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ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

NEWSLETTER No. 21

May 1998

Study Group Leader/Editor: Diana SnapeTreasurer/Membership: Peter Garnham

Dear Members,

As our financial year runs from July 1 to June 30, all subscriptions for the 98/99 year are due by the end of next month, before the next Newsletter comes out.

We would be very grateful if you would you renew your membership promptly - the renewal form -comes with this Newsletter. If you do it now, you can relax!

Although some areas have had substantial recent rain, I think many of us are still suffering from the effects of the long drought. In most places it has been difficult to care for our gardens, when we have trained ourselves not to water much at all but then see that watering is necessary to save some plants. As for putting in new plants, that's a real worry when the ground is bone dry. A good time for planning and designing rather than implementing. Let's hope that autumn brings enough rain for us to begin planting again .

Please let me know soon if you support (or disagree with) the suggestions regarding our 'mission statement', aims, etc. sent in by members. I certainly would agree with the points raised - it's probably a question of how many primary aims we list. Some others could come into supplementary aims or goals.

NEXT MEETINGS

Please see details of these meetings in text (pages 18 - 20)

SYDNEY: SUNDAY MAY 24 at Jeff Howes'
NE VIC: SUNDAY MAY 24 at Jan & Alan Hall's
MELBOURNE: SUNDAY June 7 at Chris Larkin's
SOUTH AUSTRALIA: to be decided

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CORRESPONDENCE extracts

"I must congratulate you for your energy and dedication during the last 5 years, producing such a high-quality publication promoting our beautiful flora in garden design" **Gordon Rowland** NSW

It is of course a team effort. Without your contributions in all their variety the Newsletter would not exist, so keep them coming in! DS

"I recently received a newsletter from a south east Queensland palm and cycad group in which they reprinted an item from a similar Sydney group - the essence of the contribution was that discussion was limited to one genus, in this case Livistona. I am wondering whether such an approach would be of any value for the GDSG. Reference to the species would naturally be included but more significantly, from a design aspect, would be the relationships such as colour and leaf forms to other Australian plants, as well as between different species or cultivars belonging to the genus." **Geoff Simmons** Old

I think that approach is very helpful, Geoff. We have included some articles along these lines but we do need more emphasis on the design aspects. DS

"I continue writing for the Inner Western Suburbs Courier and enclose unedited versions of several further articles. If you find anything to interest GDSG members, please feel free to use it.

I am in the midst of a merger with a landscape construction company run by a designer with strong project management skills. We shall continue to use the name of my outfit, Indigenous Landscape Design Associates, and shall now be offering a full design and construction service. All very exciting.

The Australian Institute of Landscape Designers & Managers has made me the director of chapters. I am presently involved in setting up a chapter in Queensland and shall probably become involved in setting up a Melbourne chapter soon." **Gordon Rowland** NSW

"Geoff Simmons asks about plants for shady walkways. We saw in Waikiki, a beautifully shady pergola which had mature trees trained over it. They seemed to be our Coast Cottonwood, Hibiscus tiliaceus. We were most interested because we had already decided to try a driveway shaded with cottonwoods when we build our new house at Hervey Bay. They fit most of the requirements - have a dense canopy, are fast growing, survive well (at least when unattended on public foreshores), the leaves and terminal flowers are attractive and it recovers well from pruning.

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I'd also like to pass on an article in the Autumn 1998 issue of "The Growing Idea" - newsletter of Greening Australia, Qld Inc.. It describes how Redlands Shire Council are to spend \$1.5 million on an IndigiScapes Centre covering 14 hectares. "It is planned that the Centre will become a unique botanical and educational showcase of indigenous flora".

As well as an amphitheatre, self-guided trails, viewing platforms and picnic areas, I am most interested in its proposed "demonstration gardens". Visitors will wander a street (lined with native trees) featuring landscaped gardens in coastal, cottage, formal, rainforest and Japanese styles. It is no surprise that Greening Australia's Redland Extension Officer is Rosalie Eustace, who co-authored "Indigenous gardening - growing local native plants". I am most envious of this proposed Redlands facility. Our Gold Coast SGAP branch so far has had no obvious success with lobbying our Council for the establishment of a regional Botanic Gardens here.

Yesterday was a red-letter day - it rained all day, although the gauge showed only 25mm. It is the first rain I can remember this year. We're still hoping for a "wet season" in the southern half of the state. Meanwhile we continue to keep our plants alive artificially." **Lyn Reilly** Qld

The concept of the Redlands Centre sounds very exciting, Lyn. Let's hope it is so successful that it inspires imitation. DS

"As a horticulturist working for local government I am faced with the challenge of incorporating native plant (indigenous species where possible) values into the built environment often consisting of a profound mixture (mess?) of a variety of plant species echoing past fads of plant availability..." **Alex Mackenzie** NSW

"The Japanese Garden at Warrnambool is progressing!! There is a ceremonial commencement complete with Shinto Priest from Japan at 10am on Monday, 4th May. I plan on taking some photos which would be available for GDSG or SGAP Vic Newsletters." **Cherree Densfey** Vic
NL 4-8 gives some information about this garden.

AIMS & a MISSION STATEMENT

A few comments

Doug McIver Vic

A. The AIMS -

In addition to our current four aims (NL 20-4):

5. Publish a "GoodDesign Guide".

Perhaps a book but more likely, as a first attempt, a booklet or series of booklets. It's not an easy task, but there are already a lot of useful ideas in our Newsletters which could be organised and developed, and could be made more accessible.

6. Encourage the development of a computer program on garden design using Australian plants, instead of exotic species. May not be all that difficult - it may be possible to convert an existing program by replacing the plant data base (in cooperation with the developer, of course - we supply the data).

B. Mission Statement -

Yes, we should have one, if we can settle on the right one.

A simple one would be "Promote Good Garden Design with Australian Plants".

Does that say enough to be useful?

C. Logo -

The present logo seems very good! No doubt thought might produce others as good, or maybe better, but it doesn't seem necessary to search for one. Some people might prefer to see the present one given a more professional look by using a printed font.

D. Illustrating Garden Plans

Garden plans would be more meaningful (to me at least) if the expected heights of the plants were shown, either on the plan if there is room, or on the plant list.

Comments

Lyn Reilly Qld

Thank you for another big, interesting newsletter. I'd like to comment on a few points raised.

- First, our aims and mission statement. I think the written aims still reflect the concerns of our study group.
- If we need a mission statement, would it be something along the lines of "The GDSG encourages good

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garden design using Australian plants"?

- Do we also seek a goal e.g., "to increase the number and quality of gardens containing Australian plants?" Are we seeking, ultimately, to educate others as well as ourselves?
- Better communication? The newsletter would be hard to improve on, as long as members continue to exchange views and information in it. As a distant member, I envy the communication that must be available to groups compact enough to be able to hold meetings. Sending addresses of same-state members was a good idea too.
- The logo? I like it - it is simple and succinct. If it were to change, could it have a human figure in it to point to the fact that gardens are "managed" plants?

Comment on AIMS

Geoff Simmons Qld

1. Main aim should be to encourage members to use their imagination to create an innovative garden design, encompassing and illustrating an origin recognisable as Australian.

Was it Einstein who said that imagination was more important than knowledge? - hence reading and observing other gardens are only adjuncts to garden design. They may not be very important to some designers and indeed may lead only to imitative designs. Some knowledge of Australian plants and how to grow them is obviously necessary but it is the innovation in their use that produces good results or not.

2. The emphasis in the stated aims (nos 1, 2 and 3) is on plants of Australian origin. While this is rightly justified, the land forms and features of the Australian continent as well as man-made structures and history surely must have a role in garden design if any degree of uniqueness is to be shown. One correspondent in the recent Newsletter notes the English view of gum trees. This is somewhat similar to my reaction on seeing eucalypts, especially some magnificent *E. ficifolia*, in California and melaleucas in south-western USA - they just seemed out of place.

3. Do other Study Groups warrant a mention in the aims? Such liaisons may prove fruitful. Also what about specialist organisations such as the Cordyline Society of Australia and the Conifer Society of Australia?

4. Items 2, 3 and 4 have much of merit. Perhaps some thought should be given to being more active in producing written or electronic information for the general public or maybe initially for tertiary educational establishments. This may be to expound good design aspects and explain how to avoid the bad characteristics such as straggly native gardens.

The above may stimulate some thought on the aims of the Group. I myself am not a great participator in so far as attending meetings etc., but I wholeheartedly approve of using funds to spread the ideas of garden design by persons such as yourself. In regard to a logo, I give this a low priority - I doubt whether they are of value unless backed by a good publicity campaign. Greater attention to getting across the meaning of the initials - ASGAP & GDSG, could be the aim.

Comments

Barbara Buchanan for the NE Vic Branch

- The issue of a Mission Statement and other matters on page 4 of the NL were discussed at the last meeting. I don't think that I am the only one to view missions as a passing fashion; if it helps to clarify what we are trying to do that's great, but to condense our aims to one snappy sentence would take more time than I am going to put in. Maybe someone else more adept with words will come up with just the thing!
- The possibility of including a reference to the environment in one of our aims was raised. The consensus was that while we do have a concern about the environment, this is not the unifying theme of this group which focuses on a more limited aspect of Australian plants, i.e. displaying them in such a way as to evoke admiration from anyone with an interest in style and taste. However it does no harm to look at our aims every so often in case some are neglected.
- Members were quite keen on the idea of a new logo but again I have to leave this to someone more expert. Don't forget to think about it.

5 DESIGN

Three "R"s of garden design

Diana Snape Vic

I was wondering recently whether it was possible to generalise about key factors which should be given consideration in garden design, and came up with these three "R"s. They aren't necessarily factors which spring immediately to mind. How important or how universal do you think they are?

