

ASSOCIATION OF SOCIETIES FOR GROWING AUSTRALIAN PLANTS

GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

NEWSLETTER No. 35

August 2001

Study Group Leader/Editor: Diana SnapeTreasurer/Membership: Bryan Loft***Membership renewal form enclosed for those who have not yet renewed***

Dear Members,

Thank you to all who responded to the last NL - it was lovely to hear from you. Many of you say that you enjoy the NL, which is really good to know even though I usually don't put in your nice comments. For those who hesitate to write, remember that it doesn't have to be a long article - just writing a few lines is worthwhile to make contact and let us know some of your thoughts and ideas (and also encourage others).

I regret that I was rather too naive and optimistic when I told you that our book would be published by the end of this year. Publication has been delayed and we are now *hoping* that it will be next year but I'm not going to make any more predictions! I think publishing (and getting a book published) nowadays is more difficult than ever, with the imposition of GST on books and the low Australian dollar forcing up the price of books to an all time high. Apparently book sales in Australia (at least of books with colour) have gone down something like 30% since the introduction of the GST. We didn't time our book too well in that respect.

it's not long before the ASGAP Biennial Conference in Canberra, from September 29 to October 5. I'll be going to the Conference and hope to see a number of you there, so please make yourself known to me. I'll be giving a presentation on Wednesday October 3 so I do hope you can be there to hear some of my thoughts about the role of our Group in relation to 'Australian plants in a changing world'. If you can't attend the conference, I'll include the talk (or a summary of it) in a future NL **Shirley Pipltone**, a GDSG member who lives in Canberra, has suggested that those of us at the Conference might like to visit her nearby garden before or after (or even during) the Conference (please see page 5).

Congratulations to members **Rodger** and **Gwen Elliot** Vic who each received a thoroughly well deserved Order of Australia in the recent Honours list. Also to **John Armstrong** Vic who was invited by the Hunt Exhibition for Botanical Documentation in Pennsylvania USA to contribute a botanical painting.

NEXT MEETINGS

Please see details of these meetings on pages 17-21

MELBOURNE: Sunday August 5 - at Chris Owens'
SYDNEY: Sunday August 19 - please contact Jo Hambrett
NE VIC: Sunday September 23 - at Elizabeth Brett's

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CORRESPONDENCE extracts

"I have planted this garden according to all the principles I've learned over 30 years of gardening - height, spread, water and soil needs, life, colour, foliage, shade issues, pruning, thinking about eventual replanting, grouping plants with like needs together, transplanting (works when they're little!) etc, etc - and the more I learn the less I know and the more questions I have! Grevilleas were what we started with and, by accident, a couple of eremophilas. I'm planting more of the latter now and what I don't know would fill a book. I've joined the Eremophila Study Group - some cross-fertilization from both groups should be good, as I've learnt a lot from the GDSG.

My garden is in constant evolution (a bit to Geof's horror) and I would love to have other GDSG members visit if they're in the area." Gillian Morris NSW

"In reference to blending natives & exotics on page 5, NL 34, try "Landscape Plants for Western Gardens" by Bob Perry. By western gardens he means California & similar low rainfall areas. However blending of natives is an area which needs a lot of work." John Hoile NSW

"We have recently moved to Loch and have a property of 3.5 acres and we are planning to establish a

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set of gardens so we need all the guidance we can get. Is it possible to obtain past copies of your Study Group's Newsletter or to access a reference set from which we could arrange a copy? We understand there would be a fee to pay for these back copies if they are available." **Maree & Dick Howarth Vic**

I hold a complete reference set of past GDSG Newsletters, as do all Regions and a number of District Groups who may make them available to any APS members. Otherwise GDSG members can obtain copies from me at a cost of \$1.20 each, e.g. \$12 for 10 or \$24 for 20, including postage. DS

"We have had severe frosts. Geoff set up a watering system to water off frost but the hose froze! A friend who lives nearby couldn't stop his son in time from picking up his hose - he now has 5 pieces of hose! Regards." **Colleen Keena Qld**

"Sorry for being a bit slack in responding to your excellent newsletter. If I do not respond within a few days of reading the newsletter then I forget to and that is what happened with NL33. Thanks for the nice comments about my courtyard in NL34, it is a bit of a challenge due to me using cheap, silty type soils 20 years ago and because it gets no morning sun and only the hot afternoon sun, especially in summer. Oh for the ideal situation.

