

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

NEWSLETTER No. 25

May 1999

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

Dear Members,

When I came home from hospital and felt strong enough to turn on the computer, I discovered I had received some contributions and made a start on the May Newsletter before I went into hospital on March 26. Rather than include the material in the August NL, I thought it best to send it off to you just as it was, without some of the usual sections. It will be posted at the same time as the August Newsletter.

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CORRESPONDENCE extracts
An answer to Alison Payne's letter from overseas**Colleen Keena Old**

"It was great to get the as always choc-a-bloc newsletter. I really look forward to its arrival as it is also so full of information.

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Havent got very far into the newsletter yet but after reading Alison Payne's letter thought this site may be useful to her as she seems to have access to the internet,

<http://www.rbgekew.org.uk/BGCI/europe.htm>

(I did a search for Botanical Gardens, using sawysearch as the search engine).

Am only working four days a week this year so hopefully may be able to do a few more non-work activities.

Our retirement block keeps us busy but it is very rewarding. After two years, even of no watering and no fertilising, we can stand in the shade of the local dry rainforest species. Lilly-pillies (many) are covered in fruit as are native mulberries (Pipturus). Peanut trees and the local acronychia have flowered profusely. Even the "exotic" species such as Davidson's plum have set their first fruit. It is great wandering around picking and eating handfuls of lilly-pillies, native mulberries etc."

Alison Payne's email response from Switzerland

"Thanks, Diana and Colleen.

It's a useful list of botanic gardens I can look up when planning my travels. I've just organised to get the newsletter again (normal mail to Peter), so I'll be "online" again soon. Just in case you need it, my address is Pflirtergasse 13, CH-4054 Basel, Switzerland. The garden shows on television have gone boring - very formal discussions of landscaping theory. Oh well, I'll keep watching. Regards, Alison."

The speed of email! DS

A touch of formality

Peter Swain NSW

"My wife and I have sold the family farm and we will be building a home on our block of 7.5 acres here on the good deep volcanic soil of the Alstonville Plateau. About half of the block is cleared grazing land and the remainder is impoverished rainforest sloping south to a small creek.

Our plans include rainforest regeneration, a 'naturalised' dam, a house orchard, a small bush tucker plantation and an informal rear garden blending into the landscape. The thing that is exercising my mind is a suitable design for the front garden. Our block is part of a recent subdivision and is semi rural with cattle paddocks opposite, yet a degree of formality suggested by the kerb and gutter to the bitumen road, imposed by the council. A native 'bush garden' without form may look out of place.

As 'ex poms' we are used to the semi-formal front gardens of Europe and we are eager to try landscaping with natives that have a more orderly and stronger form - perhaps standard grevilleas instead of roses, foxtail palms instead of cocas, dwarf lilly-pilty for hedging instead of box, etc. Any suggestions or further references would be most welcome. Most garden design publications consist of examples from down south and I can find little written on design principles for the sub-tropics or good examples. Fellow APS (Australian Plant Society) members and local plant nurseries are very helpful on individual species but when it comes to landscape/garden design there are not so many Capability Browns or Gerkyll Hydes around, at least not on my limited budget!

People are now beginning to experiment with such gardens, combining local plant knowledge with principles of design, discussed in past Newsletters. Often a gradation is required, from formal near buildings to more informal near the natural environment. The same plants can be used differently, or some different plants can be introduced in each area. GDSG members will be interested to hear how you go, Peter. DS

3 DESIGN

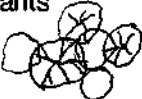

Unique aspects for Australian garden design



Geoff Simmons Qld



Attached is an attempt to point out some of the characteristics that should be considered in designing a garden recognized as of Australian origin. Inevitably the local environment plays a part - this includes topography, plant species and climate. Many people will claim exceptions but these only serve to emphasize the necessity to look more closely at design parameters.



A few of the factors that come to mind follow.