1. Ratios (or proportions)

A number of ratios determine the feeling of balance or equilibrium in the garden. This balance may feature symmetry, asymmetry, or both and needs to be aesthetically pleasing (or balanced) to the garden owner and ideally to others. Among the many different ratios I think need to be considered are the following:

- open space at ground level, including widths of paths and areas of very low growth groundcover plants, compared with garden beds or planted areas
- open space (or 'void') and mass in 3 dimensions, at shrub and tree height, so the garden does not feel too crowded. In both this ratio and the first I think it is easier to end up with too little open space rather than too much.
- heights of plants - trees, shrubs, groundcovers, tufted plants. The proportions or ratios of the heights of these plant types, & the numbers of each used, will obviously have a big effect on the nature of the garden.
- comparative sizes of plants which are related in the design, for example is this plant the right size for this rock? Is the tufted grass at its base too big or too small for this tree? Is the size of this 'frame' appropriate for the vista it encloses? All these depend on ratios of sizes, or proportions, and your personal response to them. What each plant is, is relatively unimportant!

2. Repetition (& restraint)

'Collectors' may relish variety but I think variety has distinct dangers and restraint its merits. To me it is rare for a garden to be satisfying without at least a minimum of repetition in some aspect of its character. This could be its vegetation or its themes (or both). Some possibilities for repetition are:

- actual species of plants, as occurs so frequently in nature, providing a harmonious framework. These can be interspersed with other species - just a few others or a variety; at any one time only one or two species will probably be visually dominant. One area can merge into another with a 'drift' of one of the dominant or lesser plants. These could be any size from trees to just simple groundcovers.
- a particular genus of plants, with the special interest of the similarities but differences within a genus. Some additional repetition of certain species of that genus could improve the continuity.
- similar foliage, giving a sense of cohesion (for example repetition of callistemons, or of ferns). Leaf size might well vary more than leaf colour and a little contrast would emphasize the closer resemblance of most of the plants.
- similar forms, e.g. slightly formal rounded or arching forms, or tall upright shapes, again with a little contrast to balance the repetition and avoid too much of a good thing.
- colour, creating a colour scheme of flowers (also buds, berries, fruits, etc). An enormous variety of colour schemes are possible to link plants visually - a separate subject all on its own.

1L Rest areas

It's too easy to think of our garden as a place where we work. We do, of course, but it's very important to enjoy the fruits of our labours, for which I think we need to have rest areas. This understanding has only come to me quite recently! Often we might walk too quickly through the garden without fully enjoying its beauty.

These rest areas can be considered in two ways:

1 Visually, rest areas can be 'quiet' areas in the garden to look out at from inside the house, or to enjoy when you're in the garden - restful to look at, not 'busy' with too much variety in the plants or special features. They can be sheltered areas to pause in while strolling (going 'walkabout') in the garden - you shouldn't feel you have to keep moving on.

2 Physically, there must be somewhere to actually sit down and have a 'cuppa' in the garden. This means a comfortable sitting down spot - a seat, a stone wall, a log or a rock. Ideally this spot will need some open space so it's not totally enclosed and you can admire your handiwork, but it will be partly sheltered or screened so it's not totally exposed either. If possible, a curved seat rather than a straight one, with adjacent rounded beds or planted areas somehow seems cosier.

So, trying to approach design from slightly different angles to the usual, I'd suggest ratios, repetition and rest areas as three key design "R"s.



Australia is recognised as a country with a high proportion of the population born overseas or first generation citizens. Although the current intake of about 70,000 persons per year is well below that of some previous years, there is no doubt that this constitutes a large pool of people who are either not interested in gardening or have memories of garden plants that are not Australian native plants. Only with time can familiarity and acceptance of the beauty of the Australian flora exert dominance so that nostalgia for exotic plants becomes less evident and new generations are willing to embrace something different from what was once believed to be the basis for a garden.

The effect of demographic change occurs in many aspects of life. It is interesting to compare what has happened in the food industry with changes in garden design. The old English derived roast and vegetables has been diversified in recent decades by the advent of increased use of pasta dishes, stir-fry and rice and take-away fast foods. More recently, however, there has been an upsurge in the preparation of foods that have as their ingredients Australian flora products and meats of native animals. So wattle seeds and bush limes are listed as desirable in many recipes. Except for one or two items such as macadamia nuts, these unusual food ingredients of Australian origin have been the province of adventurous chefs or specialised restaurants. A similar trend can be seen in Australian garden design - the early exotic pines, roses and geraniums are still with us, but gardens incorporating Australian plants are now uncommon but not rare. Also there are botanic gardens devoted solely to native plants. In the home field, gardens with a strong emphasis on Australian plants are the specialist or connoisseur parallel to those elitist restaurants willing to experiment with native products.

But do Australians here for some time really study the features that define Australia in a holistic way and seek to enhance those aspects that delineate their gardens from those of America or Europe? The first consideration for an unique Australian garden must start with specimens of plants from the native flora. The exploitation of native plants by the horticultural industry is highly desirable for it focuses attention on a heritage value of this continent. Unfortunately it also means more competition with exotic plants. This is even more evident if a plant derived from a native species is not labelled as such. Under these circumstances, the aspect of design becomes even more critical as Australian cultivars are judged on how well they produce an attractive garden rather than their unusual nature.

To clarify the reasons why newcomers should give thought to gardening in their new country, it is worthwhile examining the motives for establishing Australian themed gardens. These may apply equally to old and new citizens. A wish to preserve those aspects that are unique to Australian ecology may be the motivation. There are several disadvantages of using introduced species. They may displace native species, they may become weeds, or threaten native fauna as with the exotic species of aristolochia harmful to the Richmond birdwing butterfly.

Does patriotism play a part? A desire to express patriotism by being knowledgeable about Australian plants and to show them off may be a strong motive. Has this type of interest waned in recent years? Nowadays the advent of electronic and mechanical gadgets has displaced the interest once given over to the collection of natural objects such as insects and seashells. Any move to rekindle interest in the Australian environment ought to include a better appreciation of the native flora and minimising regulations that hinder this interest. Many gardeners with native plants dominant in their creations are no doubt motivated by the desire to exploit some particular unusual characteristic. Artistic or sculptural features can attract many gardeners. Would these same persons have this special interest in native plants if they were as readily available as exotics?

Newcomers find difficulty coming to terms with native plants as did early migrants, witness the desire of last century Melbournians to have a botanic garden more in tune with memories of their former country. To equate the sculptured gardens tended for several centuries with pristine Australian bush or forest would test the resolve of many people. But this battle is still evident when so many new people are entering the population. While exotic foods and dances may enrich the local lifestyle one must ask to what extent is the uniqueness of the Australian landscape diminished.

Australians travelling overseas often express their joy at returning home. With more use and attention to Australian flora in garden design, another dimension could further enhance this pleasure.

"Gardens thrive on a nice bit of mess"

Now which of our members is likely to have said that? This article, written by Gretchen Miller for the (Sydney) Northern Herald 19/3/98, was noticed by Jeff Howes. The GOSG member is **Danie Ondinea** from NSW.

To quote just a few paragraphs:-

"An untidy garden: a little bit of building refuse here, an out-of-control bush there, sticks, leaves and bark scattered on the ground. That's what landscape designer Ms Danie Ondinea likes to see most of all in a

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garden."

"Essential to a garden is the wildlife it attracts - garden design must take into account the creatures that can make use of it. What I wanted to do was create beautiful gardens where humans could come home at the end of a difficult day - a reconnection with nature for the people; and a habitat for the wildlife."

"Cleaning out the garden and starting from scratch can frighten away any wildlife for good. People have gone in for instant gardens with mature plants and it isn't going to work for wildlife.

If gardeners can't let go of an obsession for tidiness, make the front garden the presentation garden and leave the back one free. It's the right thing not to clean up the leaves and twigs and bark. Stop feeling guilty about being messy."

If you'd like to read more about Danie's ideas on 'messy' gardens, there's a report of her talk at last year's GDSG Seminar in NL19-8 and an earlier article by Danie in NL16-7.

How do you react to the idea of 'designing for mess'?

Strong statements in garden design

Geoff Simmons Qld

At least two types of strong statements are current in garden design. The first is made by the gardener who adopts a thematic approach such as designing a garden of all grevilleas or all white flowers. This approach puts a restriction on creativity but one happily endured to get the desired effect. The second form of strong statement is more philosophical, and can be exemplified by dogmatic views such as "no straight lines" or "never line pathways with rocks".

Comments have been made about "no straight lines" before, so this time a few words about rocks and pathways. I have always known that there were a lot of stones on my plot but a bushfire a few years ago resulted in a clear view of an area littered with rocks among the remaining blackened tree trunks. My rocks are all shapes and sizes ranging from smaller to those of 10 to 20 cm or so. Very few with flat sides, no hint of strata and a mixture of types from those thrown out eons ago when the Glasshouse Mountains were volcanic, to sedimentary rocks containing a mixed conglomerate of pebbles, stones and other mineral matter. With this type of surrounding landscape, it would be a travesty of design not to use rocks gathered to line pathways and otherwise to blend with the natural topography of the area.

The Australian form of rocky landscape is rarely the serried ranks of tiered stones with perfectly rounded shapes that one may see in some overseas countries. This was first brought home to me when I heard the Landscape Architect who designed the Australian exhibit at the Liverpool International Garden Expo express dismay that the English had prepared a heap of straight lines of flat stones as the starting point for his design.

It is un-Australian not to use mis-shapen stones if the countryside contains a wildness expressed in odd shaped rocks. To produce an uniquely Australian garden feel, it is necessary to have some regard for the nature of things in the continent and pay less attention to overseas expressions of garden design.

Of course different parts of our large continent have very different rock types, which may in fact resemble those of other countries more closely than those in other areas of Australia. For example, the large, rounded granite boulders of areas in Victoria, the columnar basalt in others and the dramatic blocks of Hawkesbury sandstone around Sydney have less in common with Geoff's irregular rocks than they have with some regions of Europe and the USA.

An article last year by George Seddon in 'The Australian Magazine' (4-5/10) expands on the diversity of the 'geological compendium' of our cities. He says "The major rock types are represented, and each helps give a distinctive identity to its city."

