

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

NEWSLETTER No. 26

August 1999

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

Dear Members,

Thanks to the marvellous advances of modern medical science and the expertise and dedication of the Liver Transplant team and their colleagues at the Austin Hospital in Melbourne, my health has now returned and will continue to improve, i was extremely fortunate a donor liver was available. Thank you to the many members who wrote and sent me good wishes during my long stay in hospital - it really did lift my spirits and make a difference.

It was wonderful to see the garden again after our extended separation. It survived well with almost no maintenance (some weeding by Brian) and the main action needed was a **little** pruning. Now is the time to look at the garden with fresh eyes and see whether any areas need rejuvenating or redesigning.

Subscription renewal

in May, Peter Garnham asked you to delay sending in your subscriptions as the future seemed uncertain, i am very pleased that I now feel well enough to continue as leader of the Study Group and editor of the Newsletter, though the latter depends on your contributions coming in. Doug McIver has kindly offered to help with the Newsletter and Peter and Brian regularly help by proof-reading. Doug, Peter, Joan Barrett and Linda Floyd also help with posting out the Newsletters.

As our financial year runs from July 1 to June 30, all subscriptions for the 1999/2000 year are now due. We would be very grateful if you'd renew your membership promptly. We'd like to receive your subscription as soon as possible and certainly before the next Newsletter comes out in November.

The renewal form comes with this Newsletter. Do it now, and then relax!

(if you decide not to renew, please let us know .)

NEXT MEETINGS

Please see details of these meetings in text (page 17)

NE VIC: Sunday August 22 at Jacci Campbells

MELBOURNE: Sunday October 17 at Paul Thompson's

SYDNEY: Sunday November 7 - contact Jo Hambrett

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CORRESPONDENCE extracts

"The ASGAP Garden Design latest newsletter was received with interest as usual and admiration as usual. Your use of the term wallaby paths was interesting. I use the Grey Kangaroo trails on Mt Clay to get across the nearly 200 acres without getting lost too much. I try to get to Mt Clay once a week and stay overnight. One sees and hears so much on the deck in the dusk and early night. There were at least five owls calling across to each other on Monday night, with koalas 'rattling', kangaroos coughing, bats flying around and sugar gliders 'yapping' to each other. Even a pair of wood ducks splashed down on the dam and called to their mates across the next property. However the biggest thrills were about 160 White-throated Needletails on the 2/2/99 at 8am soaring almost just above the house, probably catching insects above the dam - I watched them for half an hour or so. And then several times I have had a pair of Sacred Kingfishers 'fishing' in the dam - a great sight, even though they must have taken heaps of frogs. At the last count I regularly see 27 different birds, and my overall list is 53 this year. I have databases of plants, birds and other fauna almost up-to-date as well as a large photographic record. The Sweet Bursaria has taken over from the Clematis as the 'white sparkle' in the bush. In fact the bursaria is very tall in some parts and is in full flower.

*At home my 5600 gallon tank is full and Ian and I put on an overflow pipe, just in time as it poured yesterday here at Killarney. The garden is looking great; spread about 6 bales of old hay this morning and cut back several clumps of kangaroo paw. Just maintenance work at present - there are several plants that have apparently died with the very hot and dry weeks we had in late January. I'll cut them back hard and see if they reshoot now that we have had great rains. If this rain keeps up, I may take a chance and do a little planting, but the sub-soil will still be very dry." **Cherree Densley Vic***

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"We are members of the Nowra Group of the Australian Plants Society. This is the only Study Group we belong to and believe it is the best. The idea of garden design is so exciting, we believe those who use its principles will have a garden far superior to those who use no design principles in their garden construction. I believe we have practised those principles since starting our garden nine years ago even though they were only our own thoughts. It is fascinating now to read in the Group Newsletter, so many of the ideas we had then. It seems we all have similar ideas and we really feel we relate strongly to the Group. After nine years we are still changing the garden but now feel it is getting close to completion, even though this never completely happens.

Our fascination with native plants, animals, birds and all the wonderful things that go along with a native habitat garden started about ten years ago and is probably increasing. If it were not for people such as yourself who were leaders early in the piece then maybe we would never have found the joys we have, in a designed native habitat." **Maureen & Norman Webb** NSW

"Last weekend we took possession of a holiday house on two acres of land at Linton, south-west of Ballarat. We've been looking for something for years, usually in the gold areas, so I'm really excited about it all. Yes, it's cold there in winter, but we have a good wood-fired heater and the gardening possibilities are endless!" **Rosemary Manion** Vic

"I have a special interest in the use of arid lands plants in garden design, and the use of rocks and lighting. I think it's important to promote "native" nurseries and plants best suited for specific soil types and locations. I'm the landscaping consultant for the Bronzewing Gold Mine in W.A. I have been designing and planting there since September 1995. It is an arid area and the large gardens have to cope with people, dust and water problems. Information has been difficult to find to suit the harsh climate where I work." **Lynne Boladeras** W.A.

"I have done a bit of planting because early autumn is the best time here; it is running into late autumn but at least the soil is still warmish (we have had a few frosts). The planting is largely replacements or filling in but today I put in five Eucalyptus caesia 'Silver Princess' in the drive where we had a fire of one of the old radiatas two years ago. It had been a sward of Microlaena which still largely surrounds it and I hope will fill in again as the trees grow. I also planted a few small eucalypts Paul Kennedy gave me at the meeting. I hope I have done the right thing in that they are in the area east of the house where I have lost a lot of them, but where I would love to have a mallee canopy. I now use plenty of gypsum and I know the better soil areas but we do not have the stiff breezes to keep the air moving that Strathmerton has and winter damp on the leaves may be their downfall." **Barbara Buchanan** Vic

"The Otways were cool and damp (what's new?) but the Australian Plants Victoria weekend was enjoyable none-the-less. Interesting to visit the Stewart farm to see agriforestry at work and also Brendon Stahl's large garden on sandhills where such plants as Banksia coccinea flourish." **Joan Barrett** Vic

"We are now up in the YuKon near Alaska experiencing the weird midnight sun. We visited the Butchard Gardens on Vancouver Island developed in a disused quarry • reminded me of Warrnambool - thousands of visitors each day at \$18 each - 60 gardeners to maintain it." **Bev Hanson** Vic

That should give inspiration to those involved in the Warrnambool project! DS

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"We have had good rains here, but by no means waterlogged yet. Enough to start planting though - I've planted five enclosures over on our bare hills next door and the soil was rich 'terra rosa' so I hope the plantings will take off and we'll soon have beautiful trees to grace our hills and provide animal habitat. In the garden the banksias are starting to flower and the eremophilas have been making a show for some months. Hakea myrtoides and L. 'Burrendong Beauty' are full of flower. There isn't much flowering in the bush yet but the wattles are budding up well.

