

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS
GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP



NEWSLETTER No. 33

February 2001

Study Group Leader/Editor: Diana Snape

Treasurer/Membership: Bryan Loft

Dear Members,

I'm sorry the February Newsletter is running late but The Book took up all my time over the last few months. The manuscript and photographs have now been sent to the publisher, Florilegium in Sydney, so that's a great relief although there are still some details to finish. My co-writers Jo Hambrett from Sydney, Barbara Buchanan from NE Victoria and Chris Larkin from Melbourne have all spent some time with me in Melbourne during the last month helping with the final stages. Other members of the Editorial Committee who helped were John Armstrong and Pat and John Webb. We hope the book will be published in October this year.

I have so much correspondence to catch up with that I am sure some will miss out for this NL but these should be included in the next one. If your letter or article is still missing when the next NL comes out, please let me know. Also please forgive me if I haven't answered your letter personally, which I usually can do but recently have not been able to manage. I'll try to catch up with this over time.

The response of members of the GDSG and APS generally to the Photo Competition was tremendous and the winners are announced in this NL (as they have been in Regional APS Journals). Many people sent letters with their entries and I'll include some extracts under 'correspondence' in either this or the next NL. Barbara Buchanan's idea of the competition was a very good one - as well as producing excellent photos, some from far away places which was one important aim, it also raised awareness of the work of the Study Group. For presentation to the prize winners, John Armstrong prepared a beautiful certificate which has been posted out recently and which I am sure they will all treasure.

NEXT MEETINGS

Please see details of these meetings on page 18

NE VIC: Sunday March 18 at Martin Rigg & Diana Leggat's

SYDNEY: Sunday May 6 - please contact Jo Hambrett

MELBOURNE: Sunday May 6 - please contact Diana Snape

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CORRESPONDENCE extracts

The following **two letters** are reprinted from the APS Victoria Newsletter 'Growing Australian' March 2001. It is a voice we will sadly miss, as **Stefanie Rennick** died in January this year, aged 82, after a battle with cancer. Stefanie was a tireless worker for the cause of saving, planting and designing with indigenous Australian plants. She had a wonderful influence on primary school children in her area, inspiring their interest in local plants, and was an active member of the Garden Design Study Group. These letters, written late last year, are a reflection of her work and her vitality.

1 Regarding : Local habitat native gardens

In ASGAP GDSG Newsletter 32 (and of interest to the wider membership) I was delighted to read that **Norm and Maureen Webb** of NSW have also found the delight and purpose of developing a "local native habitat garden", propagating from their own local native flora which brings back a habitat for native fauna.

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I believe it is very important for every APS member to participate in the development and management of a truly relevant garden design for the new millennium. Wherever they live in Australia, every member could give space in their nature-strip or road verge for our now severely threatened and fast disappearing local flora and fauna. Interpretive signage to inform passers-by would be an educational bonus.

I have very strong reservations on APS members changing ALL of their gardens and the local habitat by growing only plants introduced from anywhere in Australia or hybridised for purely commercial reasons.

Some of the bonuses discovered while growing my local native nature-strip garden in the SE Melbourne region include the discovering of many new plants of value to garden design, landscaping and habitat protection. In the local native habitat gardens developed, the children and I have discovered several local wahlenbergias (Blue-bells) and at least five different dianellas (Flax-lilies). The railway reserves also provide many very interesting grasses for research. Creative gardening and garden design of this kind by schoolchildren will ensure better management and decision making on our natural resources into the future.

I wish Norman and Maureen as much discovery and pleasure as I have experienced in my "local native habitat garden", where I am enjoying the return of local birds, butterflies, skinks and other small Australian creatures.

2 Regarding: *Bursaria spinosa* - responding to Kevin Penny's letter in the December 2000 Australian Plants Society Newsletter. Kevin tells us that he dislikes the *Bursaria spinosa* trees/shrubs, apparently the only drought survivors in the creek in his property at Stratford. He is determined to remove them.

Hold on Kevin.

1. What about erosion in your creek after heavy rain?
2. Are you aware of the unique anti-ultraviolet (UV) chemical, horticultural, landscape, tree under urban power lines and honeyeater bird and butterfly habitat values of this varied Australian and local native plant? Throughout Victoria a little observation will show you at least four distinct varieties for different landscape garden design uses.

Look again.

The Ormond East Primary School's favourite UV tree which they have propagated in class and planted in their local native garden at Joyce Park, labelled with interpretive signage. About to put on a wonderful floral display for Christmas, it provides us with an insight as a sun screen used by our local aboriginal peoples.

Check your area. Can you find these forms?:

1. a fast growing, early flowering, larger leafed tree form without spines.
2. an open slow growing tree form with spines and roundish leaves which after nine years develop flowers, larger leaves and loses its spines.
3. a small compact, small leafed form with very nasty spines, a superb addition for buffer hedges for small properties or farms to replace the nineteenth century cypress hedges.
4. a rounded large leaf form, no spines, an attractive specimen medium shrub.

I would be very interested to hear your discoveries and those of other Australian Plant Society members.

Yours sincerely, **Stefanie Rennick** (Co-author: *The Mornington Peninsula, A Field Guide to the Flora, Fauna and Walking Tracks*)

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Letter from Argentina

"Thank you for sending me the Newsletters & the membership form. Being away from home & the office requires some time to get going again, and I apologize for taking so long to write. The NL are very interesting & the inter-active way seems very appropriate for a Study Group. Congratulations to you for all the organization and the comments. It's a big job.

I found in Australia that Landscape Architects and Garden Designers and also other forms of creative expression (artistic & technical) were seeking the "core of the Australian-ness", were searching for roots in the diverse origin of the population. Some of us in Argentina are also headed in this direction, searching for the vernacular but not yet as accepted by the general public, who still seek to have the so called "English garden".

I guess the Olympic Games and being the centre of the show for some days, in a very positive way, must have stined Australians also. And it was a real success. People who were not directly involved in gardening or landscaping would point us towards the beauty and the lightness of the bush in public spaces, the practicalities of the inclusion of native grass in the center of highways. We were admired by this cultural thing going on. And I'm sure a lot of it happening depended on the awareness caused by you as professionals. Congratulations!

*I look forward to receiving more NL and keeping contact with the Group. Many thanks for inviting me to join, not being Australian. Best wishes for this New Year." **Elsita Boffi De Schulte** from Argentina*

I met Elsita at a book launch in Melbourne and it was fascinating to realize how much our situations regarding use of indigenous plants in garden design had in common. Elsita joined the GDSG then. She has a special interest in tow maintenance garden design and use of native plants. She works mostly in the humid area of the pampas, in the provinces of Buenos Aires and Entre Rios, specializing in country parks in rural areas. OS.

"On reading your comments regarding presentation bouquets (SNIPPETS, Bouquet for the Olympics, NL 32) I am moved to write to tell you of the involvement of SGAP (Queensland Region) with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. SGAP Qld sponsors the QSO in the form of presentation bouquets at each performance. A small group of volunteers from various SGAP branches is rostered to provide flowers for presentation to the conductor and guest artist/s at every performance of the QSO at the Queensland Performing Arts Complex, Brisbane.

