridge geography of your garden site obviously defines the three very different microclimatic garden zones, each variously influenced by the exposure to strong wind and extreme seasonal temperatures. This is an excellent, almost radical example to illustrate how Anne has carefully understood these constraints and applied them in species selections that tolerate the microclimatic extremes so successfully. An ideal demonstration that design working with nature is worthwhile! Lawrie

## Coastal Mediterranean garden City Beach, WA

Margaret Matthews, Perth, WA

Gaia was the goddess of earth in ancient Greece. In 1979 James Lovelock published *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*, which proposes that living organisms help shape the Earths biosphere and maintain it as a fit environment for life. As a gardener and bush regenerator, I see that the Gaia theory works even on the microscale: if we can create part of a microclimate the plants that live there will further change that part of the garden to suit themselves and others like them. I like the idea of having mini ecosystems with their own microclimates.

The site of my garden is challenging: two blocks from the beach, it is really a sand dune. The soil is extremely alkaline and hydrophobic. The easterly wind blows in the mornings, especially in summer, the westerly gale blows in the afternoons. Being a Mediterranean climate, we have good rainfall in the winter (if we are lucky) and no rain in the summer. Summer temperatures often reach the low 40's, winters are mild, with minimum temperatures rarely below 10°C



After 13 years the gardens are well established but like all gardens not static.



The very large, east facing verge was originally planted just with hybrid kangaroo

paws of varying heights and sown annually for a display of everlastings. I am now diversifying the planting as the open sunny site is ideal for many of the WA plants I love and want to grow. The microclimate here really is like much of the WA bush: open, sunny and windy. Plants here prefer little water in summer and grow in the wet Perth winter. Plants include the woody pear *Xylomelum angustifolium*, fuchsia gum, *Eucalyptus forrestiana*, zig zag wattle, *Acacia merinthophora*, pink coneflower, *Isopogon formosus*, and lambs' tails, *Lachnostachys eriobotyra*, among many others.

I have also planted my neighbour's large verge across the road, again with species that enjoy an open sunny position. The first plantings were established more than ten years ago providing a backdrop of one-sided bottle brush, *Calothamnus quadrifidus*, several tuart trees and cockies tongues, *Templetonia retusa*. More recent plantings include a thriving *Hakea Victoria*, tree smokebush *Conospermum triplinervium*, several banksias and scaevolas.



Inside the fenced front garden it is more sheltered and I now have much more shade than originally. Ther is a dense planting of grevilleas and *Banksia ashbyi* (dwarf form) with several hakeas including the sea urchin hakea, *Hakea petiolaris* and the bird beak hakea, *Hakea orthorrhyncha*. This planting is to provide habitat for small birds as well as food for the black cockatoos which visit regularly for the hakea nuts and banksia flowers.

Near the steps to the front door coastal plants that grow on the sand dunes two blocks away are thriving: wallaby grass, spinifex and selfsown *Olearia axillaris*.

A billabong style pond contains Australian water plants and reeds as well as native ANPSA Garden Design Study Group – Newsletter NL 124.docx pygmy perch and is home to motorbike frogs. Boronias grow in the boggy moist end of the pond.



Two raised rock gardens in the centre of the garden are over the inground water tanks, the only way I could get enough soil to grow plants. A silver princess, *Eucalyptus caesia* grows in the gap between the two mounds (tanks). One mound is dominated by a Hakea Burrendong beauty and a *Thryptomene* baeckaena, the other by a *Xanthorrhoe*a and a *Goodenia* as well as a *Maireana*. The rockery provides excellent drainage and has several small microclimates provided by the different aspects, and shade from other plants.

A small shady garden next to the pond is well suited to *Thomasia* sp and *Correa* sp and has well established shrubs of holly grevillea, *Grevillea aquifolium* and *Chorilaena quercifolia* from the southern WA forests.



The sheltered garden on the northern side of the property is home to tree ferns and trees from the Queensland rain forest as well as *Dianella tasmanica* and *Lomandra* sp. Two staghorn ferns are mounted on the

wall. A tuckeroo, *Cupaniopsis anacardioides,* provides shelter from the westerly sea breeze which is more like a sea gale.