It is very nice to look out onto green paddocks - they have only been green for a couple of weeks as frost burnt off a lot of growth earlier. We've had Flame and Scarlet Robins around and I thought I saw a Hooded Robin but only a fleeting sighting. I would love to have the Yellow Robins but no doubt they'll come when they're ready!" **Jane & Noil Marriott** Vic

"We went to Tasmania in February on a 'plants tour' led by Dick Burns - a Life Member of Tas. SGAP. We love the alpine areas especially at Cradle Mountain and on top of Mount Wellington. It is impossible to beat some of these areas where nature has designed perfect gardens. Dick is a keen bushwalker and he took us to places that we would have missed without his local knowledge. When in Hobart we visited Jeanette Closs' garden, and also the Van Der Meer and Corbett gardens.

Recently at our Group (Parramatta/Hills) Jo Hambrett gave an interesting talk on Garden Design".
Tamara & Ian Cox NSW

"We often speak of that Garden Design meeting here when we look at our now not-so-new indigenous wetland that was no more than a muddle of old roses and blackberries when you all came here. Everything is flourishing, the Dianella tasmanica too much so in fact. The Clematis microphylla as literally embraced the old posts there and promises to be an absolute picture in a couple of months.

It's the frogs that are the real joy at the moment. There are at least four possibly five species using it now though how well the current crop of tadpoles make it through this somewhat chilly autumn/winter remains to be seen." **Jane Calder** Vic

"The garden continues to thrill us - our current project is the potager - herbs, vegetables and plants which attract beneficial insects. I haven't been able to track down anything on "native" beneficial plants yet. Two of the three plant groups are well represented by Australian species, Asteraceae and Labiatae. The other is Umbelliferae, dill, caraway etc.

As well, we can't believe the growth on our local species of rainforest cabinet timbers and have been to an information day on Farm Forestry. We hope to access a joint participation venture where as landowner you have some equity but get assistance with plants, support, etc. rather than going it alone.

A Sunshine Coast nursery is propagating four hibiscus plants and buying from us the labels we had designed. We have no shortage of other species to release. The labels are specific to the nursery doing the propagating." **Colleen Keena** Qld

"I have been working slowly in the garden - mulching a little, but in general waiting for some good rains before I do any major works. Over Easter I had a Flora and Fauna Survey done on Mt Clay with Trust for Nature. It was fascinating to find out that there were lots of little antechinus and bush rats on the block, as well as the names of some new birds and of course names of plants which I didn't already have. I even had a new melaleuca pointed out to me - how I missed it I do not know - it is in a wet swampy area through which when I walk I look very carefully where I put my feet. It is a favourite place for red bellied black swamp snakes,

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so this maybe the reason I don't look so carefully at the vegetation. So I have *Melaleuca decussata* and *L. gibbosa*. *M. squamea* and *M. squarrosa* are just a kilometre away but I haven't found them on my block yet - but then there is much of my block which I haven't walked on yet." **Cherree Densley** Vic

"When I arrived at the Women's College in Brisbane for this Biennial Conference, I felt overwhelmingly that I had returned "home", to our very special nation-wide ASGAP family. What a wonderful organisation it is! Will you receive a copy of the Seminar papers? Glenn Thomas gave an excellent talk today on "The Australian native landscape - nature or a cultural landscape?" He is from the Qld University of Technology, Landscape Architecture.

I wish I could do more for the GDSG, but at the moment I need to concentrate on my studies and hopefully that will place me in a better position to do my little bit towards changing attitudes of more Australians to our native plants." **Shirley Pfpitone** ACT

"Winter at least is a good season to be an armchair gardener even though it is by necessity as opposed to choice. I am sure your garden misses you but will flourish independently as native plants knowingly do. Many Australian plants at the nursery where I am employed are beginning to reveal their flirtatious colours. The correas are draped with coloured hues of red and the first to flower chamelauciums are supporting bulging buds. Another sensorial delight is the plethora of scents which is emitted from both the flowers and the foliage. Pull back the curtains, throw open the windows!!..." **Vanessa Kerr** W.A.

DESIGN

The way we were

Gordon Rowland NSW

This article is reprinted from the Sydney Morning Herald January 28, 1999

"Every part of this neighbourhood is beautiful. It is a succession of earthly paradises. The Bay of Sydney is surrounded by wooded hills, of great variety of forms, and into which run deep coves, right and left, their shores being beautifully overhung with woods."

This was Sydney as it appeared to author William Howitt in the early days of European settlement: forests covered the most fertile areas, usually close to the coast or the Nepean-Hawkesbury floodplains; an amazing diversity of woodland plants thrived on the poor, sandy soils of the sandstone ridges and the more fertile clay soils of the Cumberland plain; pockets of rainforest occupied sheltered gullies and south-facing slopes; heathland covered the more exposed coastal sites; and wetlands rich in aquatic and bird life occupied areas where drainage was impeded.

Since then, this beautiful mosaic of interlacing plant communities has steadily declined to the point where many plants and animals have become extinct or seriously endangered.

The Sydney Regional Organisations of Councils have initiated a project - Green Web Sydney - to restore, as far as possible, the Sydney region's fragmented web of native vegetation and to protect, conserve and enhance remaining remnant bushland communities. Funded by the Australian Nature Conservation Agency, their main goal is to establish habitat corridors linking bushland remnants in order to increase the gene pool and encourage the return of native wildlife.

The councils will have the support of Sydney's recently appointed first harbour manager, Jeremy Dawkins. At his inauguration, Dawkins declared that restoring native plant species around the foreshore was a priority. They will also have the support of the Community Biodiversity Network, a national network of organisations that promotes the National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.