Comment 1

Further to Geoff Simmons comments regarding distinction between public and private garden designs in NL 33. I tend to agree with him. My observations of public landscaping, especially commercial, gives me the impression that the designers rarely use more than 10 or so different species of plants in the landscape design. As well, they overplant to allow for the inevitable losses due to low maintenance. If Australian plants are used, the selection and use does not often reflect favourably on Australian plants. Perhaps I am being a bit harsh and some of our professional members can point out where I am wrong. When reading the newsletter, I assume that members are writing about private gardens and not public and, if so, there is merit in identifying any comments on public gardens as they are different to private gardens.

Comment 2

Cherree Densley's Jottings from Mt Clay NL 33 certainly covered a wide range of topics. I agreed with her comment "rehabilitation of an area of indigenous vegetation is impossible." This is because when the soil nutriment level (especially phosphorus) is increased due to runoff or dumping of vegetation and grass clippings it is locked up for long periods especially in heavy soil and hence less able to grow many of our native plants.

Another of Cherree's comments about not growing rainforest plants in southern Mediterranean areas raises all sorts of questions. The most important is regarding how environmental friendly we should be regarding saving water when we select plants. Even though some rainforest plants would look "just right". Where does one draw the line? **Jeff Howes NSW**

In the NL, most articles are about private gardens and, when they're not, I think this is usually clear - I'll check this in future.

Regarding Cherree's comment I think it depends on the degree and type of degradation the area has suffered. Difficult - yes, always; impossible • maybe (probably).

Your point about saving water is an important one. Not all rainforest plants need a lot of water - there are 'dry rainforests'. For further thoughts about use of rainforest plants, see Nan Nicholson's letter (pi4). DS

"You asked about reference materials dealing with gardens blending Australian and exotic plants. Chapter 36 of *Native Gardens: How to create an Australian Landscape* by Bill Molyneux and Ross

Macdonald, Nelson, 1983, is called 'Australian Plants Integrated'. The chapter has 4 pages, two of which are lists of native plants to integrate with exotic trees and shrubs, e.g. Conifers tall: *Callitris columellaris*, *Callitris macleayana*, *Casuarina* spp., *Melaleuca micromera*.

We are still trying to maintain our old house, which Geoff is renovating prior to selling/renting and also looking after that garden. Then there is the garden (3/4 acre) that was to be our retirement block before we bought where we now live and moved here last July. In addition, we are trying to plant as many of the collection of pots we brought here (1 acre of garden) as possible. The drought and regular temperatures over 40 degrees at the end of last year made maintaining 3 large gardens very time-consuming, particularly as rats eat through any irrigation such as for the shade-houses in drought conditions. We designed our retirement garden to require only natural rainfall and that is all over 1/2 acre got. The vegetable garden and some plants under massive gums needed extra watering, as did some favourites around the house site.

Anyway, the new garden here is coming along well. Many of my native hibiscus are now taller than I am. There were too many, too well established exotics here to take them all out so I am having to come to terms, for the first time, with planning around full-grown poincianas, full-grown triangle palms etc. There were however many 'pest' species, such as a full-grown privet, Queen Palm, etc. and our first job was to remove them. There were however many, many native species, including a small number of species of the original dry rainforest vegetation. Whoever lived here at one stage loved callistemons and there is a great range. There are many of my favourites such as 3 plants of *Backhousia citriodora* (Lemon-scented Myrtle), *Lagunaria patersonii* (Norfolk Island Hibiscus), the maroon Melaleuca paperbark, grevilleas, a full-grown *Syzygium paniculatum* (Magenta Cherry), pittosporum, acacias, even a randia and so on. So, you see, I well know where there is a reference to "integrated plants". **Colleen Keena Qld**

Maintaining three large gardens sounds a really daunting challenge. Most struggle with one. DS