Plants, such as *Stylidium* sp and *Leschenaultia biloba*, that have failed to grow in many of these different habitats have succeeded in pots, which are yet another type of microclimate.

The gardens have sub surface drip irrigation for the summer though many of the established plants no longer need it and I prefer to hand water new plantings. All the gardens are heavily mulched with bark and leaf litter.

So, in a relatively small area I have microclimates that support sandplain Kwongan heath, coastal sand dunes, Great Southern forest, banksia woodland, rainforest and wetland.

Margarets garden is obviously another excellent example of understanding and using microclimate to define the planning, design and plant selection, with some surprising species of the eastern coast!

## Mediterranean Garden Design in Moonta Bay, SA

Lib Bartholomeusz, Moonta Bay SA

A garden in a mediterranean climate is fun because the seasons are distinct and interesting and are generally not too harsh to restrict what can be grown. We have wet mild winters, rarely a frost, and hot dry summers.



The hot dry summers is a critical consideration in our garden design. The section in the photo was initially planned to be viewed from outside seating on the wide front verandah. So high plants were planned along the footpath,

followed by midstory the low plants near the seating.

That didn't really work because I couldn't bear to remove self-sown plants in the foreground. I chose drought-tolerant plants, many of them local species. Trees provide height, shade and screening from the street. Various eucalypts, including *E. woodwardii* from WA, *Pittosporum angustfolium* and *Callistemon rugulosus* are all thriving.

Middle storey plants include a variety of *Eremophila*. Although there are only two local species of *Eremophila*, the genus flourishes here. The foliage comes in a range of colours and the grey *Eremophila nivea* adds light, complementing the greens of other shrubs. I prefer *Correa sp* (they're harder to grow) and *C. alba, C reflexa* varieties are now doing well. Various *Acacia* as well as *Dodonaea revoluta* and *Templetonia retusa* are hardy additions to the garden.

Hedges and clipped plants are a feature of mediterranean gardens, and it's been interesting working with these styles in an informal garden. A hedge of *Atriplex paludosa* grew beautifully for ten years but it deteriorated and was removed this year. Re-planting with a border of strappy plants, *Dianella revoluta* and *Lomandra longifolia*, is the next task. *Grevillea* sp respond well to clipping, making them bushy and encouraging abundant flowering while creating interesting features in the gardens.

Grasses, including *Poa poiformis*, *Cymbopogon ambiguus* and *Austrostipa elegantissima* add texture and movement. Their seeds spread and germinate easily so I usually 'act like a wallaby' and trim them back after a spell of flowering.

Our climate is ideal for the diverse plants of southern and central Western Australian but many of the ones I really wanted to grow can't tolerate our alkaline soil. A solution is to grow them in pots. For example, it's taken some time but *Grevillea bipinnatifida* and *Acacia denticulosa* both flowered in pots this year. I wonder how long it will take to have them big enough to grow in large terracotta pots.



Another delightful aspect the mediterranean climate is the ability to create outdoor living spaces surrounded by native plants. Our shaded fernery is a favourite mealtime spot in summer. Autumn and spring breakfasts are spent contemplating the front garden and watching the wattle birds and honey eaters jostling for position. I do enjoy our mediterranean garden.

## Nature creates Microclimates

Julie Nimmo, Sunshine Coast



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Native Plants Sunshine Coast group walked the Wallum at the Authur Harrold Nature Refuge on Noosa North Shore in August, noting how a small difference in ground level captures water resulting in subtle changes and variations to the landscape. From this path with a sense of enclosure, the group observed the change beyond to the more open landscape of lower growing shrubs such as *Banksia oblongifolia* and *Boronia falcifolia* spectacularly in flower at the time.