The question of lining pathways with rocks(whatever type) in a regular fashion is different again. What do members think? DS

GARDENS

Shallow ponds

Paul & Barbara Kennedy Vic

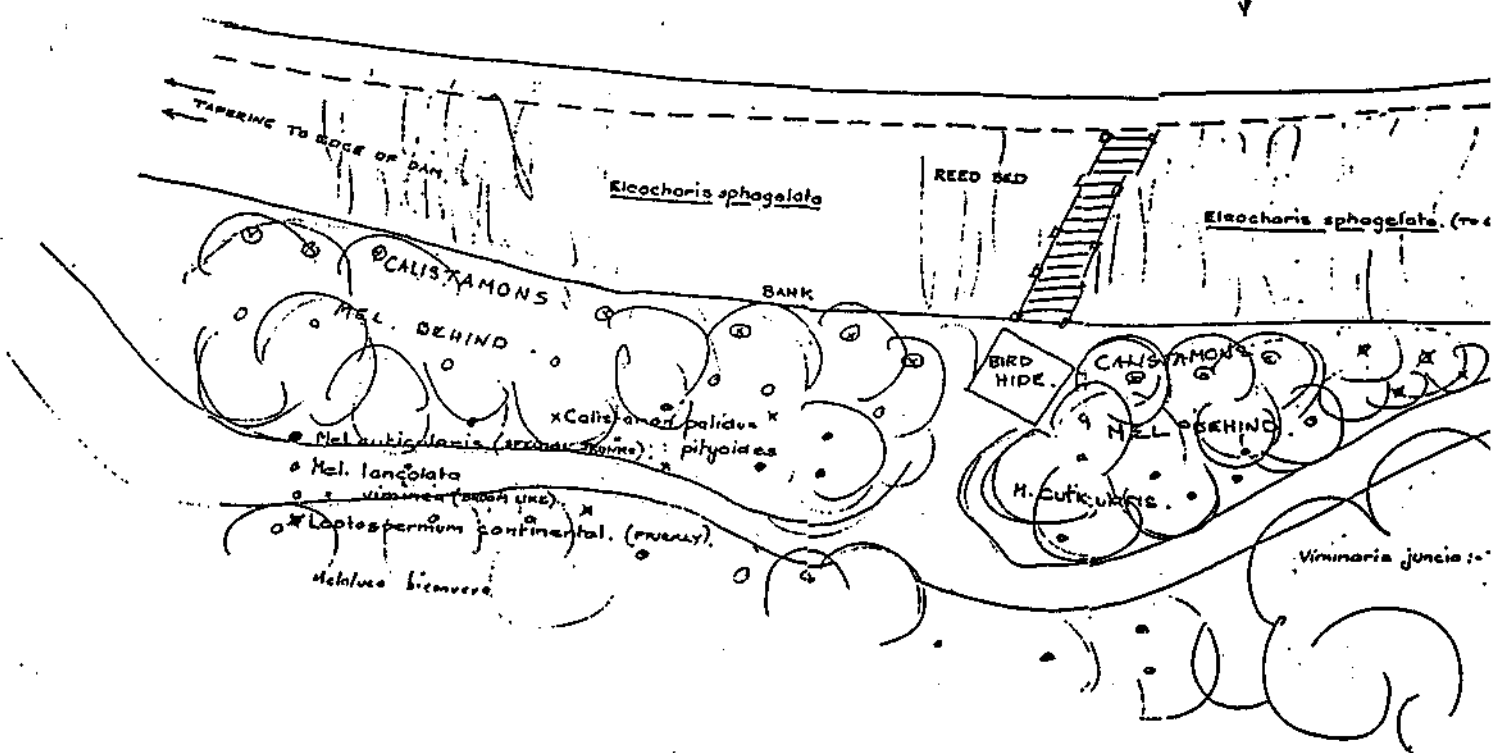
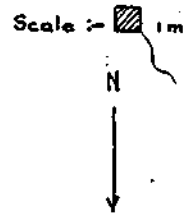
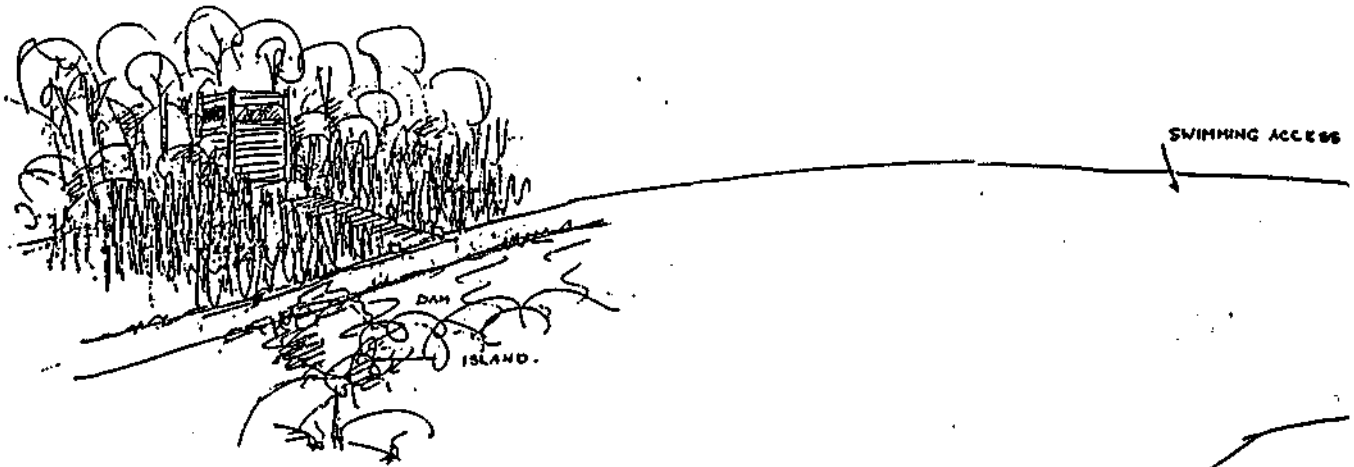
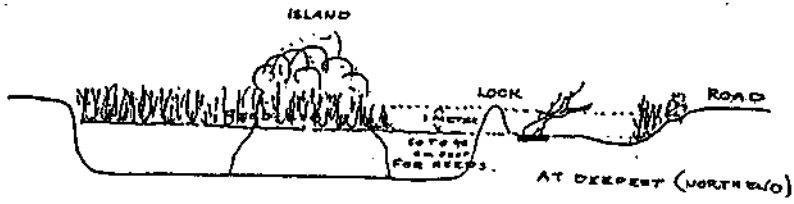
On pages 7a & 7b is a reduction of the plan drawn by **Gloria Thomlinson** and **Kay Dempsey** of a proposed arrangement for the wetlands around our dam. We hope to incorporate some of the ideas as we develop the landscape.

The nearest pond was filled with water in October and has been topped up as required through the summer. After the initial filling strong winds blew a lot of fine grass from a neighbouring paddock into the pond. A couple of days later it settled and at night I could hear the frogs croaking. An inspection in daylight revealed islands of white frothy frogs' eggs floating on the water.

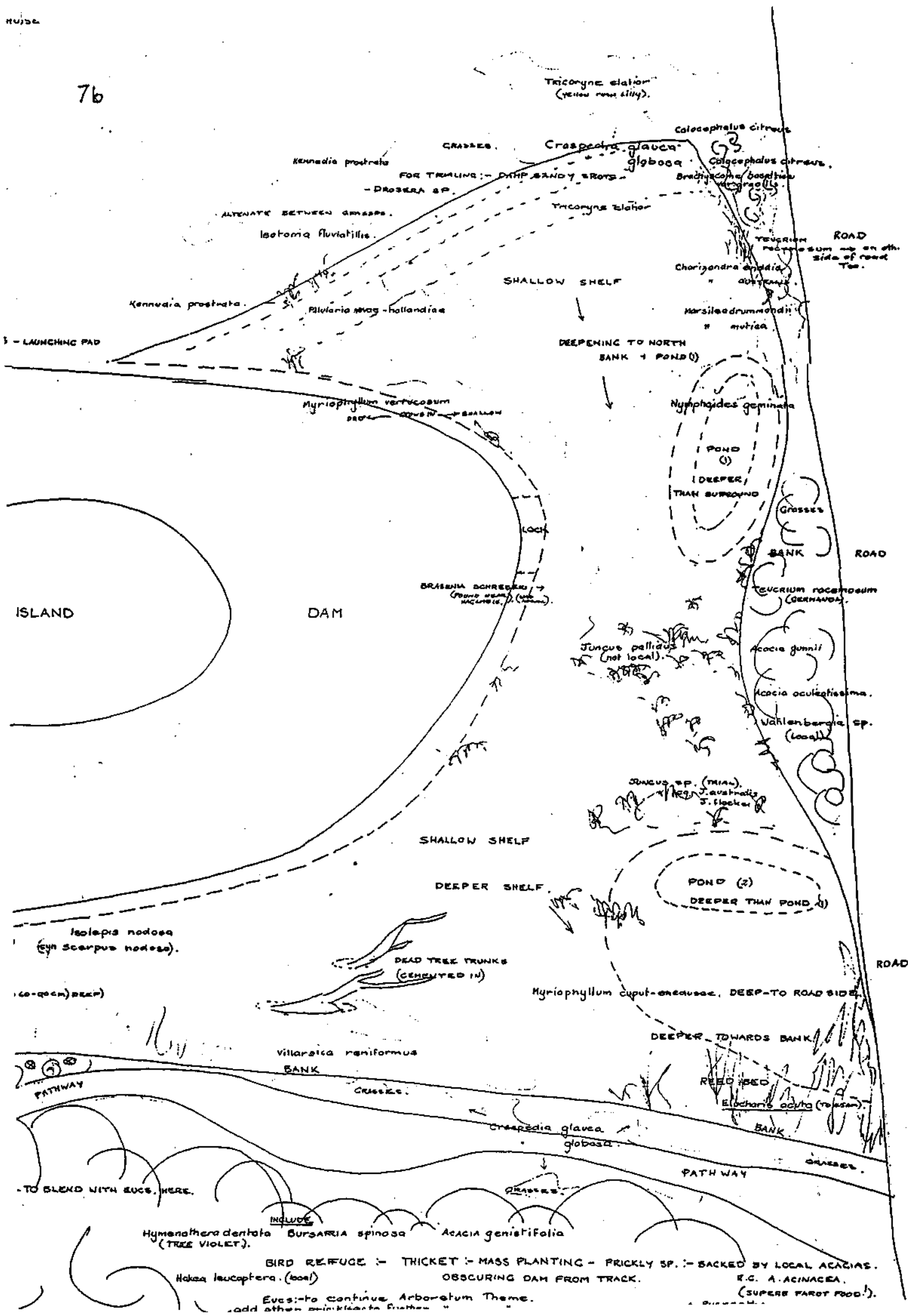
PROPOSED BIRD ATTRACTING ADDITION TO DAM FOR
PAUL + BARBARA KENNEDY

7a

GLORIA + KAY



7b



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Various reeds have appeared, which I believe have been brought in by water birds. We have planted a number of plants around the edges including *Mentha australis* and *Melastroma affine*.