In addition to its strategy for bushland, Green Web Sydney encourages owners and designers of private gardens - especially gardens close to bushland - to participate in restoring the web by planting local indigenous species. Such species, trees in particular, provide several interrelated benefits:

They heighten a neighbourhood's identity, its unique "sense of place", and, as natural food sources and habitat reappear, help restore biological diversity and the natural balance of native life forms.

Increasing populations of birds that feed on insects leads to improved plant health and vigour, reducing or eliminating the need for toxic pesticides.

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Although a minority of indigenous plants - boronias, for example - are notoriously difficult to cultivate, most are easy and require less water, fertiliser and maintenance than exotics, as would be expected. They are, after all, adapted to Australian conditions and many are able to survive drought and thrive in low-nutrient Australian soils.

When it comes to plant selection, there is an abundance of choice from the Sydney basin, which is not surprising, as it is one of the world's great wildflower regions, supporting more than 2,000 species, many of which make handsome, hardy, garden plants. If you would like to integrate your garden with the natural landscape and attract a wide variety of native wildlife, you must select indigenous plants of varying heights, including trees, shrubs, grasses and ground covers to provide protective cover and nesting sites and a wide range of food sources. Honeyeaters, for example, require an understory of plants such as grevilleas, banksias and smaller shrubs. Nectar producing trees alone are not enough. Fallen branches and half-buried natural stone provide additional cover for lizards and other small creatures.

An ornamental fish pond is a must if you want to attract frogs and colourful dragonflies. Situate it well away from bedroom windows, or risk being kept awake at night by the persistent "tock tock, tock" of the common striped marsh frog. Having endured many hours of missed sleep, I can verify this.

Avoid hybrid banksias and grevilleas with enlarged flowers because these attract disproportionate numbers of larger honey-eating birds (for example, wattle birds) at the expense of smaller honeyeaters, such as the eastern spinebill. Artificial foods are also best avoided because they create dependence and often lack the correct balance of nutrients. Remember that birds need regular access to clean water, to drink, to bathe in before preening their feathers and to keep cool in summer. Birdbaths are often too low. To keep cats out of reach the pedestal should be about a metre in height, and the bowl should be up to half a metre across with sloping sides to provide variable water depth suited to a variety of birds. Birds are more likely to use a bath that is close to protective trees and shrubs, although they may take several days to discover it.

For lists of indigenous plants, contact your local council or consult *'Native Plants of the Sydney District'*, by Alan Fairley and Philip Moore. *'Taken for Granted: The Bushland of Sydney and its Suburbs'*, by Doug Benson and Jocelyn Howell, describes the plant communities of each of Sydney's 42 local council areas.

Getting it right!

Geoff Simmons Old

This interesting phrase now used frequently by politicians presents difficulties when applied to garden design and maybe even more so with Australian plants. Gardens are dynamic systems and ever-changing so what is right one day may be less than 100% right the next day or next year. Why is this particularly relevant for designers of Australian gardens? Because only in recent years has the potential of many Australian plants been realised. As a consequence new species and cultivars come into the market place each year. In addition there is a growing appreciation of the unique characteristics of this continent.

The recent notes on aims in the GDSG Newsletter outline the difficulty in defining the word "good" in garden design and indicate that "getting it right" is an inadequate phrase when applied to Australian garden design. The area where it can apply to the greatest extent is in the choice of species or cultivars. W.A. banksias from a winter rainfall area are less successful in a summer rainfall district. Experimentation however is a characteristic of many gardeners and these persons will continue to accept the challenge of trying to grow problem plants in their gardens.

Juxta-positioning of colour and foliage types is another area relevant to "getting it right" but is this dependent on the views of the individual gardener or are there some universal rules? Desirable combinations may be listed in books and articles on garden design but it is rare that authors are prepared to state what is undesirable. Also do overseas opinions necessarily apply to Australia? Are there combinations of Australian plants that are not right?

Are there types of garden ornaments that are unsuitable if one is striving for a favourable aesthetic garden? Is a kangaroo made from cement less appealing than one carved from sandstone or wood, or even a topiary creation? All these may be appropriate in the right setting. To carry the kangaroo theme further, an erect kangaroo may be placed in a garden of Australian trees and shrubs, whereas portrayal of a head-down grazing animal may present a more interesting picture in a landscape that includes grasses or low bushes. With the wide range of Australian fauna, geographical features and plants it is a pity that a photographic record of ornaments illustrating the art and imagination is not available. Have GDSG members examples or seen ornaments depicting Australian themes? If so, why not describe or photograph them for the Newsletter?

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"Getting it right" is for gardening wistful thinking. Before it gains credence, the dynamism of gardens and hence garden design is worthy of mention. I would hope that this negative and static philosophy is rejected.

Another factor is that the rapid growth of quite a few (but not all!) Australian plants increases the speed of change of Australian gardens. I think my answer to Geoff's question "Are there combinations of Australian plants that are not right?" is that generally those from different ecosystems, different climatic conditions and water requirements do not combine well - they just don't look happy together. An example would be fine grey-green foliage plants from arid areas and lush large-leafed green foliage plants from moist areas. I'd endorse Geoff's plea to "describe or photograph ornaments depicting Australian themes for the Newsletter". DS

GARDENS

Australia's Open Garden Scheme - gardens opening in 1999 Diana Snape Vic

A disappointingly low proportion of gardens in this year's Scheme feature Australian plants. Try to visit those that do for your own interest and to support the cause. To my knowledge, four GDSG members have their gardens open in the Scheme this year:- in Melbourne, Bev Hanson (18 & 19 Sept) and John Armstrong (25 & 26 Sept); in Sydney, Jeff Howes (see below) and Gordon Rowland (9 & 10 Oct). Are there any others?

	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	TOTAL
	&ACT						
No. of gardens listed as featuring native plants	9	3	3	4	11	2	32
Total no. of gardens	253	116	68	91	155	94	777
% no. of gardens listed as featuring native plants (to nearest 0.5%)	3.5%	2.5%	4.5%	4.5%	7%	2%	4%

Australia's Open Garden Scheme

Jeff Howes NSW

An extract from 'Native Plants for NSW' July 1. (Jeff is the Australian Plants Society representative on the Sydney regional Committee of Australia's Open Garden Scheme. He will also be opening his garden for the first time on 2 and 3 Oct 1999.)

Australia's Open Garden Scheme is a non-profit organisation with a mission to promote the knowledge and pleasure of gardens and gardening across Australia. It does this by opening Australia's most inspiring gardens to the public.