## Hawkesbury sandstone country Erica Nash, Kenthurst, NSW

We live on a five-acre bush block about 50 km NW of Sydney CBD in a semi-rural area where the urban sprawl is gradually creeping in through the once pastoral landscape to the west. It is typical of Hawkesbury sandstone country, with exposed rocky outcrops occurring at various levels down the side of a hill before descending into a gully where a temporary watercourse snakes through a mixture of bracken and tall eucalypts such as *Eucalyptus punctata, Corymbia eximia, C. gummifera* and *Angophora costata.* 

Due to a bushfire in 2002-03 which came through the property, much of the understorey consisting mainly of *Banksia spinulosa*, *Darwinia* and many pea flowers was burnt and never fully recovered, so gradually I have been propagating native plants endemic to the area from seed and planting out as they mature. These have included, *Bursaria spinosa*, *Banksia serrata*, and some trees, chiefly *Eucalyptus punctata*, *E. crebra* and *Allocasuarina littoralis*. To support their growth, my husband and son have installed 200m of irrigation lines from bore water and town water at the back gate all the way down to the creek so that the new plantings can be watered on an as-needed basis. Plants I could not propagate from seed, were either bought from APS (Parra-Hills group) plant sales or from a local nursery which specialises in native plants from the local area.

Just outside the back gate is an area which we decided would be suitable for regeneration using a spectrum of native plants to encourage the return of disappearing small bird populations such as the Superb Blue Wren and a variety of Honeyeaters. In the past 30 years there has been a sad decline in these species due to the ever-increasing presence and predatory habits of the Noisy Miner and the Grey Butcherbird.



Above shows the site after initially using a whipper snipper to level the grass, followed by a low flame to trickle slowly through the larger clumps left behind.

The site is dominated by a pile of sandstone rocks from an aged dry-stone wall and one day after this project is completed, I would like to plant this out too. However, for the time being the rocks with all their different colours and shapes make a nice backdrop and provide habitat for a myriad of invertebrates and vertebrates.

Under some of the older casuarinas there was a 20x40m area of *Imperata cylindrica* (Blady Grass) a dominant native grass which was also a bush fire hazard. As it was very dense, knee high, and crowded out any would-be competitors, notably the *Themeda australis*, it was reduced with a whipper snipper and then the site burnt. However, it was not possible to eliminate all the Blady grass as we do not have grazing livestock and the Swamp Wallabies are not in great enough numbers to control the

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tender regrowth and so in some parts it has regenerated.

In front is a stand of *Syncarpia glomulifera* and Allo*casuarina littoralis*, some old and others new, the latter being identified by the metal guards placed there to prevent the Swamp Wallabies from devouring the tender young growth at night when they come to feed on the *Themeda australis*.



Tree guards to *Grevillea elegance* in left foreground and *Allocasuarina littoralis*, with bush behind.

Plants selected included Allocasuarina littoralis, Zieria, Native hibiscus, prostrate Grevillea such as the Bronze rambler, Prostanthera scutellarioides. Hardenbergia violacea and several Anigozanthos (Kangaroo paws) from the Bush Gems variety. Taller shrubs, such as the purple flowered Native hibiscus were placed near the rock pile adjacent to a self-seeded Grevillea robusta, with six Allocasuarina planted in a group to the left along with taller Grevillea. Prostrate plants were positioned near flat sandstone rocks and the smaller shrubs such as the Micromyrtus ciliata in a group near the front so that in years to come these could be admired as one walked up or down the path when either going further into the bush or returning to the house.



## Microclimate changes & plants too

Bev Hanson, Warrandyte Vic





This is a book mark produced several years ago by Diana Snape and given out to many Garden Design Study Group members. Some probably have one tucked away in a book somewhere.

It features one of our six ponds, this one planted with the soft tree fern, *Dicksonia Antarctica*. Our ponds are fed from the roof of our house which has worked very well over the fifty or so years we have lived here in Warrandyte, Melbourne.

However, when the drought years struck, the change in climate resulted in extreme dryness and I lost the tree ferns. I felt so sad and responsible about them dying on my watch.





I took a recent photo of the same view. I have replaced the tree ferns with more drought hardy plants such as Cordyline terminalis and Dianella sp.

As we head into what we are being told is to be another very dry period we should all be mindful of what we plant.

The following views of the ponds in 2020 illustrate the careful design relationship of gravel, rocks and boulders, integrated with appropriate aquatic, marginal, groundcover and shrub plants – a restful natural pond environment!