It is a delight to watch the various parrots and other birds come down for a drink or bathe. The shallow ponds approximately 200 mm deep have in a matter of one to two months become a very dynamic area of plant and bird life.

1998 Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show

Two GDSG members prepared garden designs for this Show, which was held in April.

'Reflections of a Frog Prince' was designed by GDSG member Margarete Lee and Kay Gee. They describe their imaginative design: "Inspired by reflections in a river at dusk, the design features three trees reflected in a dark "pool" and silhouetted against the evening sky. The shapes of the trees are reflected in similarly shaped beds of foliage plants on the ground plane. A viewing area with a garden seat invites visitors to view and reflect on the illusion. Accompanying them in their reflections is the Frog Prince who sits among the pool-side plants and contemplates his predicament." This design, using both Australian and exotic plants, was most effective (and the 0.2m blue Frog (Prince) was very popular).

Roger Stone designed a garden for South-East Water, illustrating the principles of a water-saving garden. It was a naturalistic design featuring the use of mulch and appropriate plants which did not require more than the minimum of water. It was in marked contrast to (and a relief from) the numerous formal displays featuring only exotic plants. Certain selected species were repeated in the design.

Australia's Open Garden Scheme

The gardens of these Melbourne GDSG members will be in the Open Garden Scheme in spring this year:

John Armstrong in Vermont, October 3, 4

Shirley Cam in Silvan, October 10,11

Bev & John Hanson in Warrandyte, Sept. 26, 27; Nov. 21, 22

Diana & Brian Snape in East Hawthorn, September 12,13

Other Australian gardens opening for the first time are those of:

Garth & Sandy McIntyre in Mt Eliza, October 24, 25 (design adviser Paul Thompson)

Jill & John Payne in Eltham, November 21, 22 (designer Roger Stone)

Graham & Maree Goods (SGAP members) at Wail East, near Horsham, October 3,4

Brendan & Maureen Stahl (SGAP members) at Deans Marsh, October 10,11

There are also other Australian gardens which have been in the Scheme before, so the total number is increasing. The Guide Book for the Scheme with further information usually comes out in August, and details are given on ABC radio too. Unfortunately the Guide Book is likely to come out after the August NL, so would members from outside the Melbourne area, or from other States, please let me know if your garden is in the Scheme. I'd like to advertise dates in the August Newsletter and encourage members to visit as many as possible - also any other gardens featuring Australian plants.

If you know of any gardens which may be suitable for opening some time next year, please let me know.

Apart from the local garden competitions which I think take place in some Sydney suburbs, THIS IS HOW WE CAN SHOW GARDENS OF AUSTRALIAN PLANTS TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

What's in a name?

Diana Snape Vic

I think most people in our society would regard 'litter' as being undesirable, but 'leaf litter' can generate two completely opposite reactions. Most of 'us' see it as attractive, and recognize its virtues - its roles as mulch, in returning nutrients to the soil, and providing habitat for small wildlife. Many of 'them' see it as untidy and unattractive - in fact just another sort of 'litter' or 'mess'.

How much is in a name? Would leaf litter "by any other name still smell as sweet"? (If it's from many eucalypts, e.g. *E citriodora*, it does have a beautiful smell!) Or would a new term such as 'leaf carpet', 'leaf nutrient layer' or 'leaf texture' have better P.R. with the wider public? (Or am I just an eternal optimist?) You can always tidy the edges of your leaf texture!

On a wider front, I still think the term 'Australian plants' gives a different connotation to 'native plants', as well as being more explicit and accurate, unless one is talking about plants native to a particular area. In this context though the term indigenous is becoming much more widely used, rather than native. For more general use I would encourage talking about Australian plants wherever this is possible.

9 BOOKS

'The Book of Garden Design' by John Brookes, Macmillan 1991

Shirley Pipitone ACT

John Brookes is a prolific garden writer, but this is the first of his books that I have read. Firstly it is big (352 pages) and beautiful, perfect reading for a bed-ridden person recovering from a SQAP-expedition-induced broken leg. The gardens photographed are primarily British, with some from other European countries and some from both North and South America. However, as illustrations of design principles in action, they are superb.

The book is divided into nine chapters:

1. What is a garden?
2. Learning to design
3. Styling the garden
4. Designing with plants
5. Designing step by step
6. Design and styling solutions
7. The ingredients of a garden
8. Plant selection
9. Further working information

It is not until page 24 that John Brookes tells us what he thinks a garden is: 'a retreat from the awfulness of the twentieth-century manifestations of man himself. I can relate to that.

Although some of this awfulness is probably evident in the setting of every garden created or redeveloped these days, Brookes still adheres to his key point that the feel of a garden should develop from its setting. The setting includes physical aspects such as shape of the landscape, surrounding buildings etc, local geology, climate, and of course, your own house on the site. Incidentally he acknowledges Edna Walling's role in encouraging the use and styling of native plants in Australian gardens at a time when similar moves were occurring overseas. He comments that 'bizarre though it might seem, the English tradition did, and still does, pervade the country gardens of that [i.e. our] part of the world.' While this is unfortunately true, I am very disappointed that Brookes does appear to be aware of the current resurgence of interest in Australian plant gardens.

The book filled a gap for me~how to put one's creative pencil to paper. Most garden design books I have read make an extraordinary leap from the mundane yet essential site analysis to the terrifying stage of creating something from nothing. John Brookes gives some practical hints about how to create shapes in your garden, taking into account the shapes in the setting. When he writes about using photos of the site, rough sketches on layers of tracing paper etc and how to analyse and refine your early drawings, he is somehow able to inspire confidence. Shapes are the key.

However I was intrigued but not convinced by his method of ensuring that your garden has visual unity with the house. He maintains that garden design should be based on a grid determined by some dimension of your house. For example, the width of a bay window or the distance between pergola posts. For very formal designs, I can see that this may be effective. But even looking at his designs in the book, I can see little relationship between the grid used and the final design. The only benefit I can see from designing using a large grid is that it is likely to encourage timid designers to think on a much broader scale and develop much more free flowing shapes and lines than designing using a metre grid or smaller.

The book goes on to describe different garden styles such as country, modern, formal, Oriental, architectural, cottage etc. We could emulate these styles with Australian plants but I must say I am pleased that this Study Group exists and gives some attention to Australian garden styles.

The most interesting concept in John Brookes's book is his categorisation of plants for the purpose of designing with them. He describes five key plant categories: the specials, the skeletons, the decoratives, the pretties and the infill. More on these later in a future Newsletter. The book continues with more practical design hints, examples of many different types of garden designs, a discussion of garden ingredients such as pots and fencing, examples of plant selection for particular conditions and effects, a brief plant catalogue based around the above five categories, and further technical information.

Well worth reading.

This is a beautiful book, so beautiful that I could be seduced into wanting such a lush soft garden if it were not for the sheer impracticability up here, let alone the antisocial action of using the water that would be needed. Reproductions of paintings have been matched with photographs of gardens based on those of the painters or such original gardens as remain. Monet's garden is well represented as it has been well preserved and has become familiar to many garden lovers. He is said to have walked into his garden every day, but he was not the only impressionist painter to be intimately concerned with his garden. Part of the purpose of their gardens was to create subjects for their paintings, vistas as well as cut flowers.

There is a section devoted to colour theory such as I have become familiar with in my Patchwork books. Van Gogh wrote 'there are colours which cause each other to shine brilliantly, which form a couple, which complete each other like man and woman'. In the examples given of blue and yellow as such a pair *Brachy(s)come iberidifolia* rates a mention for the blue petals and yellow centres which are set off by corn marigolds.

Warm hot colours of red and orange are said to be notoriously difficult to place effectively, particularly in small spaces because they tend to dominate everything else. Monet placed red roses and pansies in the foreground with pale, cool colours behind to give a greater impression of depth, to increase the distance. Cream flowers can soften the effects and very dark colours can knock back the brilliance. Green is of course the other solution. . . . how I would love to have a problem of a great mass of waratah blooms to deal with. Blue, lavender, cool mauve and pink are restful in the garden especially as the flowers tend to be pastel (what about some of the pink kunzeas?) and recessive especially when used with white.

Different lighting regimes during the day also alter the perceived colour. Low light levels can dull colours and glaring sunlight can make light flowers washed out, so pastel flowers are better in partial shade. White flowers can look sensational in subdued light, even moonlight, but in bright sun large patches of white seem to punch holes in the landscape. Monet juxtaposed colours on his canvasses in small dots to create the characteristic impressionist sensation of 'shimmer' and he built up his garden using several techniques to reproduce a similar sensation. He used broken blocks of colour, avoiding big clumps of solid colour and scattering lots of white flowers to give a sparkle. He also used gauzy white flowers to veil stronger colours, and bicoloured flowers and those with translucent or iridescent petals with light reflecting properties to increase the shimmer. All colours are enlivened by white and interposing white can save what could have been a bad colour combination.

Gertrude Jekyll was making gardens in England at much the same time, from much the same artistic background with a knowledge of colour theory, but there is one distinction between the types of gardens. Jekyll used drifts of colour that dissolved into another as the viewer walked along the border, Monet planted narrow beds in long speckled ribbons of colour stretching the full length of the bed. . . . his were designed to be seen from a single point, where he erected his easel. He also planted in straight lines but painted relaxed groupings.

Van Gogh introduced the idea of a Tapestry Garden, i.e. one depending on shapes and textures of plants beyond their flowers. This theme is not greatly developed in the book, but I feel is very relevant to our Australian gardens, where we are planning for the whole year, where our foliage is so wonderful and versatile, and many plants flower for a long period of time and have smallish blooms, not one great overall mass of colour. The Tapestry Garden relies for its effect on "silhouettes, foliage hues and textures to create a panorama of subtle colour harmonies and contrasts". The Impressionists also used ornamental grasses as part of their tapestries and this was to my knowledge well before the current interest in them.