"Please find enclosed a few snaps depicting the front garden. We feel it's a big improvement - finally completing the rough plan that was sketched years ago, to say nothing of giving me somewhere else to plant (always a problem on a small block). As mentioned previously the plants are nearly all local species and the largest shrubs/trees are three *Angophora hispida* (Dwarf Apple) chosen for their beautiful form, foliage and perfume when in flower, the fact that they are rarely planted by the general public and the bonus that they are local to us! The other plants are *Acacia myrtifolia* (Myrtle Wattle), *Grevillea buxifolia*, *G. sericea* (Silky Grevillea), pultenaeas, *Actinotus helianthi* (Flannel Flower), *Epacris longiflora* (Fuchsia Heath), *Bauera rubiodes*, *Blandfordis nobilis* (Christmas Bells), *Dianella caerulea* (Paroo Lily), xanthorrhoeas grown from seed plus, of course, some grasses. Planting is not finished yet due to the unavailability of certain species.

For accent of foliage I could not resist throwing around a few *Poa poiformis* (Coast Tussock Grass) in groupings and two *Moraea (Dietes) robinsoniana* (Wedding Lily) - yes I could not help myself - isn't it hard to stay entirely true when you decide to design a garden using plants of a certain area (for me anyway). The poas help to tie this section of garden with the rest - the hard part is stopping myself from adding Yellow Buttons that are planted in surrounding areas when I know they would probably look good there!

Most plants are doing well - the garden beds are slightly mounded and plants have been placed in appropriate locations (as far as my limited knowledge goes) i.e. with actinotus located on top of the little ridges and blandfordia at the bottom, etc. Approximately 80% were purchased as tube-stock.

As for garden edging, treated pine is used extensively here in either sleeper form or half rounds and so far very successfully. None of our edging has been cemented by the way - except where it abuts the driveway. It does of course lose its fresh green look after around six months but we don't feel it's a problem because it drops back and lets the plants/paths become the focus rather than the edging. Species such as

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myoporum, brachyscome, chrysocephalum, etc. are then used to spill over and soften some sections where appropriate.

Finally there is a newspaper article attached for you to read for amusement! It was lovely to get the publicity as I'm sure it helped to bring in quite a few visitors on our Open Garden day recently. I have to admit the photos were pretty good this time!" **Cheree Hall** NSW

The photos of Cheree's new section of her garden did not photocopy well enough to reproduce in the NL but did show an exciting garden in the making. I do think it's difficult to restrict the selection of plants to locals (I haven't in the past but I'm much more conscious of the value of it now). DS

"I had hoped to have my garden open for the Conference, but I've had so many setbacks that I gave up that idea about 12 months ago. However, I would be very happy for you and any other GDSG members to come and see my garden before or after or even during the Conference. [I live 5-10 minutes drive from the Seminar and accommodation venues and, with the possibility of daylight saving starting early, it would not be difficult to fit in a visit after the Seminar sessions. Our program is also not as packed as Brisbane's was.]

Hopefully by then I will have my weeds fully under control. My garden has developed quite patchily, depending on my state of fitness at the time, so some areas are relatively well-grown and others are very newly planted. For example, I have had to take out some monsters, such as Grevillea 'White Wings' which grew to 2.5 X 3m in two years, and threatened to stab anyone who walked on the nearby little path (the wallaby track kind of path, which Ellis Stones called 'sneak tracks'). And I have had several episodes of vandalism in the front near a public path (as many pricklies as possible seems to have helped there).

I have more or less kept to my original concept of a pretty, open woodland garden. I am hoping to achieve a pretty look as a way to encourage exotic-lovers to appreciate our plants. My garden is on a suburban quarter acre (0.1 ha) block, at the end of a cul-de sac. It has an area of public land down one side, planted with *Eucalyptus globulus* (Blue Gum), about 25 years old. I have lived here for 28 years but my garden now is a new Australian native garden designed and built within a framework of older eucalypts. I have retained a few exotics for sentimental reasons, and one because it protects a Queensland rainforest tree.

I have given a lot of thought to flower colour, with colour schemes changing gradually as you move around. At the time I had this idea, I had not read any Gertrude Jekyll, but what I have done is quite similar to her colour schemes. I have given a fair amount of thought to foliage contrast and similarities, in terms of colour, foliage size and texture, and movement. Movement of foliage is fascinating. Some plants wave, some dance or shimmy, others rustle or murmur or wobble or shake, and so forth. Most of my understorey is one metre or less but there are occasional plants which are taller than this, either because I actually planned them to be taller, or because they have defied all the best-laid plans.