These three ponds are interconnected with a dry, meandering creek bed covered in brown pebbles to look natural. The very large water worn stones were saved from the tip where they were demolishing a feature wall of these very large (pebbles). My cousin was passing by in his Ute and brought them to us. The ponds and creek are now much appreciated and often photographed.



All the downpipes on that side of the house empty into the ponds. which only flow when it rains heavily. The planting once successful now lacks enough moisture to sustain the original health and aesthetic qualities.

## My Response to Microclimate Lawrie Smith, North Lakes Qld





The microclimate analysis for my 880sqm property identified at least six site zones, each now with its own plant palette – these four 'garden rooms' show individual and distinct characters:

1 Suitable microclimate created to modify the northern aspect for shade tolerant species.

**2** South from a shade tree the microclimate progresses from full shade to full sun.

**3** Full sun microclimate through most of the year encourages colourful species display.

**4** The perimeter footpath microclimate offers both sun and shade and 'encourages' the garden to extend beyond the boundary!

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## Evolving Toward a Bush Stroll Garden

Shayne Leslie, Wyoming NSW

I moved into my Bourbon Street, Wyoming home in 2003 and spent the next eight years pouring thousands of hours and dollars into my garden with very little to show. My plan lacked any kind of, well, plan.

Fast forward to 2023 and hardly an original plant has survived from my original plantings. The ones that have survived are very loved by birds, possums, and me. Others have been lost to the usual suspects – borers, storms, very hot summers, wet winters, and poor design.

Today, the garden is coming together very nicely thanks to a few key aspects.

The first was joining my local APS group here on the Central Coast to learn more about plants endemic to the area. Second, was purchasing plants from the APS group and the Community Environment Network (CEN), who also specialise in endemic Central Coast plants. Third, it was meeting my wonderful husband in 2011 who came equipped with incredible building and landscaping skills!





Our home is the original farm property built in 1927 with a property size of 925 square metres. The backyard was sloped with a lot of lawn, an unsightly paved terrace, and weeds galore dominated by a huge liquid amber that had been struck by

lightning thus looking the worse for wear. The side passage was overgrown with thick bamboo.

My first attempt at a bush stroll garden was wonderful for my skill level. Sadly, much of it succumbed to our hot dry spell in the 2010s, a borer infestation, and inexperience.



The first things I planted were nursery-bought callistemons, blue tussock grasses, grevilleas, different herbs, and roses as well as plants I picked up from garage sales and as gifts. By 2010, I was struggling with maintaining the old farmhouse and a difficult garden.



Street Appeal One of the first garden projects Nick and I tackled together was improving our home's street appeal. In

2012, out of blast rock from Gosford sandstone, we built a retaining wall by hand.

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Well, Nick did. It was the talk of the street for months while being carefully put together.



I had planted some Pennisetum setaceum 'Rubrum' on top of the wall when it was completed thinking it to be hardy enough for the poor soil. I also thought it was native. It looked spectacular for a moment and then I was

pulling it out within two years. We left in a beautiful old camellia from the 1920s (heavily pruned) and the *Gordonia axillaris* and I planted in a prostrate *Grevillia*. Everything looked amazing until the *Grevillia* died.

There is a stroll garden between the garden and the house now featuring *Melaleuca thymifolia*, *Grevillea* 'Fire Cracker', *Leptospermum nanum rubrum, Ozothamnus diosmifolius* (rice flower), *Dodonaea viscosa* (hop bush), *Banksia ericifolia*, and *Brachyscome iberidifolia* amongst others. I planted a row of *Lomandra* 'lime tuff' in between everything to try and keep the soil improving and tie my haphazard garden together.

Unbeknownst to me, Nick planted some English bulbs. There is an *Isopogon anethifolius* in there too, but I have a feeling it isn't alive anymore... I keep watering it, though.

There is another section of this garden that is not visible from the street where I have put some exotics that do well in 100% shade.

There are also some small trees such as *Callistemon* (Hannah Ray and Anzac) and another native tree of which I don't know the name.

Lifestyle changes in the backyard





My introduction to CEN inspired me to create a Habitat for Wildlife. I also wanted to mimic the bush paths of my childhood. The first section I started to build was the bottom corner of the garden.