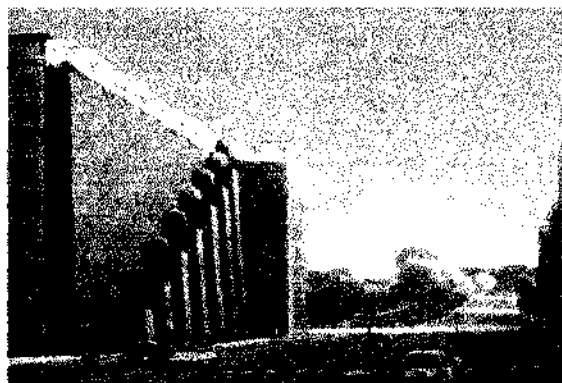
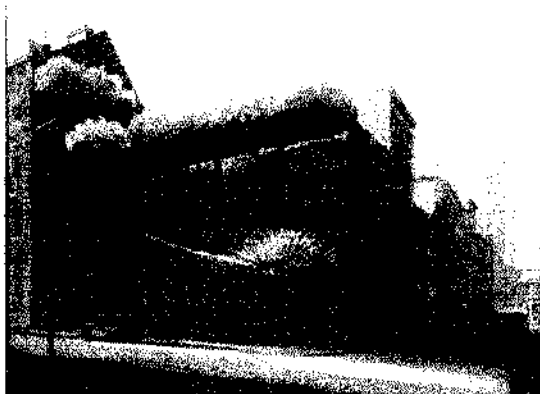
The French Impressionists were influenced by the Japanese art arriving in Europe after the opening up of Japan and this was extended to their gardens. The extra land that Monet bought to extend his garden was developed as a Stroll Garden around the lake, in the general way of a Japanese Stroll Garden, with viewing places with seats etc. for special effects. (Was it Geoff Simmons who suggested Walkabout Gardens for Australia?) (Yes - see NL 19-10.) Still I gathered the Japanese original was based on the lake margins, so we are going further when we go Walkabout. In the Stroll and the Woodland Gardens of the Impressionists the paths are often enclosed by trees, with occasional openings for special features, maybe statuary or just a special plant or plant group. It seems to me that these openings are related to the 'rooms' of English gardens, separate areas with individual characters, divided by hedges. The emphasis in the Woodland Garden, say, shifts to overgrown tunnels to walk through, varied by open areas.

The author is one of a band of gardeners working in the impressionist style, copying and adapting what survives of the original gardens, but also drawing heavily on the paintings based on them. He admits that as painted the gardens seemed more romantic and informal looking than they did in reality and the paintings can be more inspirational than the actual gardens. John Burgess at the GDSG Seminar urged us to consider paintings as a source of ideas!

MAGAZINES

'Landscape Australia' Vol. 20 No. 1 reports that Taylor and Cullity Pty Ltd have received a Landscape Excellence Award for the Australian Garden at the Cranbourne Botanic Garden. GDSG member Paul Thompson is a key member of the team involved in this exciting project.

One article describes Vertical Gardens (Jardins Verticaux) being planned in Brussels, with the aim of re-introducing vegetation against enormous blind facades of city buildings where there is no or little space at ground level, particularly at difficult corners. The vegetation may include trees, indigenous plant species and ivy. An interesting idea for walls in private gardens (generally without trees and certainly without the ivy!)



'Australian Horticulture' Feb/March 98

This issue contained my general article 'Australian plants: rethinking old attitudes' (page 76), which I was pleased to see published in this magazine. There was also a report on the Banksia Farm at Mount Barker, Western Australia (page 18), and another on the use of pebbles in gardens (p 50).

'Australian Horticulture' March/April 98

This includes an article on Lemon Myrtle (*Backhousia citriodora*) as a commercial crop (page 18), suggesting a number of possible uses, and one on the *Dianella* genus describing their landscape potential.

It also says that Mildura Native Nursery Pty Ltd have developed a CD-ROM (it was planned to be launched in March) with comprehensive information about more than 300 Australian plants, which can be modified to be area-specific for a particular location. It retails at \$245.

Is any GDSG member familiar with the CD-ROM 'Australian Plants' by Denise Greiq? If so, we'd love to have comments on it or a fuller review.

"Are native flowers better than exotics?"

Recently I was asked by the Melbourne Herald Sun to write (in 120 words!) the "yes" answer to this question. Although I do not like confrontation, they wanted some-one to put the "yes" case, so this is what I wrote. (If you feel like it, have a go - but remember that 120 word limit! I think half a page would be easier.)

"To me, the answer is yes! Here in Australia, they are ideally appropriate for their "at home" conditions. Beautiful Australian native flowers are unique and very special, often different from traditional old-world flowers. Their variety is amazing and, though some are not particularly large and obvious, others certainly are. Smaller flowers are intriguing with a subtlety and charm all their own - seen close up, many are exquisite.

Native plants have evolved as part of our Australian environment. Needing less water, they still provide all the requirements for our birds and insects in a way that no introduced flowers can. They belong here and nowhere else in the world, while showy exotic flowers are as widespread as Big Macs!"

DESIGN IDEAS

Garden design - where do we start?

Diana Snape Vic

It is easy to identify two extremes in the ways one can approach garden design.

1. The first approach (design first) is to start by working out a design in terms of the hard landscape - the sizes, shapes, positions of any structures, walls and paths. Then the layout and types, sizes and forms of plants, before even thinking about any of the actual plants which will be used. We might need x trees, y large shrubs for the side fences, z groundcover plants, etc. The choice of plants to fill the niches comes later. Drawing a plan is obviously a part of this approach.

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2. The second approach (plants first) is to start by selecting all the plants one would like to include in the garden and preparing a detailed list of plants; sorting them into their various categories (trees, large shrubs, groundcovers, etc); then working out the conditions they require in terms of soil, sunlight, temperature and water, how these can be provided and how the plants can all be fitted into the garden. The house and any other buildings, the boundary fences, probably a driveway, are all constraints in the garden design whether the first or second approach is taken. However some aspects of these can be modified to incorporate them better in the design and link them to our plants.

Most of us probably combine these two approaches. Even if we have a leaning towards the second, much of the hard landscape has to come first, though not necessarily **all** the paths, paved areas, patios or courtyards. Once in place it's difficult to change their position, but on the other hand a 20-year old Australian tree (or even 10-year old) is likely to be impossible to move, so their placement is crucial. Small plants are more tolerant of being moved but it's better to get them in the right place to begin with. So we need to plan our planting with care. When we pay a visit to the nursery we may do so without thinking through the range of plants we really need for our design and go for rather too much impulse buying.

I think this is where drawing (or just sketching) a plan can help immensely, for the second approach as well as for the first. This applies to working on a whole garden, redesigning a single area of the garden or just a garden bed. If we plot the future spread of plants fairly accurately it enables us to get the spacing more correct than we can do by guesswork. (It will also bring home to some of us which plants may be just too big for a small garden.)

We're likely to have favourite plants we'll want to include in our gardens. How and where we will use them should tie in with our design for the garden as a whole. We can also combine 'specimen' plants or collectors' temptations with repetition of plants (which we may have propagated ourselves or bought in as inexpensive tube stock). Once we have an overall design, and know the different soil, sunlight, temperature and water zones within our garden, plants can be replaced or added at later stages too. Our gardens will evolve as we find out which plants grow most successfully.

Garden boundaries

Gordon Rowland NSW

Selected extracts from Gordon's articles for the *'Inner Western Suburbs Courier'*.

Decide whether you want your boundary fence to be apparent and well defined or whether you would rather hide it. If you choose to define it, it must be part of the design and therefore worth looking at. Most backyard fences are hardly worth a second glance; they're purely functional and better hidden or screened from view. Old stone and brick fences are worth exposing though, and sometimes tea-tree and paperbark fences.

To screen your fence use plants which grow dense to the ground and reach at least fence height or about 2 metres. If your garden backs on to bushland, consider a see-through fence or no fence, and gain enclosure or privacy with strategically placed screening plants, preferably using local species. Planting additional local or indigenous plants will consolidate the sense of unity in your garden and increase its apparent size, allowing the natural landscape to appear as part of it. It will also bring more native birds and other wildlife (and raise the value of your property).

To make the best use of space in a small back yard keep the centre open and concentrate the planting around the edges. There is an abundance of handsome, hardy indigenous trees or shrubs of the Sydney region suitable for screening your boundary fence. Indigenous plants provide the added benefit of being environmentally friendly and often of survival value to our threatened native wildlife. Since there are so many that fit the above criteria, I shall mention only a few of the possibilities.

- Acacias (Wattles) - fast growing, they enrich the soil by 'fixing' atmospheric nitrogen and they attract insect- and seed-eating birds. About 65 species occur in the greater Sydney region. As most wattles have a relatively short life span of between 10 to 20 years, you may wish to allow for this by planting more enduring species to close the gap left after they die.
- Baeckeas - a genus of shrubs closely resembling tea-trees; some make excellent screen plants.
- Banksias - the 10 species occurring in the Sydney region all make attractive garden plants and three in particular make useful fence-screeners: *B. ericifolia*, *B. marginata* and *B. spinulosa*.
- Callistemon (Bottlebrushes) - a widespread genus of very hardy shrubs; 11 species occur in the Sydney district, of which the Crimson Bottlebrush *C. citrinus* is probably the best for fence screening. It is a stiff upright shrub (or small tree) of about 4m in height.
- The NSW Christmas Bush, *Ceratopetalum gummiferum*, is an upright shrub or small tree to about

- 5m, covered in white flowers during spring, followed by calyces which turn red during summer.
- The Sticky Hop Bush, *Dodonaea viscosa*, is a dense, hardy, variable species of 3-5m, sometimes with colourful fruits. Most forms are easily grown and make good background or screening plants.
 - Grevilleas - several species make ideal screening plants. Banks' grevillea (*G. banksii*) though not indigenous to Sydney (it grows in poor soils on the open plains of Queensland) is an exceptional shrub of 2-3 m by 2m. One Sydney grevillea, *G. juniperina*, has sharp pointed leaves which give protection to several species of nesting honeyeaters. The upright form reaches about 2m in height and width.
 - Hakeas are related to grevilleas. The Silky Hakea, *H. sericea*, is one of about 9 species occurring in the Sydney district. It attracts honeyeaters, insect-eaters and seed-eaters.