The flowers come from our own or SGAP members' gardens. The many forms of grevillea (flowers and foliage), banksia, callistemon, melaleuca, kangaroo paws, thryptomene, kunzea, leptospermum, senna, some acacia varieties, bracteantha are commonly used. Bouquets for men take the form of a sheaf, whilst the ladies receive a posy style bouquet. Comments from QSO organising staff and concert patrons have always been extremely favourable.

*We enjoy reading your very interesting Newsletters." **Elaine Jel** Qld*

Congratulations to SGAP Qld for this initiative and to Elaine for her involvement. I think it is a most valuable way of raising public awareness of the beauty of our Australian plants (at least in the concert-going public) and I believe it is important to do this in every way possible. DS

"We felt duty bound to send some WA photos of bits of native garden!! We had our Open Garden day in October - rather late for the spring flowers but the garden looked good. Our swan song as we have sold the house and will be spending most of the week at our real bush garden in Dunsborough. We have bought a small house within walking distance of the centre of Bunbury as I am still busy with an herbarium

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and the community native nursery.

The photos are only average and I have selected those which don't show any ferals! If they are of any use we will be flattered but will not be devastated if they are considered not good enough. The sawdust paths, the shade of ~~Aeonis flexuosa~~, the use of timber logs for steps and edging all reflect the conditions of our sand-dune gardens. Best wishes for the book." **Shirley Fisher** W.A.

Shirley sent in some beautiful prints of her 'old' garden. DS

"I don't know if it is too late for the competition but here are some photos. These were taken with a wide angle, throw-away camera and we are very pleased with the results. Descriptions of the photos are on the back of each photo. Will be in touch." **Norm & Maureen Webb** NSW

Norm & Maureen's photos were not too late and I thought the wide angle format was very effective, both for horizontal and vertical photos of their garden. DS

"I've never found my garden easy to photograph. I think I said to you when you were here that it is a garden for being in, not a garden for visual display. However here are my efforts for what they're worth.

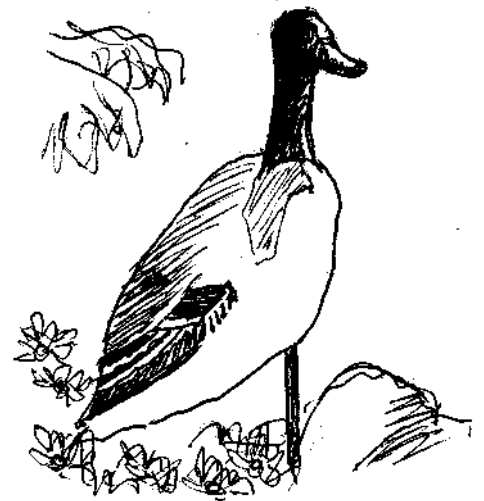
As you'll see I do have a date record on each one, which does rather interfere with the artistic effect, but I find value having a permanent reference for assessing seasonal growth, foliage colour, etc.

I hope you have a lot of fun sorting through all the photos, and look forward to seeing the book when it eventually appears." **Rosalind Smallwood** Vic

I think dates on photographs are an excellent idea for garden records, as Rosalind says. Unfortunately they usually do make it difficult for reproduction. DS

7 remember you asked about garden ornaments so I've sent you a photo of one of my favourites. This was my birthday present last year. The duck's head is of plastic and sits on top of the stick; the body is a papery substance (waterproof) and it sits below the head but is able to rotate. You put a semi blown up balloon in the body which is like a wind sock and the wind blows the body around. The duck looks as though it is wobbling. My duck works nearly as well without the balloon. He/she has been out in the hail and survived. You can get ducks, geese and flamingos. A flock of them looks delightful. I have some concrete ducks, wombats and pigs but my waddling duck is the most fun." **Christine Proud** Old

Friends of ours have one of these ducks -I think they are great! DS



"While I am interested in all areas of design, I did take particular note of the section 'getting to know reliable plants' under themes of interest. I am currently doing a bit of part-time work and my superiors seem to think it appropriate for me to do planning work unpaid in my spare time. In the past few weeks I have tried to establish a list of reliable plants as my ready reference. I will be interested to see if any lists have been compiled by GDSG members and perhaps see if there are suggestions I have overlooked and alternatively if I have suggestions not considered by other members.

I would also be interested to know what was written by Geof Simmons in NL 29. While I am a mulch and organic matter fanatic, I do believe there can be problems and I was prompted to write some thoughts for an APS Foothills Newsletter on the matter after listening to the Director of RBG Cranbourne say they had adopted a policy of growing without mulch." **Barbara Setchel** Vic

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I would welcome members' current suggestions for a list of reliable plants. Of course it does depend on climate, soil, growing conditions, etc., but many plants are remarkably versatile. DS

"After my initial scan of Newsletter 32 I am enjoying a more leisurely read on this hot December morning. What a full and interesting NL it is.

1. Great to see the City of Moreland putting out a leaflet on using Australian plants and some garden design plans. Whilst I understand using common names, I do feel strongly that botanical names should be used as well. This is always frustrating in leaflets put out by Parks Victoria who often use common names only.
2. A most interesting article by **Paul Thompson** 'Growing designs' - much food for thought. I particularly like "my definition of a favourite is the plant that serves the design purpose with some predictability". To his question "Does one let favourites have a place in every garden?" - my answer is YES, YES, YES! - that is surely part of the great joy of gardening. John and I did enjoy Paul's garden project at the Dunkeld pub - what a change to this place. We visited in October after three lovely days at Wartook Gardens staying with Jeanne and Royce Raleigh. Both their garden and the 'natural garden' around Mount Zero were magnificent.
(For non-Victorian members, Dunkeld and Wartook are in the Grampians region of Victoria. Jeanne and Royce Raleigh for many years were members of the GDSG. DS)
3. I always enjoy **Geoff Simmons'** comments - he gives us food for thought (also in the Australian Plants for Containers Study Group). (Pat is leader of this SG. DS)
4. A delightful small plant combination in a shallow bonsai container and in flower now is *Pratia pedunculata* and *Goodenia humilis* sitting on a dish of wet pebbles. It can be brought inside for a short time too.

On a personal note — John and I have sold our Balnarring home after 12 years and, whilst leaving the garden will be sad, we are just so delighted that the new residents coming in are members of Australian Plant Society and will continue to develop and refine No. 18. What a lovely spring but, oh, what a dry month November was - 9mm of rain on November 11 and only one mm in the next 5 weeks. Everything is drying out rapidly." **Pat Webb** Vic

The differences in weather in different areas of Australia - particularly northern compared with southern - have been more extreme than ever in recent years. A challenge for garden designers! DS

Jottings from Mt Clay

Cherree Densley Vic

With the December issue of 'Growing Australian' posted and the garden at Killarney 'almost' under control, it was off to Mt Clay for a few days of R & R (Rejuvenation and Reflective reading of the latest GDSG Newsletter - number 32 already and the 5th this year!!) As usual, a wonderful array of lots of interesting articles, useful snippets, design ideas and thoughts to digest.