My garden, like life, is a work in progress.

I am currently designing, voluntarily, the grounds for the Woden Senior Citizens' Club in Canberra. I was going to attach some files showing the Masterplan and Brief but, with the graphics, I think they will be very slow to transmit, so I will snailmail them to you. You may like to use them for the Newsletter unless the whole thing takes up too much space." **Shirley Pipitone** ACT

I certainly hope we will be able to take up Shirley's offer for GDSG members to visit her nearby garden during the Conference. It would be great if we could get together there to see Shirley's garden and for a brief gathering of GDSG members.

Shirley's masterplan for the Woden Senior Citizens' Club will be included in the next NL. DS

DESIGN

Blending native and exotic plants to make a spiritually harmonious space

Jo Hambrett NSW

The following is part of the text of a talk Jo Hambrett (the leader of the Sydney Branch of the GDSG) gave in April to the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney. I'm afraid you'll have to use your imagination for the photographs that Jo describes. I have omitted some sections that are solely about exotic plants.

When I was invited to present this talk it forced an examination of the phrase 'spiritually harmonious' which I had used in an attempt to describe our gardening aims at our home, 'Yanderra'. With the help of the *Shorter Oxford* I was delighted to confirm one of its meanings as 'intellectually and emotionally agreeable'.

For my money a really successful garden is one which satisfies on both intellectual and emotional levels. The whole picture - house, landscaping and surrounds - should be underpinned by a satisfying logic. Pope put it more succinctly centuries ago when he spoke of the importance of the *genius loci* or the Spirit of the Place.

Originally 'Yanderra' was a part of the quiet and thickly wooded forests inhabited by the Dharek tribe. By 1820 construction of the Great North Road had begun and it became part of an early land grant and subsequently partly of a dairy for several generations.

In the 1980s the dairy was sold and subdivided and we became the proud custodians of a gently sloping, partly cleared, partly wooded 5 acre block. Two towering Blackbutts (*Eucalyptus pilularis*), which were no doubt saplings at the time of Cook, and the Turpentine (*Syncarpia glomulifera*) glade gave the land its sheltering solitude and serene grandeur which we've tried to work with ever since.

Inspired by Sydney architect Philip Cox's book 'The Australian homestead' we asked him to design a house for the land. He gave us a light weatherboard and glass construction with zincalume roof and iron verandah posts - a modern interpretation of an Australian homestead. With its extensive glass areas, the house embraced the landscape, the outside became another room, another picture to enhance and enjoy.

The challenge, to paraphrase Edna Walling, was to touch the ground so lightly that it was difficult to tell where Nature stopped and the garden began.

Our gardening adventure began fittingly in the bush as, although two-thirds of the block was treed, our middle and lower storeys consisted of massive weed infestation due to years of grazing. Our first task was to remove them and replace with an understorey of indigenous and other native species that 'looked right' but were also 'gardenesque' - I didn't want the notorious 'jumble of dried sticks' look.

The far boundary fence is bordered by Port Jackson, Norfolk Island and Radiata Pines - the last species in particular was a popular windbreak planting with local farmers 100 years ago - so its use provides a sense of place without it necessarily being native - a secondary spirit of the place if you like.

A west facing cottage bed is planted with hardy, old-fashioned, sunloving exotic shrubs and perennials. On the other side of the path is the edge of one of the large 'Natural' garden beds - that is, indigenous trees underplanted with mainly rainforest species. In order to blend these beds together I have edged the 'Natural' bed with Australian flowering plants whose shape, colour, foliage and texture harmonize with the hardy cottagers. These antipodean equivalents are plants such as prostantheras, croweas, olearias, correas, phebaliums, indigophera, darwinias and boronias - which I treat as annuals.

In south and east facing beds dwell the exotic shade lovers. The 'Natural' beds that face them have their edge interspersed with some exotics which sit happily with indigenous plantings of rocklilies (Rock Orchids), Birds Nest Ferns, lomandra, dianella, crinums and Gynea Lilies, libertia, plectranthus and hibiscus

to name a few!