In Sydney, AOGS aims to promote not only wonderful English-style gardens but also the city's special harbour and coastal gardens, community and permaculture gardens, and its remarkable native gardens, which feature Australian plants and are unique to Sydney.

Garden owners generously open their gardens to the public for a nominal fee and all the Scheme's income is derived from these entry fees.. At the end of each season surplus funds are returned to the community through grants and donations to charities and other causes.

More Australian plant gardens are needed, especially in the spring of 2000 when it is anticipated there will be an influx of tourists to Sydney for the Olympics with many eager to find out about Australia's native flora. What better way than by visiting local gardens as part of Australia's Open Garden Scheme?

If you are interested in helping to spread the word about Australia's native plants by opening your

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own garden, or know of a garden that you think may be suitable, please contact your state's Coordinator of the AOGS. A garden selector will visit the garden to see if it meets the criteria for inclusion in the program.

Opening as many native gardens as possible will be a great way to show and educate the public about native plants as well as a means to promote the Australian Plants Society. So please give it some serious thought.

Report of two gardens visited during the meeting of the N.E. Victoria Branch of the GDSG of on May 7

Barbara Buchanan Vic

Paul & Barbara Kennedy's garden

Paul explained his general plan for the garden (see NL 21 page 7). As a collector's garden it is to grow eucalypts, acacias, hakeas and other Proteaceae. Therefore he selected the site as providing a mix of sand and clay. It is open and windswept and priorities have been to plant windbreaks on the perimeter, to line all driveways with eucalypts which will later overarch, and to maintain open cells between blocks of trees and shrubs where later smaller plants may have protection from wind and frost. The area in front of the house is developed with beds of low pretties to keep the view of the dam. The clay spoil from the dam has been roughly spread and he hopes will gradually naturalize; volunteer red gums have appeared. They would like this to return to its original state as far as possible. Beyond the clay patches is a sandy/clay slope which will hopefully grow eremophilas.

We had some discussion on water / no water for eremophilas. Does watering lead to lush growth which could become twiggy and dead in the heat? Or is it necessary to keep plants attractive and in flower over long periods? On reflection, if water is used pruning is probably essential. Jaci Campbell has found no need to water at Caniambo.

Paul stressed the importance of matching plants as closely as possible to their natural habitat, and how I envied him the sand. Plants that grow naturally on ridge tops are likely to have strong deep root systems whereas those from valley floors may be more surface rooting.

A mixed garden

This is another collector's garden and the soil is deep sand in which tonnes of pig manure have been mixed. I had not realised there were different types of collectors' gardens. The Kennedy's collecting is botanically driven - plants are rarely home-grown or from friends, because many are not commercially available. While it is too young to see properly yet I am confident it will have a unity and coherence. The lasting impression I took away from this garden was that the collecting was done for the need to have something different. One corner was devoted to Xanthorreas which unfortunately had been vandalised, but enough was left to make me excited at the possibilities. The recent plantings of Australian plants were hybrid grevilleas and such as *Agonis flexuosa* 'After Dark' - new, rare and costing that bit more. I am delighted that these new forms are bought by non-SGAPers. The nursery trade needs their patronage as we are too few to make native nurseries prosperous. And where the lead is given the public will follow.

I have always been inclined to think natives and exotics don't mix well. Here I felt it was not too bad, an intense blue sage for example being rather like some of our Australian plants. There are so many serious gardeners who still can only look to overseas for their concept of the ideal, but if they all had such a mix of plants then our Australians will become well-established. It was certainly unlike any garden I have seen before but I hope there are many more along the same lines. I have resolved that next time I start a new garden I will go for sand!

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Two gardens of the NSW south coast visited during the Sydney GDSG meeting on July 25

Ian Percy's garden

Jo Hambrett NSW

Ian Percy's miner's cottage sits on a low lying block of land that was filled with coal dust residue from the long ago mining activities in the area. It is not unusual for 100km/hour winds to belt through the area and it is, of course, very close to the coast. Ian is slowly replacing the largely exotic content of the front and side gardens with native material. He is especially interested in small, low-growing plants and is cultivating a heath and mallee effect for both aesthetic and practical reasons. Judging by the magnificent *Eucalyptus caesia* drooping its red blossoms over the front door, he will be completely successful in his endeavours!

The back garden was a delight. It reminded me of a medieval tapestry. Ornamental, fruit-bearing trees, herbs and vegetables occupying orderly segments and collected objects (bottles on a table, old workboats, pieces of tile and like treasures, statues by a pond or under a broad leaf) made intriguing pictures within the garden itself.

Danie Ondinea's garden

Danie wrote about her own garden:

"My property at Scarborough (between Royal National Park and Wollongong) is nestled at the base of the Illawarra Escarpment where the mountains meet the sea and where rainforest and eucalypt forest meet. I have been restoring the native vegetation for the past 8 years during my fortnightly visits.

The block is long and thin, approximately 25 ha (2,500 m²) and is north-south aligned. My priorities for my work are to protect and restore wildlife habitat, encourage natural regeneration and use local plants in any revegetation, control problem weeds such as Morning Glory, Turkey rhubarb, bulbs (Watsonia and Monbretia), Wandering Jew, Crofton Weed, etc, and maintain winter sun and some distant views.

The design is flexible and the work is done in close partnership with the local wildlife and plants."

Jo Hambrett adds:

The block backs on to a pristine creek area and Danie has an ongoing battle with weeds in an effort to restore her block to its former indigenous state. The biggest skirmish to date is against a Morning Glory infestation. This monster had all but gobbled up about one third of the block including smothering a mature Lilly Pilly tree! With the dogged persistence of a true bush regenerator, Danie is slowly beating it - by rolling it up, carpet-like, on to itself. As she said, once she found a way of making a difference within a very small time frame, she began to be able to enjoy the rest of the area more - she didn't feel too daunted by the prospect. The added bonus of course is that it is a completely environmentally safe method and its slowness allows wildlife using it for shelter to find other digs gradually.

Inspirational, as usual, in her vision, tenacity and knowledge - we left Danie's garden revitalized in our mission to garden and design with native flora.