1. I particularly enjoy the Correspondence extracts. Thank you to Martin Rigg and Diana Leggatt for your "may your garden be inspiring" sentence. Too often, particularly after visiting other gardens and landscaped areas, we come home a bit envious of others' efforts and a bit disgruntled with our own. I feel that your short sentence is inspiring in itself. It had an instant effect on me. I love visiting other gardens but I love coming home to my own even more. Drawing inspiration from our own efforts restores confidence in our own ability and continues to build self esteem. Of course, we can always strive to improve and rejuvenate our gardens but we must be able to draw inspiration from what we have already achieved. Yes - I did make a good choice with those screening shrubs: yes - that colour combination flowering together did work; yes - I'm glad I made the choice of planting that clump of *Anigozanthus flavidus* (Kangaroo Paw) just outside the window as the honeyeaters can be seen so closely. But, Diana and Martin, a 320m x 240m landscape? And I thought

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my garden was large!!

2. Thank you, leader Diana (NL31 p1), for including both ~~common names with botanical names~~ in the GDSG Newsletters. As a fellow Editor, you have reminded me that members are at all stages of familiarity with Australian plant names. Whilst it is time consuming to look up and then type out both names (plus sometimes a changed one), apply italics and other styling, there is less risk of alienating readers who could just skip over a list of botanical names because it is just too hard to decipher and thus miss out on valuable information. (I prefer, for consistency, to start with the botanical name in italics, then the common name in brackets - even if it means re-typing lots of words in a submitted article.)

Cherree's preference is the approved way of doing it. I vary the order according to how the text 'reads' but also I am happy to have botanical or common names first approximately half and half (usually consistent within one article). When I read bird journals I appreciate just how difficult it is for someone who does not know virtually any scientific names, as I have never made the effort to learn them for birds. DS

3. It was a case of 'been there, done that' with Norm Webb's article (NL32 p13) and his experience with Golden Diosma. Like Norm, I was attracted once by the soft, fast growing, golden foliage (it makes me slightly nauseous now) believing it would be OK amongst the correas and eremophilas behind a water feature. It grew splendidly, even attracting blackbirds to nest in it, and early photos of that part of the garden show an attractive grouping of plants. But it gradually dawned on me that it was indeed 'out of place' and it had to come out. It did leave a large gap with depleted soil; replacement plantings have been slow. (Your replacement grouping is inspirational, Norm and Maureen - I like the idea of *Xanthorrhoea australis* (Austral Grass-tree) and grasses together. A similar planting can be seen in a small section of the Seppelts Winery garden at Stawell, Victoria - well worth a look, by the way.)

4. Paul Thompson's excellent thoughts (NL32 p4) on 'favourites', 'reliability', 'predictability', 'unpredictability' and 'favourite lollies' left me with a burning question. Just what are your 'long term species' please?

5. Diana, why can't ALL Nurserymen do the right thing? I have two huge problems. Two feature plants are just not going to be suitable because I planted them according to the Nursery label. *Grevillea magnifica* ssp. *remorsa* (Granite Pink Poker Grevillea) was labelled as 1.5-2m x 1.5-2m. I find it can grow to 3m with flower spikes to 10m! *Acacia coventyi* (Blue Bush) was labelled as 2.5m x 2.5m and I find it can actually grow to 10m x 6m. Paul Thompson saw it a few months ago and asked me innocently, but pointedly, "Why did you plant that particular wattle there?" I then quietly went and looked up the Encyclopaedia! I should have done that in the first place as now I'll have to move the house!

6. I found the four suggested plans from the City of Moreland, which used local plants, charming and inspirational. The use of grasses, the hedge of Wedge-leaf Hop Bush, groups of *Bursaria spinosa* (Sweet Bursaria), native grass lawn and overall presentation very appealing. WHO was the designer/landscaper? We need to write to them and congratulate them.

7. Thanks to Jennie Lawrence of Burnie who added to my list of 'ankle highs' with the suggestion of a low form of *Baeckea ramosissima* (Rosy Baeckea). but *Chaetospora sphaerocephala* (Button Grass)? Our local form has clumps of leaves to 1m and flowering stems to 2m. (By the way, Jennie's Woolly Thyme lawn is lovely.)

8. At Killarney, the best groundcovers by far are: *Brachyscome multifida* (Cut-leaf Daisy), *Myoporum parvifolium* 'Pink' (Creeping Boobialla), *Scaevola albida* (Creeping Fan-flower), *Mazus pumilio* (Swamp Mazus) and *Grevillea humifusum* - formerly *G. thelemanniana* 'Grey leaf form'. *Kunzea pomifera* (Muntries) is shaping up to be a wonderful (but slow growing) groundcover also, which should give me the benefit of edible fruit too. (It's fascinating how similar my list of 'best groundcovers' is. DS)

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9. If you get the chance to visit that area of Victoria, as well as the Seppelts garden, also have a look at the attractive landscaped Alexandra Gardens (the Australian plants section) at Ararat. These are well designed for their aspect, well labelled and well maintained by members of APS Grampians District Group. The prostantheras (Mint Bushes) were spectacular when we were there in November.

10. Colleen Keena (NL32p12) is that a dinkum site? It would take me an hour to type in the address!

11. Thank you, Peter Garnham, on behalf of the members of GDSG, for 6 years of book work and keeping us all in line with membership payments and visits to the bank. Accurate and time consuming administration is a thankless (until now!) but necessary task.

12. I cant understand that Geoff Simmons is not 'getting the message' (NL_32p3) re the philosophy behind choices made by members in their gardens and landscapes. The GDSG Newsletters contain dozens of articles with expressed thoughts of 'why'. Personal philosophies are the very basis of our attitudes, interest, ability to love and appreciate, inspire our willingness to experiment or even how much we can spend on plants at the time, and this just shines forth in our wonderful Newsletter as members put pen to paper or fingers to the keyboard. The 'best' writing and the articles I enjoy the most are those based on practicalities or philosophies backed up by examples. The old saying that we 'learn by our mistakes', however, is true of our adolescent experiences at gardening with Australian plants. Let's have a debate about it Geoff! (NL31 p4). Here are a few other statements to go on with:

A "Large expensive rocks should NOT be partly buried during placement."

B "Curved driveways for the sake of fluidity of line make for nothing more than good businesss at the panel beaters."

C "Rehabilitation of an area of indigenous vegetation is impossible."

D "Sawn logs set in pebbles to form a pathway (as seen in many landscaping books) was a stupid idea."

E "The encouragement to use more Australian rainforest species in southern Mediterranean-type areas of Australia is contrary to one of the basic reasons for using natives - i.e. saving water resources."

I'll look forward to members' responses to those!