- 1 Open spaces



<p><u>OUT</u> mixed crowded plants</p> 	<p><u>IN</u> shrubs or trees with space between</p> 
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- 2 Rocks

<p><u>OUT</u> layers of regular shapes</p> 	<p><u>IN</u> odd shaped rocks without formal placing</p> 
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- 3 Trees

<p><u>OUT</u> totally deciduous trees</p> 	<p><u>IN</u> evergreen or partial leaf drop</p> 
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- 4 Flat areas

<p><u>OUT</u> mounds and silly hills</p> 	<p><u>IN</u> flat or rolling plains</p> 
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- 5 Unusual plant types

<p><u>OUT</u> cacti</p> 	<p><u>IN</u> grass-trees</p> 
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- 6 Plant forms

<p><u>OUT</u> bamboos (1 species only)</p> 	<p><u>IN</u> cordylines</p> 
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The above doesn't exhaust considerations along this line. What about hills (Uluru & Glasshouse Mountains), flower colour (yellow dominant), grey leaves and other manifestations of xerophytic life.

If we don't realize what represents Australia, where is the starting point?

*(Exceptions do spring to mind. For^m1, plants crowded in heathland or rainforest; for *2, the regular layers of Hawkesbury sandstone around Sydney where I grew up; but Geoff's approach is challenging. DS)*

Attracting birds to your garden

Jenny Adams NSW

From an article in 'Native Plants for NSW Vol.33 No. 3 July 1998

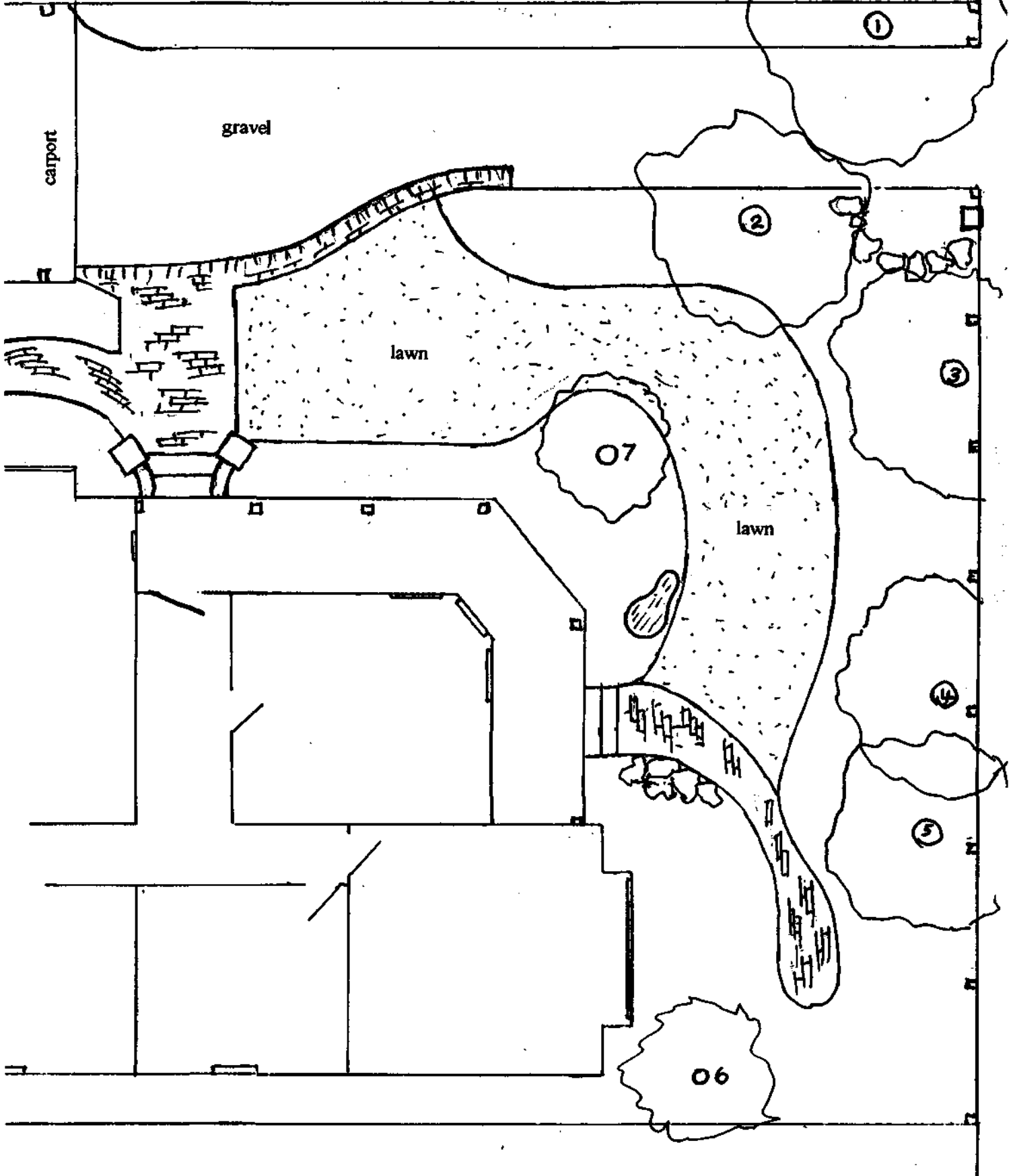
- plant locally indigenous species
- provide a simple birdbath in a place that is safe from cats
- include understorey plants like native grasses and ground covers, amongst shrubs and trees
- the more diverse the flora the more fauna species will be attracted to your garden
- plant close to create a dense understorey to make birds feel safe
- untidy gardens with lots of logs and dead branches attract most fauna
- most birds eat a balanced diet; 90% eat insects plus nectar, seed or fruit.