There is no shortage of other indigenous plants suitable for screening your boundary fence.

Displaying Australian plants

Geoff Simmons Qld

Real estate agents have a catchcry of "position, position and position" when advising people on buying houses or land. Australian plant advocates could well emulate this by adopting the theme of "display, display and display". This means giving much thought to devising imaginative designs that utilise the special qualities of Australian plants.

Books are available on specific aspects of display such as container grown plants. However, the subject of display is broader as it includes bedding, specimen and broad acre gardening. While landscape architects may design with a specific theme in mind, home gardeners have an ideal opportunity to experiment as they are able to alter their garden at will to produce interesting designs.

The use of simple iron stands and terracotta pots for instance can be used to display Birds Nest Ferns. These ferns can be raised to any height desired and arranged in rows, singly or in a pattern. The result emphasises the unique character of these ferns, namely large, simple leaves spreading umbrella fashion as if suspended in space. This mimics the presence of these ferns high in forest trees but enables much better viewing and control of growing conditions.

Another example is the now well established practice of grafting grevilleas to produce standard plants. Grevilleas normally used as ground covers grafted at the top of metre or so stems not only displays the flowers to advantage but also helps to control weeds that may disfigure the ground level beauty of the bed.

Modern versions of ancient craft such as the manufacture of terracotta pots and the development of modern hardware for garden use can be blended to produce unusual effects. Imaginative displays should reflect the special nature of our plants.

PLANTS in DESIGN

Small eucalypts for the eastern States

Paul Kennedy Vic

I read with interest Dean Nicolle's list of preferred small eucalypts for the garden. Whilst we are growing many that Dean has listed (we have over 160 species of eucalypt), our favourites are *E. forrestiana* and *E. pluricaulis* ssp. *porphyrea*.

E. forrestiana is always eye-catching with its red seed capsules, and grows into a small to medium upright tree (3-7m) suitable for suburban gardens as well as broad acres.

E. pluricaulis ssp. *porphyrea* has the most intense blue/purple leaves all the year round. It grows as a small mallee to perhaps 3-4m and is always bushy. The colour of its foliage makes it a gem for gardens. It comes from the Jerrymungup-Bremer bay area of W.A.

I am disappointed that a lot more of our eastern mallees are not grown in our gardens. Most come from along the mountain ridges extending from northern NSW into Victoria. They would be ideal for localities south of the divide. Eucalypts in this category are:

<i>apiculata</i> (Narrow-leaved Mallee Ash);	<i>approximans</i> (Barren Mountain Mallee);
<i>bakeri</i> (Baker's Mallee);	<i>cunninghamii</i> ;
<i>flindersii</i> (SA Grey Mallee);	<i>gregsoniana</i> (Wolgan Snow Gum);
<i>luehmanniana</i> (Yellow-top Mallee Ash);	<i>moorei</i> (Narrow-leaved Sally);
<i>polybractea</i> (Blue-leaved Mallee);	<i>pumila</i> (Pokolbin Mallee);
<i>multicaulis</i> (Whipstick Mallee Ash);	<i>stricta</i> (Blue Mountains Mallee Ash);
<i>sturgissiana</i> (Ettrema Mallee)	and <i>viridis</i> (Green Mallee).

I don't believe the brilliance of the flowers should be the determining factor, rather something that is going to be nice and bushy which can fit into a suburban garden and provide habitat. I believe SGAP as a

Society has failed to push eucalypts of the mallee type for home gardens, as in many cases they would be more suitable than the large eucalypts which seem to have been the fashion over the past thirty years.

Perhaps one of the aims of the GDSG could be to set up display areas of plants suitable for home gardens and encourage nurseries and SGAP to promote these plants. Display areas could be set up in public gardens or gardens of members. What do members think?

*Not all the eucalypts listed by Paul or by Dean Nicolle in the last NL are well known and/or readily available. Please let us know of those that you are growing or know sources for. As just one example of the attractions of the eastern mallees, Gordon Rowland describes *E. multicaulis* (Whipstick Mallee Ash) as a compact, multi-stemmed tree with smooth bark, purplish new growth and an abundance of creamy white flowers, mostly in winter and sporadically at other times. It reaches about 6 or 7 metres. Although it tolerates most soils, around Sydney it usually inhabits dry sandstone areas. It makes a good windbreak and attracts many native birds.*

Further comments on small eucalypts

I was pleased that the article on ornamental small eucalypts was included and that 'small' did have a better meaning than usually - 2 to 3 metres would be my idea. One interesting point is that only one S.A. eucalypt, *E. leptopoda* ssp. *elevata*, is included in Dean Nicolle's book (and that only just scrapes in). It is the only one listed in the book so I hope that few people made the mistake I did and automatically looked for pictures and descriptions in the book. **Geoff Simmons** Qld

From my experience, I agree with the first four eucalypts on Dean Nicoile's list. **Jan Hall** Vic

Another species from NSW we have in our garden is *E. rupicola* (Cliff Mallee Ash). Described as a mallee shrub growing 1-6m, ours is an attractive tree of about 6m with two distinct trunks. **Diana Snape** Vic

Regarding conifers

Geoff Simmons Qld

- Another reference is: *Horticulture of South-eastern Australia Vol. 1: Ferns, Conifers & their allies* Roger Spencer, Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne
- There is a relevant society: The Conifer Society of Australia. The subscription is \$12 and they issue an annual newsletter covering all conifers, not only Australian. Enquiries to: Roger Spencer, National Herbarium, Birdwood Ave., South Yarra, Vic 3141. Ph (03) 9252 2315
- Nurseries: A local general nursery has an occasional Australian conifer but I have obtained more from Kuranga Native Nursery. 393 Maroondah Hwy, Ringwood, Vic 3134. Ph (03) 9879 4076
- Some personal experiences with Australian conifers in my garden designated the Casuarina-conifer garden. Teaming conifers with casuarinas seems to work well for two reasons - the leaf forms blend quite well and, more importantly in my case, the casuarinas drop needles that inhibit virtually all plant growth under their shade so they produce minimal care areas. Conifers planted in spots where the leaves of casuarinas have been brushed aside seem to do well.
 - Podocarpus lawrencei*** - small shrubs, 3 plants obtained in 1995. Three prostrate plants of the same species obtained at the same time did not survive the same conditions. Have any members had this experience? Relatively easy to strike from cuttings.
 - P. elatus* - 5 plants obtained in 1995 from a Brisbane nursery, sited in open ground in full sun and now about 1.5 to 2m high. Planted about one metre apart to form a fairly tight group.
 - P. gray!* - 3 plants placed in garden in January 1996. Growing quite well except they seem favoured by a hare or wallabies so if my wire guard is moved leaves are chewed.
 - P. ladei* - 2 plants obtained a decade or so years ago from a Brisbane nursery. Easy to propagate.
 - P. spinulosus* - several plants with the fine foliage that is attractive.
 - Callitris oblonga*** - 3 plants obtained from Kuranga in 1975. Much to my surprise these plants have done very well and certainly would do credit to any garden. Surprised as I had considered this to be a species of the colder climates.
 - C. baileyi* - grown well since planting in 1994.
 - C. macleayana* - planted in 1996
 - C. rhomboidea* - several Port Jackson Pines planted in 1993 have proved successful garden subjects. Seed is readily collected using the bag method and germination is good.
 - C. columellaris* - Richmond Cypress Pine. Also *C. columellaris* v. *columellaris* (Coastal Cypress)
 - Agathis robusta*** (Kauri) - Planted in 1995 originally as a pot plant but transferred to open. A sic

grower but the leaf colour is attractive.

- *Araucaria bidwillii* (Bunya Pine) - Three plants, one in a pot and two in the ground. One of the latter was completely burnt off in a bush fire; however several trunks have since appeared.
- *Actinostrobus arenarius* and *A. pyramidalis* seedlings have been raised recently but it is too early to judge whether they will be suitable as garden plants.

An Australian conifer in Dublin

In 'Garden Artistry: secrets of designing and planting a small garden' by Helen Dillon (1995, Macmillan USA), with a focus on plants for a garden in Dublin, only seven or so Australian plants are mentioned. One of these is a conifer. The author says "Hanging over the edge (of a bed) is an obscure, prostrate conifer for the collector, *Microcachrys tetragona*, a member of the Podocarpaceae from Tasmania, where it creeps over the rocks. It has sweet little female cones, which mature to a translucent bright orange red." DS

Tough plants for dry conditions (see note page 18)

Monika Herrmann Vic

The following are some of the plants which I have found to survive in challenging conditions, in a dry bed sloping down to the west - partly in sun, partly shady:

<i>Anigozanthos</i> spp.	have handled most situations
<i>Banksia spinulosa</i> 'dwarf	wonderful texture plant, have several in the garden
<i>Brachysemacelsianum</i> syn. <i>B. lanceolatum</i>	dense, silver-green foliage, scrambling on slope, can be a semi-climber
<i>Chorisiaena quercifolia</i>	decorative lobed leaves, greenish-cream pendulous flowers, grew easily
<i>Correa</i> "Dusky Bells"	excellent "filler" plant where-ever needed
C. "Marion's Marvel"	no fuss except pruning as it grew beyond expectations - doesn't happen often here!
<i>Darwiniacitrbdora</i>	a wonderful all-round performer
<i>Eriostemon myoporoides</i>	surviver in any condition, plant in full sun has grown best
<i>Grevillea endlicheriana</i>	no watering; distinctive grey fine foliage
<i>Grevillea shiressii</i>	took a while to establish - hardly surprising in a very rocky site
<i>G.victoriae</i>	similar to above
<i>Melaleuca hypericifolia</i>	graceful weeping habit; even found a seedling
<i>Phebalium lamprophyllum</i>	excellent dark-green foliage, compact, white flowers in profusion

Some species from these other genera are also proving to be useful:

Acacia, *Bracteantha*, *Chrysocephalum*, *Lasiopetalum*, *Phebalium*, *Thomasia*.