I planted a fig tree as the main feature of the Habitat for Wildlife Garden. Yes, I know. It will grow big. Probably really, really big. In 2015 it was a tiny little plant. Now. it is a tree. It isn't near any major underground modernity and,

by the time it is really causing problems, Nick and I will have composted. I prune it dramatically every year. The birds love it and I have seen Fig birds, Native Miners, Koels, Satin Bower birds, and a Topknot Pigeon. Magpies sleep in it at night and the Possums like it as well. Recently, this area has been upgraded with a frog pond made of old concrete tubs.



Other plants include different kinds of *Grevillea*, native and exotic orchids, *Lomandra*, *Syzygium smithii*, *Callistemon* Hannah Ray, *Banksia integrifolia* and *Themeda australis*. These are haphazardly planted to create a bush feel with small paths throughout the shrubbery.





We have completed significant terracing on the sloped block, all by hand. This has helped distinguish the growing Habitat for Wildlife area and bush stroll paths with our lifestyle areas. The terracing is also a bit of forward

planning. Nick and I are, weirdly, growing older. We need to garden to be less chaotic

and uneven to flat and easier to manage. But this will be the next chapter of my tale as we evolve towards a bush stroll garden.

Shayne, your twenty-year process of garden transformation will ring true with members as we all learn about the physical and aesthetic influences that direct the progressive design and establishment process. As your article shows, keeping a text and photo record of progress is not only interesting but very informative. Make sure you send the next chapter! Lawrie

## Open Space in Suburban Gardens

Diana Snape, Melbourne

## An extract from an article in Newsletter #3

One must plan ahead to retain garden space for the future, open areas (especially paths) tend to shrink or be lost as plants expand slowly and inconspicuously over the years.

I think the balance of space and vegetation makes a very important contribution to the "feel" of a garden, partly because of its practical effect on sun and shade. Volume is implied by the height of trees which "contain" the garden, and the proportions of this volume change the feel of the space. Very tall trees dwarf a tiny garden, but moderately tall trees in a small garden carry its space upwards; if all plants are less than fence height, the garden seems very constrained.

Space can sometimes be "borrowed" from beyond the boundaries, depending on the surrounding scene, and a neighbour's trees (or open space) can help.

The size of a garden can seem greater when the total space is divided into separate areas, but each separate area must then be sufficiently large itself with its own space/vegetation balance.

The edges of open areas are valuable, providing sunny, semi-shade or open shade positions for many plants.

## The MAILBOX

## TINY FORESTS

Jeff Howes, Westleigh, NSW



This is a topic new to me and I was so curious, I decided to drive to the Wollongong Botanic gardens to see for myself first hand, where, according to a staff member I spoke to, advised it was the first such forest in an Australian Botanic Garden.

As you will see from the picture below the density is quite close with a range of plants from low growing understory plants to tall trees. Evidently tiny forests can be created in 3 square metres in home gardens. I am not sure if this could be done. However, it is an interesting concept that is gaining momentum as Global warming shows us the future.



For those who have not heard of the concept I have copied the following explanation from EARTHWATCH Australia Tiny Forest website.

Tiny Forests are densely packed patches of native bushland the size of a tennis court, right in the heart of our cities. These urban wildlife oases are a unique nature-based solution, reconnecting people with nature and helping to mitigate our urban climate and biodiversity challenges. Using an established planting method (called the Miyawaki method) that includes soil enrichment, diverse indigenous plant selection, and a dense planting structure; Tiny Forests are supercharged, growing up to 10 times faster than traditional forests, and becoming up to 100 times more biodiverse than monoculture forests.



Some further background on the Miyawaki method of afforestation:

It was pioneered in the 1970s, by Professor Akira Miyawaki, a Japanese botanist and forest ecologist. It involves careful species selection, specific soil preparation, very dense planting, a high diversity of species planted, and local community involvement

## A few references:

EARTHWATCH Australia Tiny Forest web site: https://earthwatch.org.au/programs/tiny-forests

EARTHWATCH Australia Tiny Forest Handbook: https://earthwatch.org.au/images/research/Tinyfores ts/Tiny%20Forest%20Handbook\_edit\_2023-04-14.pdf

https://carbonpositiveaustralia.org.au/blog/thebenefits-of-miyawaki-urban-forests-in-australia/

This is an interesting idea and could have application in the smaller residential sites now being developed Australia wide!