Mont Albert

Street frontage 22m
street to carport 18m

Scale --- 1cm = 1m
January 11, 1999

- 1. Lemon scented gum
- 2. Flowering Gum
- 3. Plum tree
- 4. Jacaranda
- 5. Jacaranda
- 6. Camelia
- 7. Grevillea Robin Gordon



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Doug & Margaret McIver's garden

Reactions of members attending the meeting varied from agreement on certain points to almost total disagreement on others.

- **Acknowledges dominance and formal style of the house**

Overall, there was concensus on the concept of a gradation from increased formality close to the front entrance then decreasing formality futher away from this, particularly round the corner on the eastern side where the path (approximately parallel to the street) eventually leads to a gas meter.

The formality of the front entrance could include a mirror image of the brick path and irregular-shaped bed (which looked circular). This would at the same time widen and give a curved shape to the bed along the veranda. White roses on the western side of the door near the steps could be repeated on the eastern side (Margaret likes roses). The two urns could be replaced by new containers and more containers or urns could be used in the current lawn area.

- **Reduce or eliminate the lawn and lower maintenance**

In the front (northern) area, several members wanted to keep a well maintained lawn. I think more wanted to get rid of most or all of the lawn. The current lawn area round the front could be replaced by extending the brick paving/pathway and having groundcover plants in between to replace grass. Joan Barrett told us that '*Australian Plants*' March 85 Vol 13, No 102 suggests a variety of groundcover plants.

Doug & Margaret need to decide just how much access they need to their drive along what is now the northern boundary of their lawn. Alternatives for the pathways, around the corner where the Grevillea 'Robin Gordon' is, (apart from bricks) would be gravel as in the drive, grey concrete as on the veranda, or heavy mulch.

- **Plantings**

Most members were merciless towards the plum tree - it obviously had to go - until they tasted its fruit and jam! Tony Roberts might have the solution to this with grafting, as seeds have not been reliable. Where a large hakea was removed, the suggestion of *Melaleuca linarifolia* was rejected as growing too large while *Melaleuca lateritia* is of more appropriate size, and the colour of the flower goes well with the unusual colour of their *Corymbia (Eucalyptus) ficifolia* which is also in flower now. Another suggestion was *Backhousia citriodora*.