Fern Garden

Jennifer Borrell NSW

I saw Fiona Hall's Fern Garden at the National Gallery of Australia for the first time last December and I was very impressed. There are two views of the garden. It can be viewed from inside the gallery from above. This aspect emphasises the circular form of the tree-fern canopies above the circular form of the pathways. It is quite surprising to see tree-ferns used in this formal way as they are most commonly seen as a(n essential?) component of a rainforest landscape. However surprise soon turns to delight at the beautiful patterns described in this very formal landscape.

The second aspect of the garden is the one reproduced in the Newsletter (NL23, p13). This is the view from ground level reached through the beautiful wrought iron gate. Here the impression is an almost

sacred one of entering a special and hallowed place. This is no doubt fostered by the trunks of the tree-ferns which appear like the columns of a Gothic cathedral. This atmosphere will increase as the tree-fern canopies grow towards each other. Incidentally having seen the garden from above it was quite difficult to find the ground level access. There are absolutely no signs to guide the visitor.

I have always enjoyed visiting the National Gallery's gardens particularly the Sculpture Garden. They are now quite mature and still lovely to wander through. The Fern Garden is a welcome addition.

Ninfa - an Italian garden with a history

Linda Floyd Vic

The garden of Ninfa in Italy is garden design on a grand scale. I found Italian gardens of great interest, especially their formality and emphasis on repeating shapes and textures, flowers being secondary to the overall design. They do however seem to go overboard with roses!

The plan of Niinfa is on page 11. Extracts from the description of the garden:

Today, Ninfa is all that is left of a small, yet prosperous mediaeval town that thrived for about 600 years between the late 8th and 14th centuries. And what a breathtaking sight it is, with its lawns, flowers, trees, hedges, plants and shrubs of all kinds, and its streams and ponds, all recreated by a *genius loci* in the early twenties. Its charming poetic name, Ninfa ('Nymph' in English) comes from a tiny Roman temple that used to stand there. This splendid garden now covers the ruins of the old town's walls and churches. It has an ideal microclimate; Ninfa is shielded to the north by an escarpment, while the river - whose source is under the rocks - controls the temperature with infallible accuracy. Botanical species imported from every climatic region of the world have acclimatized themselves to the locality. The source of the River Ninfa is the Lake of Ninfa close to the little town. In 1976, 1800 hectares of land around Ninfa were declared a protected wildlife oasis. 152 species of birds have been identified here."

BOOKS & MAGAZINES

***The Urban Woodland* by Suzanne J Price (Lothian 1986)**

Jennifer Borreil NSW

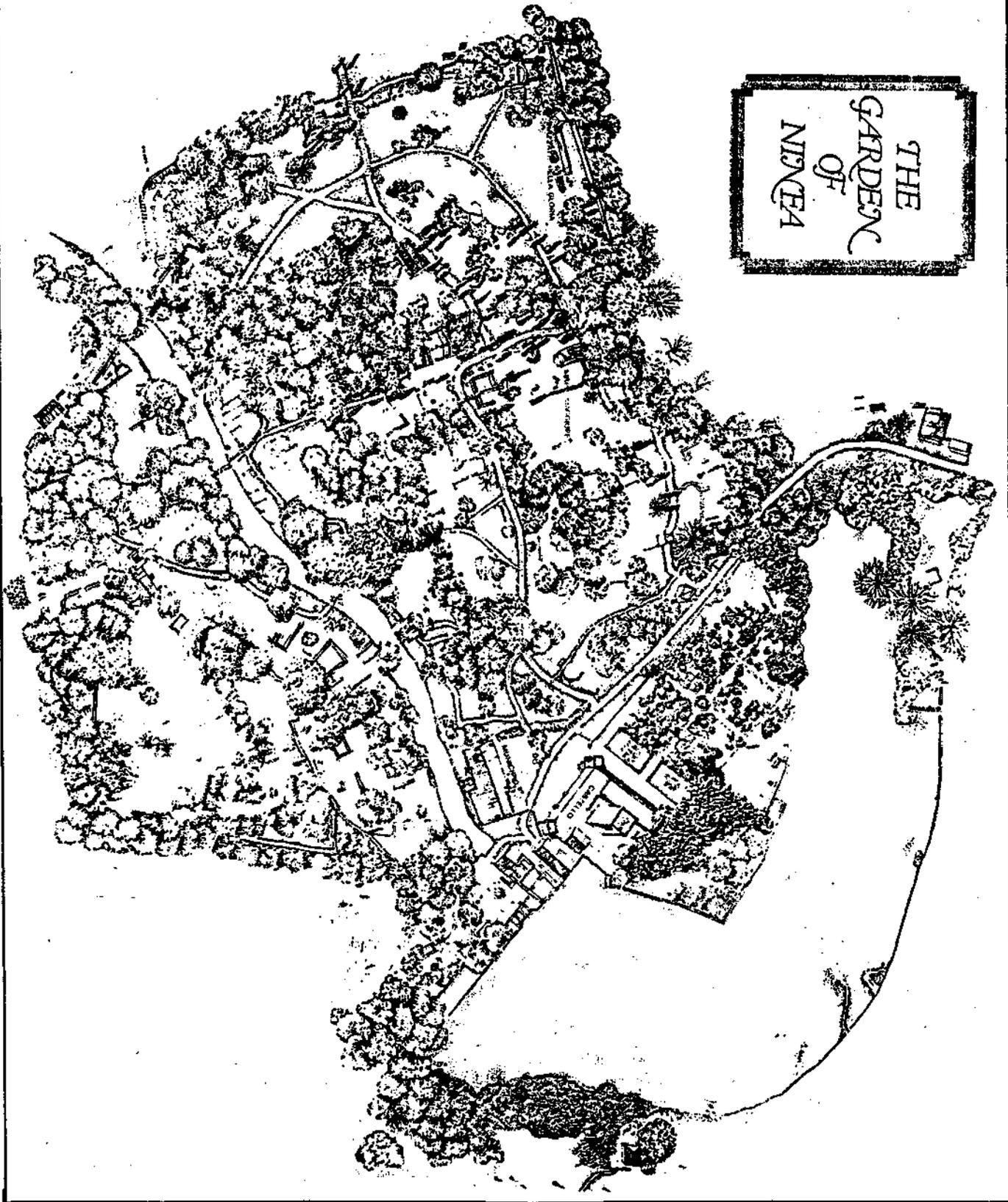
One book I read recently was *The Urban Woodland* by Suzanne J Price, recommended in an earlier Newsletter. I really enjoyed this book and found it quite stimulating. Suzanne Price's design philosophy is based around the idea of creating pictures in the garden. This is a particularly good philosophy when creating aspects of the garden to be seen from each window of the house. I walked around my house looking at the view of the garden from each window. Some form a more complete picture than others and it is an idea I would like to work on.