Ground Covers

<i>Correa decumbens</i>	growing and flowering in very dry shade, poor soil
C. reflexa var. <i>nummulariifolia</i>	excellent low spreading, profuse light-green bells
<i>Grevillea curviloba</i>	have taken many cuttings to form a mat on the steepest slope.

Suggestions I have been given: *Goodenia ovata* prostrate which is growing quickly and easily, propagates easily also and *G. macmillanii* which I have yet to get hold of.

Weekly record of the 10 best plants at Killarney

Cherree Densley Vic

Reprinted from SGAP Victoria March Newsletter are Cherree's records for just two weeks of the 6 included in that newsletter. (Victorian members will have seen the complete list.) These selections are based on flowers for colour in the garden but also on foliage. (Killarney is on the south coast of Victoria with its fair share of rain, wind and salt.) Keeping such a record for our own gardens would be an invaluable guide to our plant 'palette' for design.

Week ending Jan 10

Agonis flexuosa
Angophora costata (Smooth-barked Apple)
Anigozanthos flavidus (green)
Blandfordia nobilis
Bracteantha bracteata 'Diamond Head'
Epacris longiflora
Hibbertia scandens
Melaleuca elliptica
Scaevola albida pink (in container)
Viminaria juncea

Week ending Jan 31

Crowea exalata
Cymbopogon refractus (Lemon Grass)
Eremophila nivea
Eucalyptus leucoxylon (white)
Grevillea beadleana (grafted)
Grevillea bipinnatifida (grafted)
Isolepis nodosa
Juncus vaginatus
Leptospermum petersonii
Leucophyta citreus (Lemon Beauty Head)

Trees with topknots

Geoff Simmons Qld

In this instance, trees with topknots are defined as woody plants with straight trunks surmounted by a crown of leaves and, at times, flowers and seeds. They seem to fall readily into two categories - natural and manipulated plants.

NATURAL

The outstanding species in this category belong to the palms. The straight trunks crowned with palmate or fishbone leaves and maybe with magnificent racemes of flowers and bunches of spectacular seeds can be seen and appreciated in the warmer regions. Also reference should be made to some tree ferns that grow tall, shed their dead fronds and exhibit this type of beauty.

A recent visit to a nursery supplied another example of an Australian plant with this type of growth. The tree is *Gastonia* sp. (Noah's Basswood). The two young trees in my garden give no hint that they will eventually grow up with bare slender trunks, crowned with a rosette of drooping leaves.

MANIPULATED PLANTS

This category includes plants where extraneous branches and leaves are removed from the trunks. This is mainly applicable to plants that normally grow stick-like. Perhaps an example could be *Eucalyptus citriodora*. Into this group could also be put the grafted plants, although here there is limited need for height. There are many ways of looking at plants with topknots - the above is only one. Among others are height, capacity to have a crest of flowers or seeds, upright or hanging plumes.

In garden design, single specimens or groups of such plants should be considered, to add variety to the breadth of Australian plants available for an Australian garden.

Replacement plants

Tony Roberts Vic suggests that we should try to suggest Australian replacements for European plants wherever possible, either on an individual basis or in groups. We started this early on in NL 3-8 and NL 7-9 but then the suggestions lapsed. The idea is a good one to revive, so thank you for the reminder Tony, if members request it, those early lists could be included in the next NL, along with any new suggestions you send in. I suspect one slight difficulty is that the actual groups of plant in which Australia is particularly rich differ from the groups of European plants - e.g. our wonderfully extensive range of shrubs and ever-green trees of all shapes and sizes. On the other hand we are lacking in the variety of deciduous trees, and many of our bulbs and soft herbs or perennials are as yet little known. Our substitutes may be of a different nature.

Hibbertias - "You light up my life"

Jan Simpson ACT

This is extracted from an article with which I felt much empathy, written by Jan Simpson for the Canberra Region December Journal.

According to Gardner's book, *Wildflowers of Western Australia*, there are 64 species of *Hibbertia* in W.A. alone. All except two species have yellow flowers. Most of those from W.A. are shrubby bushes. He says: "Members of this family are easily recognised by the five free concave persistent sepals and the five, usually notched, deciduous petals which fall early; the usually numerous stamens ... and the almost free carpels, commonly two or five in number, which open outwards to liberate the seeds."

The common name for *Hibbertia* is "Guinea Flower", from the golden pre-decimal coins called 'guineas'. (The flower of *H. scandens* really is as big as a 'guinea'.) Hibbertias well deserve this name, as they look like pieces of sunshine lying on the ground and light up the shady places under trees and leggy, bare-ankled bushes. They are a perfect species to add to a garden, about five years down the track, to give it a lift without having to totally change everything.

Hibbertias are really understorey plants, although a few will grow in very sunny positions. Most are not fussy about soil type, but none like a soggy root system. This need not be managed by raised beds but by siting the small plants among already established shrubs, where competition for water will keep the hibbertia on the dry side and provide the necessary cover at the same time.

I've always had some hibbertias. *H. scandens* found a congenial home inside a melaleuca where it is sheltered from frost. Individual 'arms' may reach three metres. The prostrate green form of *H. obtusifolia* will root at the nodes in damp litter, and reached over a metre wide. *H. empetrifolia* (syn. *H. astrotricha*), facing east against the back fence under a callistemon, took off like a rocket and the next year smothered itself in flowers. *H. procumbens* was slow to take off because of the raw tanbark we spread as mulch. This soon was impenetrable to water as it matted together with a white fungus. We scraped this back and covered the bare

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soil with stone chips for a mulch. The hibbertia still lives and is happily warming the feet of a calytrix. It roots at the nodes if encouraged with moist humus and has reached a metre wide. In Canberra it flowers from late spring to early summer and can withstand dry periods once established.

The stunning W.A. plant *H. stellaris* is definitely a 'fuss pot' but could be treated as an annual. Two colour forms available are the regular 'orange' and a bronzy gold form which could be described as 'early season mandarin'. For both *H. serpyllifolia* and *H. cuneiformis* it was difficult to achieve the right balance between the amount of overhead cover and watering.....

I decided to outline a 'path' with prostrate gold plants to complement the *Senna*, *Chrysocephalum semipapposum*, *Acacia wilhelmi*, and the gold in the *Hakea vicoriae* leaves. Along with *Goodenia* spp., *Vellia* spp. and *Chrysocephalum apicuiatum*, I put in *Hibbertia microphylla*, another W.A. species having small round leaves with recurved edges that tend to hang downward along the stems. It can grow to 60 x 80 cm and so far it's doing well on a weekly watering. Cuttings strike easily. Another plant tried was supposed to be *H. humifusa*., a prostrate plant from the Grampians in Victoria, but from its response to conditions was probably *H. fasciculata*..

I have begun planting the pool surrounds and have included a local *H. obtusifolia* upright grey form. This is one very tough plant that grows on dry, stony hillsides. While it grows easily from soft tip cuttings, getting these soft cuttings is not easy. The plant puts them out irregularly, in response to good water supply. Not only do you have to be there at the right time - but you need to have beaten the kangaroos as well. The local *H. obtusifolia* varies in colour from lemony gold, through yellow, gold, buttercup to the orange side of gold, and flowers range in size from five to ten centimetres. Old plants may be up to one metre in diameter. Can you imagine how splendid an informal hedge of them would be in early summer?

These plants are really attractive and deserve to be grown more. Someone else besides me must have some bare-bottomed bushes needing brightening up, or a corner needing colour. Look for them at the next sale. Happy Hibbertday to you all.

SNIPPETS

Geoff Simmons sends an extract from a local paper blaming the pollen from callistemons for an increase in asthma (and suggesting the removal of all callistemons as street trees). A successor to acacias as the villains? Fortunately a response to the letter points out that grasses may be the culprits and that research needs to be carried out before any extreme measures are taken.

A description of the Smithsonian Garden in Washington DC in 'Australian Horticulture', Feb/March, tells us "The Island Garden is entered through a moon gate, a circular passageway. In China, the circle is a symbol of Heaven."

A report of studies of honeyeaters in gardens recommends the planting of local grevilleas (and indigenous understorey plants generally). Unfortunately the showy cultivars such as the extremely popular *Grevillea* 'Robyn Gordon' attract the larger, aggressive noisy miners and wattle birds at the expense of the small honeyeaters (and other small birds too). It's very important to provide sufficient (indigenous) shelter in the garden.

GDSG member Ross Smyth-Kirk has been co-opted to the Board of the Australian Flora Foundation. Since 1981 the Foundation has been funding research projects involving Australian plants, for example into their pollinators and breeding systems. The knowledge gained from such research is potentially invaluable.

MEETINGS

Melbourne meetings

Report of meeting held on Feb 1st at Monika Herrmann's

Thank you to all the people who came on this rather warm afternoon and stood in the sun with clipboards in hand to pool their ideas. The brief was to design and plant a linear bed directly in front of the house below a driveway. This area is rather narrow and then slopes steeply on the western open side of the hill. Plants should not grow taller than 1.5m and not obstruct the view. A tall Stringybark gives some shade to a small portion of the area which means that plants will need to tolerate dry shady and very dry sunny conditions.

Some parts of the site require very tough plants - there were many favourites suggested: *Cryptandra amara*, (long-flowering, Aut-W, 30-60cm), *Cassia (Senna?) odorata* syn. *C. australis*, (fragrant, orange-yellow fls, Sept-May) and *Austromyrtus dulcis*. Also *Baeckea virgata* and *Crowea exalata* 'Whipstick' were thought to handle the conditions. I have tried a crowea which grew well for a short while and then suddenly turned tail (lack of water) - I will try again. *Metaleuca vblacea* dwarf was suggested as ideal to group together and then shape to size. *Olearialirata* and *O. phlogopappus*, although relatively short-lived, would do well. A local form, *O. myrsinoides* has been planted on the boundary. A dwarf Casuarina was another thought - *{Allocasuarinanana?}* - dense small shrub, plant in groups, hardy including clay soil). The Hibiscus family would provide height and colour - *Hibiscus geranioides* (not Alyogyne) and *H. splendens*, a taller plant with grey foliage. For hedging or siting around the edge in groups, *Stypandra glauca* (Nodding Blue Lily) and *Thelbema* sp. were suggested. *Hibbertia empetrifolia* and *Aphanopetalum resinum* were thought to make a spreading ground cover for clumping or climbing if given assistance. The *Aphanopetalum* may need more moisture as the one I have already planted has taken a long time to establish.