I suspect that most gardeners are peaceful people who avoid conflict and the sort of confrontation that appears to be loved by politicians and the media. I'm all for 'shades of grey' myself, not just 'black and white'. DS

13. Danie Ondinea would be proud of my efforts to attract wildlife - one of my underlying philosophies for creating a garden of Australian plants. The blue wrens, ravens, magpies, magpie larks, lots of honeyeaters, wattle birds and willy wagtails have all raised young this year from nests in the garden. We have thousands of garden skinks and one little echidna but the presence of a red-bellied black snake sunning itself amongst the scaevolias gives a whole new perspective to my former weeding practices.

I remember Cherree writing in an earlier NL about some limits to the wildlife she would want to attract to her garden! DS

Rosalind Small wood was a member of the GDSG in its early years and has lately rejoined. Her house and beautiful indigneous garden are for sale.

FOR SALE

'Half a Chance' landscaped indigenous garden at Point Lonsdale, Victoria. Double block with two titles (house block 1038 sq m and garden block 806 sq m.) Land for Wildlife accreditation. Mature trees, shrubs, grasses plus pond (with frogs). 4-bedroom passive solar house - shaded in summer, sunfilled in winter.

GDSG GARDEN PHOTO COMPETITION - RESULTS

Thank you to all members who entered photos in our photo competition and congratulations to the following winners. The standard of entries was high and the committee had some very difficult decisions to make. Depending on the final selection of the book designer, all (or at least most) of these photos will be included somewhere in the book to illustrate an aspect of garden design.

Thank you to John Armstrong Vic for designing the beautiful certificate awarded to these winners.

Winners

NSW	Fran & Jim Standing (their own garden, Jim Standing the photographer)
Queensland	Fran Bright (Glazebrook / Cox garden, Fran Bright the photographer)
South Australia	Anne & Colin Dealtry (their own garden, Colin Dealtry the photographer)
Tasmania	Dick Burns (Dick Burns' garden design and photograph)
Victoria - equal first	Elspeth Jacobs (Elspeth Jacobs' garden and Ian Littler's photograph) Howard Tozer (Howard Tozer's garden and photograph)
Western Australia	Lynne Boladeras * the only GDSG member* (Lynne's garden design & photograph)

DESIGN

Notes on formal gardens

Glenda Datson and NE Vic Branch

There is definitely a place for Australian plants in formal gardens, once the preserve of exotic plants - how do you translate Australian plants into that use?

- **Gloria Thomlinson** - in smaller gardens, it's a way to use plants in narrow areas, small areas. Formality is often forced upon the design because of the small size.
- Pushing boundaries to create interest, e.g. standard plants used in formal gardens, but can't relate to rambling gardens.
- **Jenny Davidson** - "curvilinear", formalistic plants to suit more relaxed rather than strictly formal gardens. Architecture is very formal at the moment - neo-Georgian structures in not only Melbourne but country towns. People have less time available and want to buy in advanced sizes but they still want a garden.
- Regular maintenance - plants which will relate to clipping/control. We are getting a greater palette of plants which are suited for formality. Plants are evolving through nurseries, great cultivars are appearing which can be used in formal gardens.
- Emphasis on maintenance, an integral part of a formal garden. If you want to maintain the form/structure you have to do 'x' number of things to your plants to maintain them. Landscape Architects write a maintenance manual in their design. Time frame of 15 years in its intended form before you need to replace.
- **Jan Hall** read an extract from **Paul Thompson's** paper presented at the Grevillea Study Group weekend - "Growth time to development" - which was referred to a couple of times during the meeting.
- In a suburban street, a rambling garden may not fit the streetscape so a little bit of formality may suit. e.g. entrances formal and beyond that less formal.
- The Group feels it is essential to have plant lists so that the reader has examples of plants to suit different categories e.g. plants which prune extremely well and can be pruned to achieve different 'looks' - *Acacia iteaphylla* (Flinders Range Wattle); callistemons; leptospermums. Versatility of better, more adaptable plants. *Grevillea robusta* (Silky Oak) - clipped. Necessity of maintenance has provided ideas (accidental discovery) for formality which can be utilised.
- Repetition can produce formality, with quicker growing plants, e.g. grasses, lomandras, daisies, in grids or

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patterns. Plants may not be formal in form but can be used in this way. Combine tufting plants with groundcovers - orthrosanthus in formal rows. People may want formality and containment but with the right choice of plants, wildflowers can still be used.

- With waterwise gardening, gardens become less formal away from the house. Close to the house is the irrigated part of the garden, which could have potted plants in a formal arrangement.
- Gardens tending more towards extreme formality e.g. for highrise apartments. Many people crave a connection with the living land - part of the Australian bush to be brought back to their living space e.g. for the smallest, one plant in a pot.

Blended gardens (gardens with Australian and exotic plants together)

People do have "memory" plants they want to retain.

- It is important to have compatible looking plants, liking the same conditions e.g. water, shade, sun. Selection needs to be very careful.
- To retain a complementary blending of existing plants (exotic) look at form, texture, leaf size, etc. A good mix, e.g. small, medium, large, whatever complements what is already there.
- Plants can be highly diverse but blended, rather than just individual specimens. Linking is crucial, so look for links. Every level has its blenders and tufties can be blenders.
- Fillers used in the florist trade can be used as fillers in the garden to give harmony.

What advantages in including Australian plants in with an existing range of exotics?

- Patriotism * Colour in winter * Bird attracting properties.
- Strong alternative forms, or subtle shapes, offered as alternative or blend.
- Alternative flowering seasons - autumn croweas, summer correas liking shade.

Some very interesting ideas from this meeting, which I was sorry to miss What are your thoughts on these subjects? DS