Suzanne Price's seven design principles have been espoused in previous Newsletters:

1. Segment your garden so that it is not all seen at once. This will enable each picture to be seen individually.
2. Cover the ground with plants so that no bare earth is seen.
3. Have as little lawn as possible.
4. Soften all corners and edges except where you want a formal setting. This gives the garden a natural and well established appearance.
5. Design the garden to suit the house.
6. The garden design is dynamic. Over the years personal tastes, knowledge and plants will vary and require changes to the initial design.
7. Keep maintenance levels as low as possible so you have time to relax and enjoy the garden you have created.

The garden of Ninfa

The plan of Ninfa indicates that this grand Italian garden lacks the formality of geometric shapes - squares, rectangles, circles, etc - frequently evident in such a garden. The gently curving paths imitate the natural gentle curves of the river and much of the lake, and the distribution of trees and shrubs in the landscape is asymmetric rather than symmetrical. DS



Extracts from 'Landscape Outlook'

Sydney member **Gordon Rowland** is now the Editor of 'Landscape Outlook', the Newsletter of the Australian Institute of Landscape Designers and Managers (AILDM). The following are extracts from this Newsletter, with thanks to Gordon.

Garden Web

<http://www.au.gardenweb.com/>

The Garden Web is a site for anyone interested in plants and gardening. Here are many useful tips and hints from professionals and hobbyists from Australia and Oceania. Other pages to be found in this site are *The Cyber Plantsman*, for the serious gardener, *Gardens of the World*, *Garden Web Europe* and a directory of garden supplies.

I don't know how relevant this site is for Australian plant gardens. DS

Sydney Festival of Gardens

Darling Harbour, Tumbalong Park, 24 - 27 September 1999

Theme "Gardens of the World"

The Festival will feature landscape architects from around Australia who will design a miniature garden in an area 6m x 6m. The Festival will promote the importance of using design professionals. Professor David Stevens from the UK will be conducting workshops on garden design. He will also design and build a garden display inside the festival.

Landscape designers are sought who would be interested in participating. There are up to 20 miniature garden sites to choose, between 6m x 6m and 6m x 10m. For further information and to obtain a festival kit, please call 02 9907 6575.

David Stevens will be speaking at three seminars (cost: \$50 per person per seminar), topics:

Garden Design around the World

Courtyards and Backyards

Building a Garden at a Major Garden Show - how to set about it, advantages, sponsorship.

If you would like to book or require further information on these seminars, please call 02 9907 6575.

Threatened Plants of Australia

Woolworths the 'fresh food people', in association with Standard Publishing House, printers of *Landscape Outlook*, have produced a series of posters to promote public awareness of our National Heritage. One poster of particular interest to landscape designers is *Threatened Plants of Australia*.

The poster measures 705 x 490mm and is printed on both sides, one side featuring colour illustrations of selected endangered species, the other a wealth of interesting facts and contact details of useful organisations.

Woolworths are to be congratulated for their initiative in raising public awareness of the environment we share. Many of the plants listed as threatened will surprise even people in the landscape industry. Available for the price of a greeting card, they are affordable for everyone. Copies are available by mail order from: Woolworths Limited

Corporate Relations Department, Poster Section

P.O. Box Q70, QVB Post Office, Sydney NSW 2000

This is a very impressive poster. DS

Naturalistic gardens**Diana Snape Vic**

Members of the NE Vic Branch of the GDSG considered classification of gardens at a meeting earlier this year, and wrote "We would expect all our gardens to be naturalistic". Most of our gardens are naturalistic to a greater or lesser extent, but obviously not all naturalistic gardens are the same. We were trying to distinguish between them in our classification.

Natural gardens are created by nature alone. These can be classified as heathland, coastal, alpine, grassy woodland, semi-arid, rainforest, wetland, etc, depending on the type of ecosystem in the area.

Naturalistic gardens are created by people, influenced by nature.

- A naturalistic garden may contain only plants **indigenous** to its area, and then may be classified as heathland, coastal, alpine, grassy woodland, semi-arid, rainforest, etc. It is likely to be highly naturalistic.
- A naturalistic garden may include plants from other, probably similar areas, to deliberately create a garden which has the 'feel' (**ethos**) of heathland, coastal, alpine, grassy woodland, semi-arid, rainforest, etc.
- A naturalistic garden may contain only plants indigenous to another different area, and then may be classified as heathland, coastal, alpine, grassy woodland.etc. - a **natural plant community** garden.
- Many (most?) of our gardens are 'naturalistic' in that they contain only Australian plants, but these may come from a number of different areas and have no definite regional/ecological influence or look.

A **collector's garden** may be naturalistic if the plants collected come from the same or similar areas and look 'natural' together. The greater the variety of plants a collector accumulates, especially from many different areas, the less naturalistic the garden is likely to be.

Formal gardens. There are certainly very few now, which I think is a pity - I would like to see more. It could be a whole garden or just part of a garden. I am intrigued by the possibility of combining naturalistic and formal aspects.

The various **theme gardens** can add further detail to a description of all or part of a garden.

Design for perfumed gardens?**Geoff Simmons Qld**

One of the attractions of a garden may be the olfactory sensations experienced. The ability to detect odours seems to be a relatively uncharted field. Is there a factor equivalent to colour-blindness? What are the changes to the sense of smell from childhood to old age? An Australian visiting from overseas once remarked on the smell of the bush while inspecting my garden. This rather surprised me - either I was unable to detect it or had grown accustomed to the scents.

Designing a garden to enhance the scents inherent in the Australian flora clearly requires deeper study and tailoring of plants species used, to please owners or anticipated visitors. This may need to take into account also climatic effects such as heat and rain on the release of aromatic compounds, as well as the time of blooming.

In 1979 Ralph Bailey, a member of the Western Suburbs Branch of the Queensland Region of SGAP produced a book with the title "Perfumed and Aromatic Australian Plants". This loose leaf book describes many species of the Australian flora and whether the perfume originates from flowers, leaves or bark. The two main sources of these scents are:

- 1 The aromatic oils in leaves, and
- 2 Perfume from flowers.