Discussion Notes

Doug McIver

GDSG Meeting on Doug & Margaret McIver's front garden, Mont Albert

Feb 7, 1999

In these notes, I have attempted to record all the ideas offered. There has been no attempt to select any preferred ideas, to leave out any ideas, or to comment on them..

Most people divided the area into two parts - the area to the north of the front veranda and entrance, facing the driveway, referred to here as the "entrance garden", and the area across the front of the house, facing the street, the "front garden". It was generally agreed that the entrance garden should reflect the formality and tradition of the older house, but that the front garden could be treated more informally, a more "naturalistic" garden. As the north-facing front veranda is used regularly, the aim should be to provide a "vista" looking out from the veranda.

Suggestions for the entrance garden included:

Get rid of the "right-angle" where the path meets the driveway

Make the entrance to the front steps symmetrical - have something on the right to match the clump of vegetation on the left.

Add a brick pathway to the right of the front door to match the curving brick path to the left.

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Extend the brick paving to the corner of the north veranda.

Keep lawn in front of the veranda. - a formal manicured lawn

Place a birdbath in the space in front of the veranda.

There should be some "tall skinnies" in front of the fence on the north side of the driveway.

The veranda bed should be wider.

Introduce vegetation between the veranda and the driveway to provide a visual barrier to obscure the view of the cars.

Replace the concrete blocks at the front steps with a pair of suitable tubs.

Suggestions for the front garden included the following:

Provide a path from the formal area in front of the veranda, through the remaining lawn to the southern boundary, and replace the remaining lawn with small, very small, or ground cover plantings. There was general agreement on this concept, but not on the nature or exact position of the path. It was agreed that the path should not introduce a new element to the garden. Gravel, grey concrete, or mulch were suggested. Opinions seemed to be diverse, but strongly expressed! There were strong opinions for and against gravel! There seemed to be little support for brick paving, on the grounds that it could be too formal. There was some support for a "wallaby track", which could be adequate but inconspicuous, providing sufficient access for maintenance, and to reach the gas meter.

Add a second pool, several times larger than the present one, and separated from it by the width of a path.

There was one suggestion for a footpath directly (but not straight) from the gate to the centre corner of the veranda.

Provide some change of levels (perhaps using the soil removed from the site of the pool)

There was general agreement that all the trees should be kept, except perhaps the plum tree. A number of people, but clearly not all, felt strongly that it should be removed. (An attempt will be made to use grafting to create a replacement to be planted elsewhere, as it produces exceptionally appealing fruit.)

The steps at the front should be concrete to match the entrance steps

It was accepted that the hedge along the driveway was a good feature, but also some feeling that an alternative to the present rosemary/flavender should be chosen.

Planting suggestions:

Chef's cap correas (*C. baeuerlenni*) under the *Eucalyptus caesias* in the far corner

Replace the plum with a, lemon myrtle (*Backhousia citriodora*).

The kangaroo paws are OK, but not in the right place - they need their own space.

One suggestion favoured the removal of the lavender and rosemary hedge - alternative suggested were westringias, *Austromyrtusdulcis*, *Baeckea virgata* or *Teucriumracemosum*.

Replace the lawn with mulch and ground covers, such as the examples shown in *Australian Plants March* 1985 Vol 13 No 102.

If a replacement is being sought for the plum tree, consideration should be given to the size (smaller than the jacarandas?) and the colour (should relate to the orange/red of the flowering gum and the *Melaleuca* Robin Red Breast).

Ground cover suggestions included *Myoporum parvifolium* and *Grevillea* 'Royal Mantle'

Add a second grevillea (another *G.* 'Robyn Gordon' or similar) about where the pool is now.

There should be something tall at the end of the veranda, past the second steps, against the corner of the bedroom.

Suggestions for planting in the pots each side of the front door included dwarf lilly-pillies and grass trees (use better pots perhaps).

There should be a small eucalypt, 3 to 4 metres, at the end of the present hedge, tall enough and small enough not to interfere with the cars.