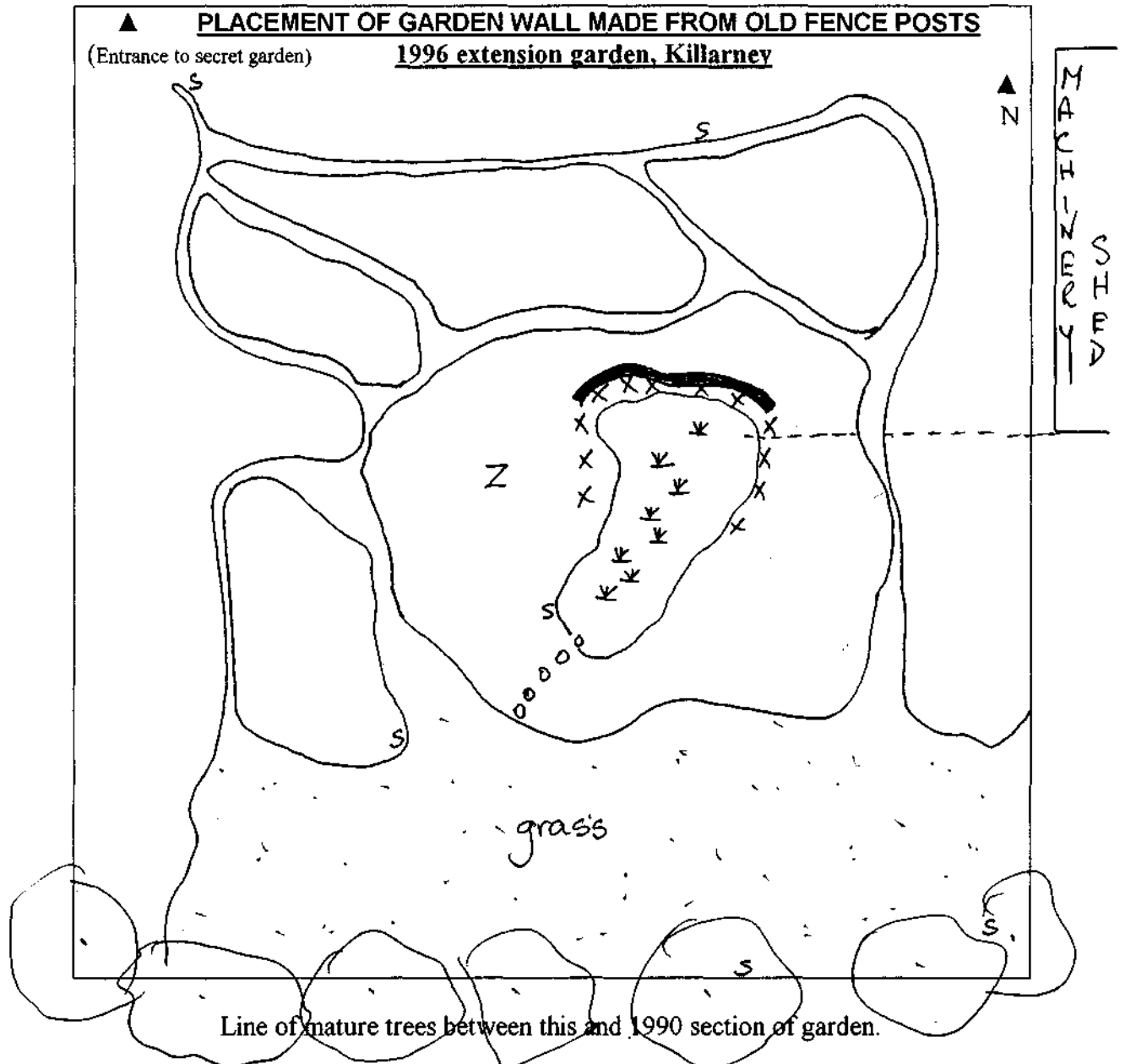
The 'evolving' compartments

Cherree Densley Vic

I have always liked to have water in the garden and the 1996 extension, like the other areas, needed a water feature too. In the early stages, it was a case of getting something down on paper and striking whilst the iron was hot; to get my brother here with his bob-cat for a weekend doing some other jobs and just casually adding a further job - digging out the soil; to get Ian to construct and hook up the down-pipe from a newly built machinery shed to lead into the new area. (It took a few nicely baked fruit cakes and several roast lamb dinners with all the trimmings.)

I designed the middle section (Z) of this area as a 'holding basin/ephemeral soak' where unused rainwater could be redirected from the new shed through an underground pipe. Whilst the rest of the garden - see plan page 1 - has more or less been planted successfully, I have never really been completely happy with how this area has developed. In the first place, I suppose it was a rush decision without proper planning as to how to treat the surface areas. Should I line it with plastic to hold the water? Should I concrete just some of the lowest areas to make it a more permanent source of water? My original idea of an ephemeral soak, just as in nature, won out and even though it is dry, dry, dry for several months, the natural look appeals.

The porous, black, volcanic loam allows very rapid drainage but now, after a few years, a crust has formed in some spots consisting of roots of sedges and some mosses on the bedrock which slows seepage. Nardoo (*Marsilea* sp.) is now successfully creeping along the bottom and small plants of Water Ribbons have



- == pathways - crushed grey volcanic tuff
 - X original Gahnia plantings
 - underground water pipe leading from roof of machinery shed
 - v v ephemeral wetlands
 - oooo stepping logs leading into depression
 - S garden seats
 - █ placement of wall made from old fence posts
 - Z middle section of garden extension
- Area is approx 50m x 54m



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become established. The lowest part of the depression goes down to a bedrock of tuff.

Originally the margins of the depression were planted with *Gahnia sieberiana* (Red-fruit Saw-sedge), which grew rapidly and successfully for two years sending up towering 2m (7') high flowering spikes. These plants created a wonderful atmosphere and made a quiet, special place for blue wrens in particular, and hiding places for skinks and frogs. A small seat made from logs and a rough plank of wood, tucked under a melaleuca, formed an ideal retreat and a superb bird hide. I was advised NOT to plant the gahnia actually in the water.

However disaster struck in the form of last year's very dry winter and all the gahnia clumps almost died. Tatty, large clumps consisting of 80% dead matter is not a pretty sight. The 'neatness' streak in me demanded action so, over 2 days, I cut the clumps to the ground and carted away the dead material (not an easy task I assure you). I was distressed to also find, amongst what I had cut down, the makings of a blue wren's nest - the first time they had tried to actually nest here. The result of my cutting back left a huge expanse of water without a well defined edge - once provided by the gahnia. I could now see right through to other parts of the garden to the north and even to the borrowed landscape of the paddocks behind. The area had lost its intimacy. Instead of my eyes being drawn to the water, they now looked through and beyond. What had been a quiet, enclosed retreat was now open to the elements. I'd lost a 'garden room' or compartment.

How could I now treat a large expanse of bare banks? Perhaps a large rockery could be built. What with? Rocks are expensive here and I'd scrounged whatever had been available. So what was at hand which I could use to make a structure which could provide shelter and replace the lost gahnias? I started looking about.

Ian had been replacing some fences and had heaped very old fence posts against a shed to throw out. (Ian NEVER throws anything out unless it is truly worthless but even these posts were beyond being useful to him.) I felt that I could use them somehow as they had an already very weathered, rustic look. What if I 'planted' them closely in a curved, informal line on top of the bank of the depression? Next day, after a sleepless night just thinking about it, I started digging holes after breakfast and carting in the posts - just two fitted in the barrow - and ramming them in. When Ian got home from work at 5pm I asked him, nicely, for 'just 10 minutes' help, by 9.30pm we had finished; my rustic wall looked great in the moonlight!

Well done, Cherree (and Ian). I'll look forward to seeing the 'new look'. One thing I found very interesting was that a crust was forming in some spots, with establishment of Nardoo and Water Ribbons, Nature is wonderful. DS

Private versus public garden design

Geoff Simmons Old

The article by Paul Thompson in Newsletter 32 brings further focus on the conflict (?) inherent in the GDSG concept.

A rigid, more planned design is desirable in a public garden, that is, one based on the selection of species known to be reliable growers in that particular environment and offering some value in beauty. Fortunately there is an increasing number of varieties that meet these criteria. Also the large scale public gardens can inspire the imagination in respect to multiple plantings of a single or several reliable plants or unusual use of a single species such as the tree-fern garden in ACT. Transposing mega designs is not

possible when a private garden is initially planted and evolving.