There are also organic compounds emitted from the soil, particularly after rain.

Group 1 can be called "Clayton" perfumes for invariably it is necessary to induce some degree of injury to the leaves to release the oils, by brushing or treading on the foliage. If this does not occur the plant is simply a green bush or tree and must be judged as a worthwhile garden plant because of other characteristics. Leaves of *Backhousia citriodora* and *B. anisata* have magnificent scents when crushed and the bushes (trees) are attractive in leaf and to some extent flowers. On the other hand, *B. myrtifolia* is not so graced with essential oils and the bush is less attractive.

Having been subjected to severe medical reactions by beetles on eucalypts and wasps on graptophyllum when trimming branches, I would caution against encouraging the idea of brushing against vegetation - some unwelcome effects may eventuate.

Group 2 sources, scented flowers, have more relevance in designing a perfumed garden. The scent can be favourable or annoying depending on the species.

Perfume in the garden one would think would be a popular theme in Australian garden design. However it is rarely mentioned except when individual plants are mentioned. One thinks for example of highly perfumed boronias. Is there a garden specifically designed to exploit the value of Australian species in this regard? There is surely a challenge in producing a perfumed garden with Australian plants.

Karwarra Garden at Kalorama in Melbourne has quite a large section featuring boronias and each year holds a boronia festival. OS

PLANTS in DESIGN

Small trees

Shirley Pipitone ACT

Geoff Simmons' comments in NL 24-3 have set me thinking again about the huge differences between Australian plants in different regions. In Queensland, it may be possible to create a treed look using trees up to 4 metres high. However, in the Canberra region, where the indigenous vegetation is grasslands and dry sclerophyll forest, very small trees would look quite out of place. Being shrubby, they would also take up much more space than tall tree trunks. But then only a very few of the small eucalypts named by Dean Nicolle will grow here so that problem doesn't really arise.

In my 0.1 hectare (1/4 acre) garden, I have 10 eucalypts. The 7 mature trees are 8 to 10 metres high. About three years ago I replaced one 8m tree (which was damaged in a windstorm) with two *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* and one *E. sideroxylon*. Many of my trees are along the south-east boundary which means they cast shade mostly on the other side of the fence, where open space is planted with Tasmania Blue Gums.

At the moment my garden looks a little top-heavy in places because I have taken out almost all the mature shrubs and started the garden again from scratch. But I think my eucalypts look wonderful - I don't think they are too tall and I don't think I have too many. Fortunately one (only one!) of my neighbours also likes

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Australian plants. We share the end of the cul-de-sac with the Blue Gum backdrop and we love it!

To continue, my comment about different Australian plants in different regions has a broader purpose.

I acknowledge that it is important and a useful function of GDSG to gather information about the reliability of Australian plants. However I find the plant listings in this wonderful Newsletter to be its least useful contribution to my state of knowledge. Canberra's climate has such extremes that many listed plants won't survive here or need a tot of special treatment. But SGAP Canberra Region has a great deal of information about plants which will thrive here.

I think GDSG should encourage Regional and District groups to take into account design factors when gathering information and labelling plants which grow well in their area. Many GDSG members, especially those from non-mainstream areas (e.g. country NSW), might be better to rely on local plant knowledge rather than GDSG information.

/ agree with your last paragraph, Shirley, but I think plant lists in our NL may suggest or remind us of plants we are less familiar with and extend our palette. Of course they have to be tested in different regions, and members may prefer growing indigenous vegetation. DS

What is a small tree?

John Webb Vic

If I was to be so presumptuous as to design a small tree, it would be a *Eucalyptus globulus*-1 just love its pale blue/green new growth, blushing pink at the margins; but the present design is just too big for the average garden, and that includes ours. So as we have a £ *globulus* in our back garden, we have to redesign it to suit! Whenever it reaches three metres - every year - we cut it back to about half, all branches. Last winter, in fact, we cut it back to a single stump about 60cm high. After about four months it showed just a couple of leaves on the side and at the top of the stump. And now (late January) we have a dense covering of leaves, springing out all over the place, looking like a series of bouquets - a lovely sight, and a nice contrast to all the summer green shades around it.

Another example of coppicing which works (so far) has been with a *Banksia robur*. After about eight years ours had become leggy and unsightly in a prominent position near the lounge windows. It was destined for the compost heap when we noticed a shoot coming up from ground level and a couple of buds at the ends of previously pruned tips. We decide upon drastic action and cut most of the stems to ground level, leaving just two new shoots. And waited. Not for long as now, after only a month we have been rewarded with masses of new growth, including flower spikes.

So - if you don't like the original design, do not be afraid to modify it! The worst that can happen is that an unsatisfactory plant will be removed a little later - and you may have a delight, as we have.

Plants for shaded areas near established trees

Ivan Holliday S.A.

Reprinted from SGAP Journal, S.A. Region, February 1999. Ivan Holliday is the noted author.

One question that I am repeatedly asked is: "What native plants can I grow in 75% shade, against or near the trunk of an established Australian tree?" I have found that the following plants are successful under the above conditions. No doubt, other growers could add to this list from their own particular experiences.

- * *Acacia redolens* (prostrate form). This plant spreads vigorously to form a fine ground cover.
- * *Acacia rhotinocarpa* and *A. mtricarpa*

- * *Brachyscome angustifolia*. This is a long-flowering, spreading ground cover which performs much better than the popular *B. multifida*. It does require some watering during dry spells.
- * *Chorizema cordatum* (actually flowers better in the open)
- * *Conostylis candidans*. In my garden, this is one of the best plants for these conditions. It flowers well in shade or full sun, and it never becomes difficult to control.
- * *Correa pulchelia* (various forms). I have trouble growing *C. reflexa*, though it should succeed in other soil types in semi-shade near trees.
- * *Dianella revoluta* and *D. tasmanica*. *D. tasmanica* suckers readily, so it requires regular control. Good forms of *D. revoluta* are excellent foliage plants for these conditions. As well, the plants produce attractive blue flowers.
- * *Eremophila drummondii* and *E. ionantha*. In shade, *E. ionantha* tends to become leggy but it still flowers well.
- * Grew/tea 'Glen Sandra'
- * *Hardenbergia* sp. (particularly *H. wo/acea* forms)
- * *Hibbertia aspera*. This hibbertia is an excellent spreading ground cover shrub which suckers, thus providing new plants for other areas.
- * *Hibbertia dentata*. This trailing plant produces numerous seedlings for further planting.
- * *Melaleuca societatis*. The plant grows well but, in comparison with its profuse flowering in full sun, produces few flowers.
- * *Scaevola aemula* forms (requires plenty of water)
- * *Templetonia retusa*. The semi-prostrate form is best.