Bev and John Hanson's garden was in the Open Garden Scheme in 1998. With Bev's permission I used their 'handout' to obtain extracts for a brief overview of the design of their garden. DS

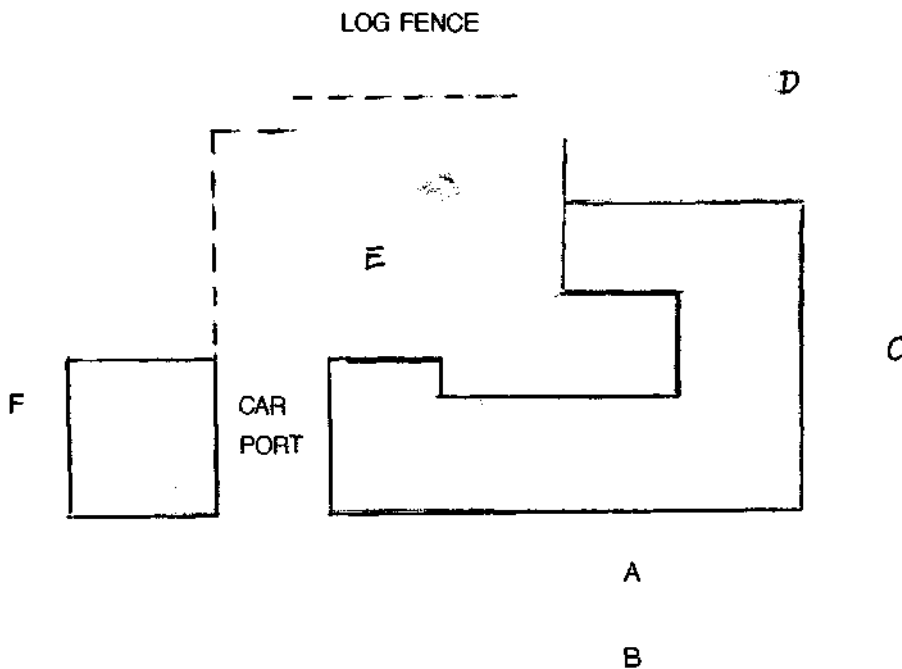
My husband John and I bought our 4-hectare Warrandyte property in September 1969 when I fell in love with the natural wildflowers in the surrounding bush which was complete with understorey.

After graduating from Burnley Horticultural College with a Diploma of Horticulture, I was fortunate to work for one of the top landscape architects, Ellis Stones. His natural style, which included careful placement of rocks, influenced me. When we built the house in 1972, I already had the garden design in my mind so was able to get machinery to help shape the garden during the construction stage.

After moving in over 25 years ago, John and I fairly quickly completed the area closest to the house with the help of our tractor. The many windows in the house allow the garden to be appreciated from inside.

Most of the garden consists of Australian plants which blend in with the natural bushland. Another bonus was that in 1981 bushland on two of our boundaries was declared part of the Warrandyte State Park.

SPECIFIC SECTIONS



Note - This overview just gives a hint of the interest and complexity of Bev and John's garden. DS

- A. South section including five ponds, selected rocks, & plants including ferns, water plants, etc.
 - B. New section consisting of native & indigenous plants about one year old.
 - C. East section where wisteria offers shade in summer & allows sunlight through in winter.
 - D. Mounds created with carefully selected rocks & groundcover drifts to offer privacy. Lawn & barbecue area makes a sheltered outdoor entertainment area.
 - E. Courtyard area with introduced plants & pond, enclosed by a log fence.
 - F. Orchard, vegetable garden & Australian plant nursery.
-

BOOKS & MAGAZINES

"Dissecting Park: flagging down specificity" - students from Faculty of Environmental Design & Construction, RMIT University, 1996

Diana Snape

Some time ago **Paul Thompson** lent me this fascinating but very dense small book. The park concerned is Flagstaff Gardens in Melbourne and the booklet was written by students «s part of their course, and published by the Department of Planning, Policy and Landscape of that Faculty. (I'm impressed by how hard those students worked, analysing the park, but I don't recommend it for a light holiday read.) Much is not directly relevant to private gardens, e.g. sections on history, monuments, sport and social aspects, though I liked the quote "*limits are the stuff of design*".