On the other hand a private garden is more flexible and can be a place of experiment, personal challenge and endless variation governed only by access to the Australian flora and individuals' ideas.

The cost involved in each type of garden is also a major factor. The purchase of a large number of a particular variety or advanced size plants is quite a different proposition to the purchase of one or several small plants or the acquisition of seeds or cuttings.

Whilst it is important to have botanic gardens, arboretums and other places extolling the virtues of Australian plants and design to the general public, for the individual private owners to copy such gardens means that they are missing out on the most stimulating aspect of garden design using local flora. Experimentation and innovation are of greater importance. The success rate may be limited if unwise choices are made but a much greater appreciation of the flora may be obtained. And if by chance a particularly impressive plant arises from a batch of seedlings - what a reward! This type of discovery occurred with many of the exotic species e.g. roses long before the current detailed knowledge of genetics came into force. Encouragement to try different species under different conditions that is possible in private gardens should be the aim of SGAP/APS members. Plant diversity and therefore gene diversity can only occur if more gardeners persevere with more species of different origin. Plant cloning and breeder rights to some extent run counter to this concept of gene diversity. The results of using limited genetic sources may produce plants best suited to public gardens but variety may be the answer for private gardens.

Do GDSG members want gardens of standardised plants or gardens with variety and an ever-changing display as natural characters exert their influence?

I can't resist saying, or a bit of each Geoff? It's hard to live with too much experimentation!

Gene diversity is a strong argument for growing strictly indigenous (local provenance) plants rather than the same species from somewhere else - where their genes should be being preserved locally.

With his article, Geoff wrote the following letter as a further explanation'. DS

A further explanation

Geoff Simmons Qld

In contract gardens the designer is hired to design a garden for public viewing and asked to take into account the wishes of one or more persons. On the other hand the design of a private garden is more personal and liable to change at short notice. Looking back over Newsletters one can see this distinction but no clarity exists in purpose. The result is confusion as the two type of garden design are fundamentally different irrespective whether Australian or non-Australian gardens are involved. The question then is which type of garden should be the major concern of the GDSG. While there may be a place for both types of purpose, the fact that there is much more scope for a larger number of people to experiment with unusual or off the beaten track species, under more diverse environmental conditions, means that private garden designing becomes much more interesting and gives greater scope for imagination.

There are three main sources for garden design - the natural plants communities, local garden design and gardens in overseas locations. These are rich sources of ideas but in the final analysis the person who is making a garden is the arbiter.

I think that clearly designated sections in the Newsletter for private and public designs would be desirable with priority given to private gardens.

Editor's response

I agree with Geoff that our primary focus is on private gardens J2Ut I think there is no hard line between 'public' and 'private' designs and I would certainly not like to see such a division made in the GDSG Newsletter.

- Many professional designers design private gardens for a single client, or just offer preliminary concepts.
- Private gardens can be open for public viewing, as in the Open Garden Scheme.
- Amateurs from the GDSG sometimes design gardens for public spaces, where there is some connection with the SG and where QQ. money is available for a professional designer.

What are members' thoughts on this subject? Please let me know. DS.

GARDENS

Report on a garden and an Open Garden

Cheree Hall NSW

/ visited Cheree's place to take photos of her garden. DS

One reason for writing is the seed you planted in my head regarding your Garden Design Study Group. Quite a strange thing happened during my Open Garden -1 was practically mobbed regarding all sorts of questions about native plants as if I was some brilliant expert on the subject - no such luck! The only question not asked was "How many worms live in your garden?"

Generally it seemed the main people who visited had native gardens that had "gone wrong". They had over-planted without giving consideration to the end plant size or how one would look in relation to the next. No thought was given about foliage contrast nor had the majority thought about varying height or groundcovers.

On another side of the fence were the ones who "no longer bothered" with Australian natives as they had too many pests and diseases or dropped dead so, instead of trying to find out why or explore the correct conditions/positions for the plant in case that was part of the problem, they just got stuck into exotics.

Another avenue of discussion was the small amount of landscaping we had tried out - lots of people enjoyed the dry creek bed (which was full of water today mind you), the wide deco-granite path and the pebble gardens with the grasses around the side of the new laundry. They seemed to be pleasantly surprised on turning the corner to discover the ferns.

On the main the comment from people was amazement at the fact an Australian native garden can have a structure to it and it didn't have to look like a bush garden (not that I think there's anything wrong with that). Just about every single person could not believe I was just an amateur. Please don't think I'm getting on my high horse - this info is just to give you an idea of what went on here in October - basically what the general public's reaction was. I feel most people walked away inspired and many promised to go back and re-think some of the sections of their gardens and to bring back friends next time - let's hope!

Therefore, I definitely think there is a real need for this type of book - the sooner the better. I can't wait to see it. (*Paul Urquhart's book would have come out just after Cheree wrote this letter! DS*) Apart from your previous book and visiting Betty Maloney's bush garden I actually have not seen another private native garden. There has been a bit of activity towards native plantings recently by our Council and I hope it continues.

News on the garden front here is the garden recently won the Australian Native Garden Section of the Beautiful Garden Competition for the Pittwater region. The gardening bug is again running rife and on the drawing board to commence in about one week is the digging up of grass, extension of the paths and mounding up soil to complete the front garden area. I intend to experiment here by designing a garden using only local plants found in our reserve where we do bush re-gen three houses down from us. I intend to group plant small-medium shrubs, use groundcovers and have a couple of larger species about 3-4 m as the upper storey. I really don't want to throw too much shade on the drive garden as there are mainly full sun

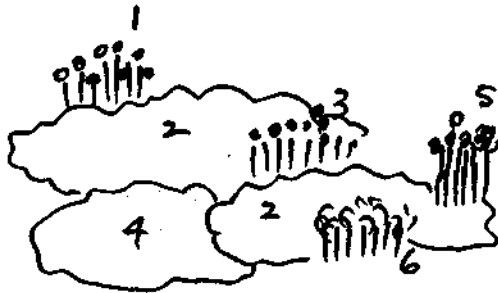
species located in that section of the garden. This will be quite a challenge due to lack of knowledge regarding how the mature plant may look especially in a garden situation - more lush perhaps?

I have recently submitted two designs for some gardens at our local school where my son attends - seems I can't stop myself! Unless the watering is attended to these may go by the wayside. There is strong root competition and dry shade areas plus there's always the inevitable rampant soccer-ball.

A blue/mauve/white 'cottagy' effect

Cherree Densley Vic

(All flowering together - last two weeks of November and most of December.)



Diplarrena latifolia (White Iris) 1
Brachyscome multifida (Cut-leaf Daisy) 2
Patersonia occidentalis (Long Purple flag) 3
Chrysocephalum baxteri (Fringed Everlasting) 4
Sowerbaea juncea (Rush Lily) 5
Thysanotus dichoraenea (Fringe Lily) 6

Mt Clay Rockery

"Offshore" - an indigenous coastal garden

Pat Webb Vic

John and I enjoyed a visit to Jane Burke's garden "Offshore" yesterday. Jane's work in revegetating the bush garden with local understorey plants was a delight to see. I loved her bed of correas - *C. alba* and *C. reflexa*; what a joy this must be to see in the Spring, when so much else is in flower with hibbertias, orchids, kennedia etc..