# Plants in Design

## 'Terra Australis' develops maturity Ben & Ros Walcott, Canberra ACT

The Terra Australis Garden, opened in 2019 as one of the Gallery of Gardens at the National Arboretum in Canberra, was developed by the Australian Native Plants Society (ANPSA), as a stylised representation of the Australian geography and its diverse flora. Designed by Lawrie Smith, the garden celebrates the varying Australian landscape through landform, rock form, and plant species, to showcase a more formal garden using native plants.

Now the TA Garden is growing bushy, in some cases almost too bushy! As you can see from these recent photos taken September 2023 the area of the garden is packed with plants in flower. The wattles have bloomed magnificently this year, *Acacia acinacea*, Gold Dust Wattle, *A. covenyi*, Bluebush, *A. fimbriata*, Fringed Wattle, *A. howittii* 'Canberry Honey Bun' and *A. verniciflua*, Varnish Wattle.

The maintenance staff at the Arboretum are doing a marvellous job of pruning, watering and fertilizing the garden. They also have some strategic plans to limit children climbing on the water feature and disturbing the rocks. *Kunzea ambigua*, Tick Bush, planted between the water feature and path, will grow to 3m high with aromatic leaves and honeyscented white flowers to form an impenetrable barrier (we hope)



Ground zero after first planting in November 2019



'Terra Australis' garden in its dramatic setting



Acacia verniciflua, Varnish Wattle, Allocasuarina littoralis, Black She-oak, Laurel hedge is now growing high enough to protect against the wind



Acacia fimbriata in full flower, basalt ridge, Gymnostoma australianum, Daintree Pine



Queensland section, basalt ridge, *Chrysocephalum ramosissimum*, *Macrozamia moorei, Brachychiton rupestris*, Queensland Bottle Tree, not leafed out



Acacia acinacea, Gold Dust Wattle, Allocasuarina duncanii, Duncan's She-oak, Eucalyptus neglecta, Omeo Gum, Leptospermum 'Copper Glow', Leptospermum 'Mesmer Eyes'



Water feature, *Callistemon subulatus* 'Brogo Overflow', *Eucalyptus neglecta*, Omeo Gum and *Lomandra* 'Lime Tuff'

Thankyou Ben and Ros for all you do in ensuring that 'Terra Australis' our ANPSA garden, has established and matured so successfully in the four years since initially constructed and planted. It certainly provides a glimpse of the diversity of our Australian flora, and a visual contrast with the other adjacent gardens in this Gallery of Gardens precinct of the National Arboretum.

## *Grevillea cv* 'Honey Gem'

Lawrie Smith, Queensland

This cultivar is said to be a hybrid between *Grevillea pteridifolia* and *Grevillea banksii* (red form). The plant was originally assumed to be a *Grevillea pteridifolia* seedling by Mrs Cherrel Jerks, Taringa, Brisbane - cv registered 1980

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Leaves are very deeply pinnately lobed ie. as deep as the midrib. Each leaf is more or less 29cm long and 24cm wide. Individual lobes of the leaves are 18cm long and from 2-4mm wide. The upper surface of the leaf is dark green and the underside is covered with silky hairs. The leaf margins are rolled under. Young stems are covered with silky hairs. Flowerheads are apricot with yellow styles, borne on a spike 16cm long and 8cm wide. Individual flowers are more or less 4cm long and set fertile seed.



One specimen - spans 5m x 3m kept pruned to 2m tall

#### Cultivation notes and observations

This *Grevillea* is an excellent garden subject, exhibits hybrid vigour, grows quickly and will reach six metres tall with a spread of three or more metres over several years. It displays decorative grey green foliage which is an excellent foil to the honey-coloured flowers in terminal displays. Regular formative pruning will encourage multiple irregular branching, consequent dense foliage and increased flower production. In subtropical climates it is best to carry out tip pruning in the summer to early autumn no later than April, to ensure that new growth has adequate time to develop and allow flower production in July and August, which is always on the new terminal growth.