Some of the rather more relevant topics concerned (quotes or my comments are in italics) -

- Circulation: Angles of paths (*'illogical movements through intersections'*) - what we do see in practice was worked out by logic, that people will take 'short cuts' between paths at an angle to each other of less than 90 degrees, and the smaller that angle the more they'll do it.

Relationships between path and planting beds affecting circulation - planting beds in parks are set back from paths by a 1 m strip of planting of ground cover. Garden beds are of a rectilinear form, placed at intersections where the paths meet at 90 degrees, and are neither greater than 10m in length nor less than 3m in length. (*Depending on the size and complexity of the park and its paths, this formality may be justified!*)

- Topography and sloping shadows: The shadow cast by an object on an even horizontal plane is of a specific length, taken at a specific time of day on a specific day of the year. A shorter or longer shadow not only indicates the direction of slope but also relative steepness. So shadow lengths can define contours. (*Could be of interest to those of us who have sloping blocks.*)

- Vegetation and treescape: One project explored relationships of trees with each other and the site through analysis of leaf shapes. A tree which was not positioned within a 20m radius of another like-leaved tree was termed 'solitary'. A 'grouping' of trees occurred when two or more trees with like leaves were within a 20m radius of each other. (*Sparse 'groupings' for eucalypts.*)

- Views and boundaries: "*A view is seen and is a way of seeing, inextricably linked to a viewer.*" Anon. Views are particularly relevant to a site's perceived limits and can visually extend or enclose it with re* interpretation of the park's (*orgarden's*) boundaries.

- Edges: "*By treating the edges of the park the whole park is treated as one entity. The edges define the site/space from its context, define its topography, and define the entities within the space.*" B. Kirsten
Three of the independent notions of 'edge' are:- materials; facade; and inclusive/exclusive.

Materials range from impermeable (e.g. bluestone wall > one metre) to open (e.g asphalt paths). *A plan can show their distribution (sequence and proportions) around the edge of the park/garden.*

Facade - the heights of the tallest trees (as seen from the park boundary) and the distances from the bases of their trunks to the boundary edge are used to calculate a gradient, which distinguishes a visual plane. This series of visual planes, receding from the boundary, act as the proposed facade.

Edges can be inclusive/exclusive, semi-inclusive or ambiguous, as in the case of a ha-ha.

P154 elevation of the spactal nature of park edge (could illustrate edge materials)

- Visibility: if visual access is denied to the 'inner', the space becomes significant as a 'separate' entity and the barrier becomes pronounced.

I've not really thought of my garden as a whole having an 'edge' which I could follow round - boundary plantings, yes, but not the total 'edge', so this is one new idea for me. Another is the concept of sloping planes acting as facades' in the garden, either around the boundary or elsewhere. DS

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DESIGN IDEAS

Ideas for Garden Design

Angie

Michael

is

NSW

from Sydney Wildflower Nursery West at Marsden Park

From an article in 'Native Rants for NSW Vof.33 No. 4 October 1998, and written in response to my article.