Congratulations to Jane whose garden has to be one of the most well planned gardens with so much thought given to respecting the physical and ecological qualities of the site. I am pleased to have visited this garden. I am sure that, wandering alone or with one or two others, one would enjoy the birds, lizards and butterflies as well as the plants. But I am not a fan of Open Gardens - it all seems so artificial and intrusive.

However if it weren't for Open Gardens, it would not be possible to visit gardens such as this one!

See NL28 p12 for a report which mainly consisted of a long extract from Jane Burke's handout, which was very well written. DS

Gardens of Victorian members outside Melbourne

At Melbourne meetings, we visit gardens of members and sometimes make suggestions for new gardens, or for renewal of gardens or areas within them. The NE Vic Branch do the same. At the last meeting, it was suggested that Victorian members who lived outside Melbourne but would like their garden visited, or looked at for ideas for renewal, could let me know. We might then be able to arrange a whole day outing to include a meeting at their place. We haven't had a GDSG weekend in the country for quite a few years now, so please let me know if you have any thoughts about that too.

Did any-one read a book relevant to garden design over the summer holidays? If you did, we'd like to hear about it. Both short and long reviews are welcome, also notes on articles in magazines.

On the Internet

Colleen Keena Old

Some articles that I found of interest.

<http://aardenina.about.com/homeaarden/aardenina/cs/desian/index.htm>

DESIGN IDEAS

Is there a place for single seats?

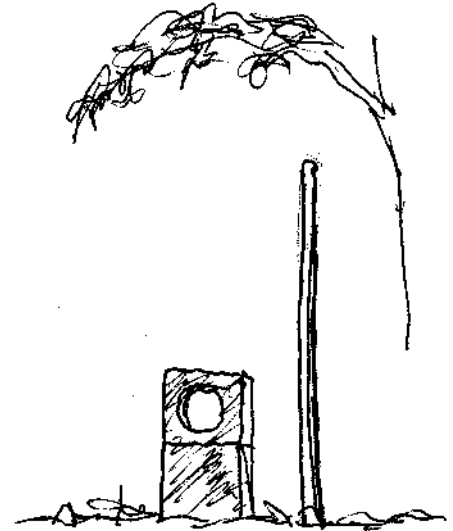
Geoff Simmons Qld

There are a multitude of designs for garden seats but the idea of a single resting place doesn't figure very often or at all in these design variations. The proverbial black stump could perhaps be used as a single seat. This short item is for those persons with large gardens or long driveways who desire to rest aged bodies or those weary from other causes. I have two on one side of my driveway and use them when puffing begins.

The single resting places can consist of two structures - a stone, concrete, wooden or metal platform of convenient height and a fixed, stable pipe or post that is used to hoist oneself from the sitting to upright position. I am sure that someone with artistic talent could design single seats in keeping with Australian concepts.

As with garden seats in general, sitting is very important. In warmer climates, beneath a shady tree may be desirable or where visual contact with Australian plants is desired. The over-riding factor is to place the seat where it serves the purpose of repose and seems a natural part of the garden design.

I think Geoff's idea is an excellent one, rather like a 'shooting stick' you don't have to carry. How about some designs from members? DS



PLANTS in DESIGN

Choosing plants

Paul Thompson Vic

Plant selection is based on **Form, Colour, Texture, Site Suitability, Compatibility, Availability & Maintenance**. Designs may be developed from a seemingly endless range of plant forms choosing from the 12,000 or so species that have been cultivated. With at least 4000 of those thought to be usually cultivated, there are plenty to be familiar with to maximize your options.

The way that one might approach a new project is to think in terms of the space conceptually arranged with its masses. One needs to view the plants as collective groups or linking forms that serve the brief or the broad design objective.

Provisional lists of plant groups are prepared so that the conceptual design that deals with the broad character may develop. The next stage of taking the concept into a more specific design examines the

groups or particular plants that will suit:

1. The conditions that they will predictably be growing in.
2. The intent of the design in the broad areas and the character of a particular place. This is to be evaluated independently according to whether plants are part of mixed or singular groups or highlighted specimens.
3. The next consideration is the vigour or speed of growth of the main groups as they may affect the design.
4. The longevity of major species within the horticultural context & the management regime.
5. The analysis of the above so to check whether the resultant growth suits your design eye (and your clients' understanding) at critical development periods of the garden. These stages may be 1, 3, 5, 10 & 20 years or whatever is appropriate in the circumstances.
6. The availability of plants within the period of control of the design. Remember, substitutes made by contractors or nurserymen may not suit the subtleties of your design.

Given that the right plants went where they were supposed to the job is only two thirds over. Plants need to be chosen to suit maintenance. Maintenance of an idea needs to be viewed as an integral part of the design development. On-going management sympathetic to the design is essential to fully realise any sophisticated integrated planting design. A garden that relies heavily on plants for its visual structure needs to be seen as a satisfying design at all times during its development into its mature form. Strong elements of the garden need to develop as intended. Informed maintenance is critical to this vision. The need for sympathetic maintenance must be strongly established early for every design. This will help raise the professionalism of contractors.

Only through quality care can planting design move forward.

Paul's article reminds us how much more difficult it is to design professionally. Amateurs - the majority of us - can indulge ourselves with 'experiments' or 'mistakes' whereas professionals cannot. DS

Thoughts on mistletoe

Barbara Setchell Vic

Some thoughts which came to mind after reading your article on mistletoe.

Observing mistletoe in the wild one notes that within forested areas the trees generally carry little of the parasite if any at all, while the trees on the periphery sometimes carry a number of infestations. Trees standing alone frequently are the ones carrying many clumps of mistletoe.

This has made me wonder if the birds linger longer in the isolated trees before making the dash across open space, and so remain long enough to deposit the seed. Perhaps someone in the Study Group may have connections to biologists to have an explanation for this phenomenon.

It does make me wonder if the introduction of a plant to a suburban tree would lead in time to the tree being burdened with an intolerable load and in situations where they are inaccessible for control measures. If you were hoping to attract mistletoe birds, my feeling is that there would be a greater chance in suburbs adjoining bushland reserves. Perhaps some bird observers may enlighten us on sightings in the suburbs.

I've always thought of it as 'edge effects' or 'isolated remnants', with birds not having sufficient (or any) choice of trees, but I'm sure Barbara's more precise explanations are probably correct. On August 26 Malcolm Calderis speaking about mistletoes in the RBG Cranbourne lecture series. DS

SNIPPETS

Annette Houseman of NSW has sent me photographs of two stunning young trees in flower in her garden. Both are nearly two years old and are crosses of *Corymbia (Eucalyptus) ficifolia* and *C. ptychocarpa*.