Some general suggestions were handy:

A *Telopea* 'Shady Lady' planted lower down would benefit by adding another one or two waratahs for impact. Because the bed is so narrow a good idea was to break up this linear effect by adding more rocks to provide waves of terraces at an angle across the bed. (I hear groans from Rolf) This would repeat the terrace effect begun higher up. It was thought that repetition of ground cover was the way to go.

Monika Herrmann Vic (Monika's own list of tough plants is given on page 15.)

Report of meeting held on March 1st at Maureen & Geoff Short's Diana Snape

In March we enjoyed a visit to Maureen & Geoff Short's garden, which is approximately one third of an acre (0.13ha). The back garden is relatively long and narrow (65m x 18m or 217ft x 60ft), with a gently curving path leading down one side. In the first section, during the last couple of years, an extensive grassed area has been replaced by garden beds with two crossing gravel pathways making an X-shape. At this stage in its development it is a very open sunny area, though several trees have been planted that will eventually shade certain sections. In general though the well mulched new beds now contain mainly low shrubs and ground-covers with repetition of some species, forming a very attractive 'wildflower garden'. In the older beds adjacent to the side fences more mature shrubs, some quite large, predominate.

The back section of the garden, which Maureen & Geoff think of as their 'woodland', also has mature trees and shrubs with large tufted plants such as grasses and *Lomandra longifolia*. Wide pathways and open areas are gravelled and in one low spot in the side pathway there is an ephemeral wet area which drains towards the side fence. Very large rocks were introduced to give interest to this area when the garden was created. Maureen & Geoff asked for suggestions for this whole 'woodland' area. The following were a few of the group's ideas:

- develop the low spot further and very deliberately as a semi-permanent water area, creating and shaping two saucers to collect water - this will also provide good conditions for restios and sedges
- this could well be combined with building a short boardwalk or a bridge over the low area where it is likely to be muddy or wet after rain, to take advantage of changes in ground-level
- no small rocks should be introduced because of the strength of the large rocks there now
- the older clumps of grass could be rejuvenated by cutting back
- smaller tufted plants could be used as well as the larger ones, e.g. smaller lomandras and orthrosanthus species, especially beside the paths
- more small plants such as groundcovers could be introduced to line edges of paths and link this 'woodland' area with the 'wildflower garden'. However this should not be continuous - there should be visual interruptions, with some taller plants to block the views of lower plantings beyond.
- those shrubs which have grown well in conditions of semi-shade should be repeated here
- a yate which was looking very unhealthy should be coppiced (to give it a final chance)

Sunday May 3 evening at 8pm. This was a members' slide night at the Snapes', looking at gardens & architecture etc relevant to design. Notices were sent to members who attend meetings fairly regularly plus those we hoped might be able to make it for this special one. (Remember always to ring me up and check if you're not sure about a meeting.) There will be a report of this meeting in the next Newsletter.

Next meeting:

Sunday June 7 1.45 for 2pm at Chris Larkin's, to see a garden in the early stages of development. Chris suggests car-pooling - ring her for specific directions, and to let her know whether you can come. Alternatively ring Diana Snape

July - no meeting

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Sydney Branch meeting

Unfortunately the March 15 meeting was washed out (light rain and cold - the only inclement weather to date in the last six months or so). A last minute, very difficult decision had to be made and the meeting at Jeff Howes' place has been postponed.

Next meeting - Sunday May 24: 2pm at Jeff Howes'.

Jeff has worked out an agenda of objectives for this meeting to add focus to the garden visit:

- To discuss the plants used in both the front garden & courtyard in relation to form, texture & colour.
- To make suggestions and discuss your thoughts as to what plants should be added or removed to improve the landscape design.
- To discuss how formal or informal this native garden is and why you think this.
- To demonstrate how to promote new growth from a mature native grass -we will see "Jeff's party trick" with his poa (*Poa sieberiana*).

Your ideas and suggestions (over a cup of tea and a biscuit) as to the future formats of the GDSG meetings will be most welcome.

Please phone Jo Hambrett by 20/5/98 to indicate whether you can come.

NE Vic Branch

Report of meeting held on February 22 at Gloria Thomlinson's

Barbara Buchanan Vic

The Branch's comments on mission statements, aims and logo are included earlier in this NL (p 4).

Geoff Simmons usually gives us something to think about. This time it was his discussion of sustainability in a garden. In one sense 'garden' and 'sustainability' are incompatible terms but the naturalistic bush gardens of so many SGAPers are nearer to sustainability than most, and indigenous gardens should be closest. The only indigenous garden I have seen that was left to look after itself, i.e. self-sustain, did not impress me; it was a formless mess, but it satisfied its makers so at least one criterion of garden-making was met. We certainly want to introduce new plants as they become available, and to continue to develop and refine our existing plants. We went on to consider what remains when we leave our garden and hope that for a time at least the 'bones' will survive us, i.e. our use of space and general layout and the major trees and shrubs.

Diana has suggested that a theme for a NL could be designing with bushfires in mind - this was the subject of the last Wangaratta group meeting where we received much useful information. It occurred to me that quite a few of the recommendations lend themselves to a formal style of design around the house.

We also have Gloria's front garden to think about. It is very difficult to visualize a complete change to this attractive garden, but put your thinking caps on and see what you can dream up. Move out into the nature strip or the the 120m strip between service road and highway if you want. This front garden has become more exposed to noise and traffic since the nearby bridge was rebuilt.

Next meeting Sun. May 24 at Jan & Alan Hall's Patanga Nursery, Murray Valley Hwy west of Yarrawonga, at 10.30 a.m. for 11 am start.

S.A. Branch

Report of meeting held on February 14

Janet Fisher S.A.

The group met at the property of fellow member **Philip Tow** and his wife. They live on a 2 hectare rural property north of the town of Gawler. The property was purchased in 1984 but work did not start on the garden in earnest until 1989. The land in the area is flat and creating a wind break was of major importance to protect the house and reduce wind-caused soil erosion. Trees were planted along the boundary to start the windbreak soon after purchase and added to as plants died or failed to thrive. The windbreak consists mainly of eucalyptus and acacia with some under-plantings of smaller shrubs.

The garden surrounding the house initially was almost totally exotics but as the Tows' interest in native plants has grown so have the native plants in the garden. The soil and conditions facing plants here are tough but once established they seem to thrive. Most admired was a stunning example of 'Grew/tea'Superb', in full flower, a magnet for the local honeyeaters, and a beautiful example of *Acacia pendula*. The garden is a lovely example of how exotics and natives can be successfully integrated given thought and planning.

Later in the day the group moved on to the Dealtry Native Garden and Plant Nursery and were given a tour by the proprietors of the display gardens they have on site. The display gardens although small were a wonderful example of how to create a natural looking garden crammed with interest in a very limited space.

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This was done mainly with the use of narrow winding paths that gave the illusion of a much bigger, garden. The gardens also contained many unusual plants which generated much interest amongst the group.

Next meeting: dependent on group members' interest. Please phone Margie Barnett.

MEMBERSHIP & TREASURER'S REPORT

Peter Garnham

FINANCIAL STATEMENT - Quarter ending 31/3/98

<u>Receipts</u>		<u>Expenses</u>	
Subscriptions	70.00	Photocopying	248.10
Interest 31/3/98	<u>1.23</u>	Postage	<u>271.50</u>
	<u>\$71.23</u>		<u>\$519.60</u>
<u>Current funds</u> (31/3/98):			
Balance in bank	\$2173.27		
Cheques in hand	<u>20.00</u>		
	<u>\$2193.27</u>		

MEMBERSHIP

1997/98 Subscriptions - 205 paid as at 31/3/98 (approx. 257 members)

New members

A warm welcome to the following new members of the Study Group. We hope you enjoy your membership.

Alex Mackenzie

Maureen & Norman Webb

Change of address

Geof Hawke & Gillian Morris

Reminder: 1998/99 subscriptions become due on 1/7/98.

Please see enclosed separate subscription notice. Prompt payment will ensure your continuing receipt of the Newsletter. We trust that you find your membership of the Study Group worthwhile, and look forward to your on-going valuable involvement.

Many thanks to Lisa Armstrong for kindly using her professional skills to 'tidy up' and improve our iogo. (Lisa is the daughter of GDSG member John Armstrong.)

I really like to hear your responses to each Newsletter, plus ideas on any subject related to garden design. At this time of year you can save on postage and just send a line with your renewal form. Let us know what you think about:

- 'covering the ground' - the use of both hard, inorganic materials (such as stone and gravel) and organic ones, either living plants or dead (leaf litter/leaf carpet etc). What have you found are the benefits or disadvantages of those you have tried, in practical terms or as an element of garden design? (If lots of members each write just a sentence or two that would help give us a broader view.)
- suggestions for reducing fire risk by designing the area around a house and the associated planting.

I've been looking for quotes about gardens lately so I was interested in John Brookes' definition, found by Shirley Pipitone (see p9). Let me know if you find any that appeal to you. One comment that I liked was: "Half the interest of a garden is the constant exercise of the imagination. You are always living three, or indeed six, months hence." Mrs C W Earle 1897 (from *The Virago Book of Women Gardeners* edited by Deborah Kellaway(1996).

All articles are welcome but it's helpful if they're typed or clearly written or printed. My Macintosh computer translates most easily from Microsoft (text only) or DOSS format (WordPerfect) (ASCII) format, so if you can send articles on disk on one of these formats I'd be very grateful. (Your disk will be returned.) Also on email but please don't use attachments.

Articles for the August Newsletter are requested as soon as possible (straight away if you like!) and certainly before the end of June, as this year we plan to be away for July. You'll enjoy a feeling of great virtue if you get down to it now (along with renewing your membership). Looking forward to hearing from you.

Very best wishes

Diana

Diana Snape