Most specimens of the cultivar have a naturally irregular and sculptural habit of trunk and branch formation which creates an interesting garden subject or focus, supporting the grey green foliage canopy. This cultivar is receptive to quite radical pruning, when carefully done can artistically exaggerate the sculptural form of the trunks and branches. Branches of 100mm diameter or more will readily produce epicormic growth which should be thinned out to ensure a pleasing density, form and direction of the branching structure.

## NL Archives Issues 81 to 84

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 #85February 2014Design memories & moods of a gardenDesign memories & moods of a garden

Pam Yarra, Victoria

.... When considering design of a garden, a good designer will discuss what the owner envisages for their garden, in much the same way an architect designs a house for a client's specific needs, so gardens like houses develop over time to be an extension of the owner. Garden design using Australian plants, including indigenous, is relatively young and still has a long way to go ...

## Newsletter #86 May 2014

## New Botanic Gardens for regional Victoria

Neil R Marriott, Victoria This major arts and cultural destination, WAMA will complement other tourism attractions in the region, sharing the spectacular backdrop of the Grampians Ranges... The site in its entirety will be an educational, training and interpretative centre for wildlife art in all its forms. It will be developed to create a botanical landscape featuring the best of Australian flora, with a covenanted area dedicated to Grampians species. The grounds will incorporate sculptures and carvings reflecting Australia's diverse natural history.

#### Newsletter #87 August 2014 Order or Disorder?

Diana Snape, Victoria Most of us balance a desire for order in our lives with a yearning for some variety and adventure. Gardens, too, range from those that are highly pruned and controlled, all straight lines and circles, to some that look as though they know no geometry and have never seen a pair of secateurs. . . . nature IS ordered, according to its own rules. A natural landscape is ordered - by evolution, heredity and environmental factors. It looks 'right' to us, though it might look 'disordered' to others . . . Alienation from nature is a real concern with the increasing urbanisation of the population.

## Australian native vines and climbers

Ros Walcott, Canberra Climbers represent a different aspect of garden design from shrubs, trees and groundcovers. They can cover a wall, climb through another plants, hide an ugly structure or create a free-standing feature as the star of the show. We have many excellent climbers in our native palette of plants. Some are extremely vigorous, while others are much less aggressive, depending on your climate, and stay in the area you have planted them.

#### Newsletter #88 November 2014 In love with ground covers

Chris Larkin, Victoria

Is Australia over-endowed with groundcovering plants, or does it just seem that way to me? There does seem to be a wealth of choice in these plants. Some are ground covers that hug the ground closely, but then there are others that are prostrate forms of shrubs, usually described as 'decumbent'. Apart from their use in garden design, there are practical reasons for using ground covering plants.

No matter what I have to say about the size, toughness, ease or difficulty of growing a particular plant, there will be some people who will disagree with me because no two growing conditions – or indeed plants – are the same . ... But I value groundcovers mainly because of the role they play in good garden design. This is what really interests me.



## A warm welcome to all our new members

We look forward to your active participation in your study group . . . .

- Rae Bassett, Woombye Qld
- Jocelyn Chandler, Barcaldine Qld
- Roz Priest, Draper Qld
- Stephanie Camera, Ballarat Vic

## Current Membership: 231

#### Treasurer's Report – October 21, 2023

General account: \$3 Incl Donation: \$3

\$ 3,224.47 \$ 30.00

 Term Deposit:
 \$ 28,520.39

 (incl interest \$107.97 - reinvest @ 3.35% for 12 mths to 25/01/24)

 TOTAL:
 \$ 31,744.86

## Membership of GDSG is free ...

The Garden Design Study Group Newsletter is published three times each year in March, July and November . . . .

#### Newsletters are distributed only by email.

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

#### Newsletter Editor: Lawrie Smith AM

38 Sandpiper Avenue NORTH LAKES Q 4509 Phone: 0411 228 900 Email: gdsg@anpsa.org.au





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.