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One is called 'Summer Beauty' and has pink flowers; the other 'Summer Red'... yes, red. The numerous clusters of flowers are nicely spaced all over each tree and already they show signs of adopting the solid form typical of their parents.

MEETINGS

Melbourne meetings

Meeting on Sunday February 4 - cancelled

Our suggested guided twilight walk in the Botanic Garden South Yarra was postponed until later on because the guide who had been recommended was going to be away. Few members contacted me so it did not seem worthwhile trying to organize a different venue. For the March meeting, **Jan Fleming** or I contacted anyone who had expressed interest to let them know the details of the venue, so I hope no-one missed out who wanted to come. Please help us by getting in touch about meetings when necessary.

Report of meeting on Sunday March 4 at Flora MacDonald's

There was a good attendance especially with so many other activities on, including 'Clean up Australia' day. Flora's garden covers an acre and was designed by Bev Hanson 28 years ago. Like many gardens in Victoria it is under stress at the moment, with one of the hottest and driest summers on record coming at the end of a four-year drought. However it is surviving well and the original design has stood the test of time amidst a changing environment, with further development occurring nearby.

Positioning of major garden beds and framework trees and large shrubs still works well, with a vista kept open down the whole length of the block. Flora's garden includes the full spectrum of plant types and plant ages. It was amazing to see huge old specimens of a correa and a grevillea, each covering cubic metres of space - looking marvellous from front view but less beautiful from behind. The smaller garden areas closer to the house, including a water area and fern gardens, are beautiful with smaller plants that could be 'lost' in the larger areas.

Next meeting: Sunday May 6 - venue not decided yet.

Please phone Diana Snaoe or Jan Fleming mid-April to indicate whether you can come to the May meeting and to find out details.

NE Vic Branch

Report of meeting on Sunday November 12 at Glenda Datson's

The main topics for discussion were formal and blended gardens - see article page 9.

Next meeting: 10.30 am on Sunday March 18 at Martin Rigg & Diana Leggat's,

Sydney branch

The response for the last proposed meeting on **Sunday November 19** was not good enough for the meeting to go ahead. (The effects of the busy Christmas/December season seem to be spilling forward into November.) We'll try again with this venue.

Next Sydney meeting: Sunday May 6

We hope *this* meeting will be held at Fernbrook Garden and Art Gallery at Kurrajong Heights, where

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the woodland and rainforest gardens are supposed to be very beautiful. They were created by horticulturist Les Musgrave and the art gallery is the working studio of botanic artist Elaine Musgrave. The garden entry fee of \$5.50 per person includes tea, coffee and biscuits.

~~Please phone Jo Hambroff~~ well ahead to indicate whether you can come, to help in her organization of this meeting.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Bryan Loft Vic

FINANCIAL STATEMENT - Quarter ending 31/12/00

<u>Income</u>		<u>Expenditure</u>	
Subscriptions	285.00	Postage	154.20
Bank interest	11.96	Stationery	67.84
		Subscriptions	25.00
		Bank fees	<u>2.00</u>
	<u>\$296.96</u>		<u>\$249.04</u>

Balance in bank (31/12/00) \$3652.43

Our bank balance

Diana Snape Vic

As we are a non-profit organization we only need to keep enough funds in the bank to cover all our ongoing expenses. Currently our income is well balanced with our expenditure. Next year we will receive royalties from the sale of the book so we should start thinking about who / what we might want to support by funding, once expenses have been covered. **Do you have any ideas?**

Suggestions made at the last meeting in Melbourne include:

1. Australian Flora Foundation

This was set up by ASGAP to fund research into aspects of the cultivation of Australian plants. This is related to our aims but not directly so, though to design with Australian plants we need to be able to predict their performance under cultivation. It has the advantage of having an excellent administrative system already in operation. We can specify the type of project we want funded within their charter.

2. Providing funding for existing smaller Botanic Gardens of Australian plants

This does relate to our aims. One problem is selecting which gardens and the spread between different Regions (States). This would need time for administration. It could be perceived that it would really only be contributing to their maintenance; however renewal is ongoing design. This is important because so often this is under-funded and therefore neglected, giving Australian plants (and design) a bad name.

3. Award/scholarship at a tertiary Garden Design School

Again this relates to our aims and raises awareness within Design Schools of designing with Australian plants, which is good. Again there is the problem of choosing which Design Schools in which Regions and then how the award/scholarship is made or judged. Concentration of GDSG members to be involved in this is low in most areas. The amount of money would probably be limited for anything ongoing.

4. Fund the design of a new public garden of Australian plants in each region

Ask APS/SGAP in each Region to provide an area for a new public garden and then pay a designer to produce a design for that project. This relates to our aims but has some similar problems to 3. Working backwards, the ongoing maintenance; the selection of the designer; and the willingness and ability of each APS / SGAP Region to find a suitable area for a project. Then once the garden is designed, the work starts!

That's as far as we got. It seems quite hard to spend money! **Please help!!**

MEMBERSHIP**New members**

A warm welcome to the following new members of the Study Group. We hope you enjoy your membership and we look forward to sharing ideas.

Elsita Boffi de Schulte

Ted and Jenny Finnie

Barbara Frawley

Cheree Hall

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Michelle Munn

Barbara Setchell

Rosalind Smallwood

Heather Smith

New address

Graham and Shirley Fisher

Thank you to the contributors to this NL. I have saved another great contribution from Cherree Densley for the next one. It's called 'Advantages of lining pathways' and Cherree ends it by asking members "What do you use to shape garden beds? Or do you prefer no edging at all?" If you already have some thoughts on this topic, it would be good to have more than one article in the next NL.

The Book we have just 'finished' is really an overview based on the work of the GDSG in the last eight years, so now it could be time for us to think about future directions and ideas for the Group. A huge number of detailed areas of garden design with Australian plants remain to be explored. It's certainly not only the lists of plants of the 'Grow What Where'¹ type for different conditions - though these are important of course. Even the 'hardy and reliable' plants and the 'my favourite' plants have to be checked carefully for each individual garden's conditions and also different sites within the one garden. It's more to do with the style of garden wanted; the garden layouts and plans; shaping of the soil surface to use, exaggerate or change contours; choice and placing of trees and large shrubs as long-living framework plants; use of hard landscape; introduction of water; and then how each of these is combined with the others and with the enormous range of possible plants. In some ways we are all 'beginners' and we've hardly started our investigations!

Please write in with your questions, ideas and suggestions. Let me know what you are particularly interested in or would like discussed in Newsletters. Don't feel that you can't contribute - everyone can! The strength of the NL and the GDSG has always been the involvement of members through the NLs, as relatively few members have the opportunity to attend meetings. This limits the scope of practical 'hands on' things we can do, though if members send in plans we can put them in the NL and other members can learn from them, or make suggestions to help. The more detail included the more useful the suggestions are likely to be.

You can just tell us how you solved the problem of that tricky corner in the back garden. . . . or whatever. Looking forward to hearing from you

Best wishes



Diana