- Remember the vertical dimension. Grasses, rushes and members of the Iris family *Patersonia* are all good for small gardens, and Kangaroo Paws are outstanding, their tall stems rising above their tufty leaves. White trunks of the Lemon Scented Gum, *Corymbia (Eucalyptus) citiiodora*, planted close together, make the statement on a large scale.
- Accept change in the garden. A new garden needs bright, fast-growing plants like *Bracteatum* daisies to fill in spaces, so don't feel cheated when they look scrappy after a few years. As larger shrubs grow they may overshadow a small loved one - plant a new specimen somewhere else, and appreciate the big'un for whatever quality you selected it for in the first place. As trees grow, be prepared to think of new approaches to what goes under them - your colourful shrubs may give way to a collection of ferns or even an open brick paving with a bench to enjoy the shade.
- If a plant fails to thrive in your garden, ditch it. Then look for something that is already doing well and plant another one. Happy specimens of plants look better than sad ones, however rare. If you still want to try your hand with plant number one, look for a different position, or a pot.
- Scale is important - the delicate/lowers of *Thomasiapygmaea* need to be appreciated up close while big bold Queensland hybrid grevilleas like *G. 'Honey Gem'* are for the distant end of your garden. Multiple plantings, however, can build a small edge plant like *Helipterum anthemoides* into a larger feature.
- The smaller the garden, the fewer the varieties - that is if you want an uncluttered appearance. You can cheat a little, however, by using some 'same but different' plants - a dwarf lilly pillly to reflect a tree size one; low growing *Banksia 'Coastal Cushion'* with a gold-flowered form of its two metre parent *B. spinulosa*; red, pink and white forms of the heath *Epacris impressa*.
- Think what it looks like out of flower before you position it. *Melaleuca fulgens 'salmon'* has outstanding apricot flowers, but no amount of pruning can make it anything but a sticky looking shrub. Put it between a foreground feature and a lush background plant, and forget about it until spring.
- For a natural looking garden, plant in odd numbers. The smaller the shrub, the more you may need - try three *Lomandra confertifolia*, placed in an irregular sided triangle, mixed with five *Brachycome multifida*.

PLANTS in DESIGN

Rainforest Tub Shrubs

Rhys & Julie McGregor NSW

From an article in 'Native Rants for NSW Vol.33 No. 3 July 1998

In this article Rhys and Julie describe the following rainforest plants which they are growing (mainly for their outstandingly beautiful foliage) in tubs, so a varied collection can be established. The tubs are "Waterwell" type containers which enable individual care of plants.

Ecmena sp. East Normandy River (Red Myrtle)

Hollandea sp. nova (Roaring Meg Creek)

Neorites kevediana (Fish-tail Silky Oak)

Sarcotoechia serrata (Fern-teaved Tamarind)

Stenocarpus davallioides (Fern-leaf *Stenocarpus*)

NSW members will have seen Rhys and Julie's list and their descriptions. If other members would like more details, please contact me. DS

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MEETINGS

Melbourne meeting held on Sunday February 7 at Doug & Margaret McIver's place (see plan on page 4 & report on page 5)

Focus - treatment of open areas in small (0.1 ha) gardens - replacing grass (a practical design topic). (Maureen & Geoff Short's garden has a similar situation.)

Next Sydney Branch meeting - probably on Sunday May 16. Members are involved in the SGAP (Australian Plants Society) display at the Sydney Garden Festival from Friday April 30 to May Sunday 2.

Please phone Jo Hambrett for details and to indicate whether you can come.

Next NE Vic Branch meeting Sunday March 14 at 10.30 for 11 a.m. start at Jennifer Davidson's,

Please ring for directions if planning to attend. Agenda:

Plans for the year, next meeting, gardens worth visiting;

Discussion of Newsletter;

Progress in Jennifer and Ian's garden and how experience has modified plans.

S.A. Branch

South Australian members please contact Margie Barnett if you have any suggestions for future meetings.

MEMBERSHIP

New member

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

Change in address

MargaretGarrett

Membership renewals

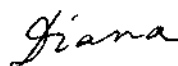
Alison Payne (in Switzerland)

Reminder: *Please always let us know of any changes to your address or phone number, or email.*

The new Study Group Liaison Officer is Lyn Thompson, PO Box 38 Woodford NSW 2778. Lyn is replacing one of our members, Helen Morrow, who has done an excellent job for a number of years now. Positions such as this are very important for supporting ASGAP Study Groups. Thank you Helen for a job well done.

I hope those of you who are in particularly vulnerable areas are not experiencing extreme summer conditions. It's a testing time when temperatures soar and water is limited.

Best wishes from



Diana Snape