It is interesting how many of the plants that Ivan recommends for Adelaide are also successful under these conditions in Melbourne. DS

SNIPPETS

A quote from recent reading: "The chief vice of gardens is to be merely pretty - if you agree with this statement come and do our course. The Oxford College of Garden Design." **Barbara Buchanan** via

Conservation of non-vascular plants in semi-arid landscapes

This is the title of a fascinating article by David Eldridge in the June 'Danthonia', the Newsletter of the Australian Network for Plant Conservation. Such non-vascular plants include bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) and foliose (leafy) and fruticose (shrubby) lichens. The article points out how little is known about these - where they are found and their conservation status. The latter is often complicated by the fact that they vary enormously over small areas. Non-vascular plants are strongly related to vegetation cover and physical and chemical properties of the soil. Because of their close association with the soil surface, they and their crusts play a vital role in soil and ecosystem processes.

I think this is one aspect of gardening that is much neglected because of lack of knowledge. DS

Notes from the IHawarra Grevillea Park Society's Newsletter

We have planted out many hundreds of new plants, some as replacements for original plantings which were past their use-by date. Some went into new garden areas near the old picnic area and lots more went into the rainforest area, including ferns donated and planted by the Fern Study Group. A major project undertaken and completed was the installation of a trickle irrigation system to the rainforest area which has seen the plants in that area start to put on some good growth.

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We have started removing some of the old wattles out the back of the park and continued to plant out different areas and do further regeneration works as well.

It is good to hear of continual rejuvenation being carried out in the Park to maintain its appeal. I think this is very important for all gardens open to the public which can display the beauty of Australian plants. DS

MEETINGS

NE Vic Branch

Report of two gardens visited during the meeting on May 7 - see page 8

Next meeting Sunday August 22 (please note date) at 10.30 a.m. for 11 a.m. start at **Jacci Campbell's** place, (between Benalla and Shepparton). Jacci is planning to build a new house later this year and we may be able to contribute garden ideas.

Please phone Jacci for directions.

Next Melbourne meeting Sunday October 17 at 1.45 pm for 2pm at **Paul Thompson's** place,

This will be a great opportunity to hear Paul, an outstanding professional designer, give us the background to the way his garden has developed over 26 years of change. We'll see a water-harvesting garden in which, over time, Paul has trialled many plants which were only just being introduced into horticulture. Paul describes his garden as an adventure.

There is a chapter on Paul's garden ('Variety in a woodland garden') in my book *"Australian Native Gardens: putting visions into practice"* (Lothian 1992). The chapter includes a plan of the garden, my brief description of it, details of its establishment and maintenance, and some of Paul's own ideas about the garden.

Please phone Diana Snape to indicate whether you can come.

Sydney Branch meetings

Report of Sydney GDSG meeting, July 25

Jo Hambrett NSW

The first meeting of the year took place in the beautiful Illawarra region on the south coast. It was a full day with three very different gardens to appreciate.

Our first stop was the Grevillea Park at Bulli. This garden, nestled at the bottom of Bulli Pass with glimpses of the sea, answered the need to house the increasing numbers of wild sourced grevillea plant material grown by the Grevillea Study Group. Ray Brown, the powerhouse behind its establishment, gave us an informative talk on the quite special needs of a large, public native garden run purely by volunteers using donated materials. We were able to stroll through the park, enjoying the glorious flora (not only grevilleas) and studying the layout from a design point of view.

On to Ian Percy's garden at Corrimal (see description page 9). Then, warmed and cheered by a most delicious lunch - homemade by Ian himself! - we drove on to Danie Ondinea's retreat (description p9).

A big thank you to Ian Percy whose idea the day was, and to Ray, Ian and Danie for opening their gardens. A hard act to follow.

Next meeting November 7

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

S.A. Branch

South Australian members please contact ~~Margie Barnett~~ suggestions for future meetings.

if you have any

TREASURER'S REPORT

Peter Garnham Vic

FINANCIAL STATEMENT - Half year ending 30/6/99

<u>Receipts</u>		<u>Expenses</u>	
Subscriptions	130.00	Postage	183.00
Donations	20.00	Photocopying	272.30
Past Newsletters	20.00	Sundry	12.50
Miscellaneous	4.50	Bank deposit book	5.00
Bank interest	<u>0.39</u>	Taxes & duties	<u>0.35</u>
	<u>\$174.89</u>		<u>\$473.15</u>
Balance in bank	<u>\$2769.72</u>		

MEMBERSHIP

New members

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

Lynne Boladeras

Mollie Lau

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

Well, it seems quite strange to be back assembling the Newsletter, but very rewarding and enjoyable. I hope I haven't left out any news or contributions, as I had a lot of paper to sort. Please let me know if anything you have sent me has been missed. Also please get going again now with your ideas, reports and information for the Newsletter. A number of members are regular contributors, which is great, but the value of the Newsletters increases with the variety of members' input. You all have your individual and unique viewpoints.

Has this year been a very wet one for you, or a very dry one, and how has your garden survived it so far? Maybe some members have even had the benefit of an entirely appropriate amount of rain. Here in Melbourne, winter has been very mild and many plants have taken it to be an early spring. Our hoveas in particular have put on a magnificent show this year. We have just had a little rain and I am feeling frustrated that I am not yet strong enough to start planting - the nursery has a slightly overgrown look!

From time to time, I and some members have thought about the possibility of the GDSG producing a book on garden design with Australian plants. This could draw upon and amalgamate material that has appeared over the years in the Newsletter, as well as introducing a lot of new material. The book could be aimed at 'beginners' or a more general readership (including beginners). We could start by considering chapter headings for the different aspects we might cover in the book. If you have any ideas about this, please write to me with your general comments or your suggestions for chapter headings.

Best wishes from

Diana Snape