The sloping bank on the southern side and in close proximity to the house links the all-native front garden and the all-exotic terraced side garden and it hopefully illustrates the hallmarks of a successfully blended garden. Its Australian components are all indigenous plants used repeatedly throughout the entire garden: Turpentine (*Syncarpia gbmulifera*); eriostemon; *Lomandra longifolia*; a plectranthus; *Banksia serrata*. The exotics are picked for their suitability to the site which, being under a large tree, is slightly difficult. They are also picked for their foliage texture and colour - I have used lots of grey-leaved plants as grey is a great connecting colour and reflects the lavender terrace planting and the zincalume roof.

Plants have also been chosen for their scent and herbal uses. These plants have to accept the partially shaded, low in nutrient, dryish site as, of course, do the indigenous species. In spring and early summer with everything in full bloom and leaf I smugly refer to it as 'the tapestry bank' - and in winter, well thank God for the natives!

In conclusion:-

The 7 point Plan to a successful blended garden!

1. The concept of the sense of place.
2. Design elements such as balance, proportion and scale.
3. Concepts of formality and informality - pattern, rhythm and order.
4. Choose Australian and exotic plants that:
 - best represent the style or mood you are trying to create;
 - best suit the environment;
 - best suit the amount of maintenance available.
5. Make the majority of your Australian plant selection indigenous - these plants will grow well in your area, have an inbuilt sense of place and are wonderful gap fillers and connectors.
6. Group Australian and exotic plants together according to their needs - plants with similar horticultural requirements usually look right together and it makes maintenance much easier.
7. A plant's appearance and needs will determine its position in the garden.

Edging pathways

Diana Snape Vic

I would not argue with the practical benefits of edging pathways as outlined by Cherree Densley in NL 34. Especially in a large (or very large) garden it should save a lot of work and therefore time, which of course we never have enough of. I liked the point that Cherree made about deterring blackbirds! I'd just like to comment on the aesthetics of edging pathways, especially for a small garden where the pressure of work is not so great.

If the outlining is quickly hidden as plants grow and overspill, then we don't really have to worry about its actual appearance. If the outlining material itself remains visible, a path lined by rocks, logs or whatever has a degree of formality. It's then a question of how this degree of formality fits in with the style or 'feel' of the garden as a whole.

I personally like the look of a formal path bordered by bluestone or sandstone blocks, for example, and not only in a slightly formal garden. These are attractive materials in themselves and their use for this purpose in the garden seems appropriate. Stones can be placed to give a curved path. If the path is straight, running between garden beds, the designer needs to consider the 'balance' of the planting on either side. A straight path may require a more symmetrical planting, a curved path leaves more options open. Even with a formal path, I think the style of the garden does not have to be formal. The contrast between that path and

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'wild Nature' (to quote from somewhere) is quite appealing - you're safe walking down your path!

What does bother me is the use of a number of small, irregular rocks to define the edges of a path or garden bed without really 'lining' it and enabling soil to be raised behind and so on. Used with either regular or irregular sizes and spacing, they seem to fail somewhere in the gap between formality and informality. They don't give a natural appearance and are not really beautiful in themselves. Especially if the ground level is flat and the stones just sit on top, they look unnatural and to my eye add nothing to the design of the garden in terms of usefulness or beauty. This might be my prejudice - do other members like this look?

Logs are nice and natural, with pleasing colours and textures - one on its own can look natural lining a path but it's harder with more. A long log is likely to be straight and you may want a nicely curved path. If the log is cut into shorter lengths, there is the problem of placing those together, end on. Where the ends meet initially tend to look unnatural but can be hidden later as groundcover plants grow to cover the joints. However the geometric angles between short, straight lengths may still be a bit hard to work with.

Whatever material you are using, take into account the nature of the material itself in your designing. In a small garden, if we change from one material to another, we should be aware of what we are doing. The more continuity there is, the more satisfying the 'feel' of the garden will probably be. However having some paths edged and some with no edging is no problem where this is appropriate. In some areas there may be no need at all to outline a path, for example a path leading through heavy leaf litter or thick groundcover plants where a trodden path is all that is needed.

Garden edges

Bev Hanson Vic

As a landscape designer in the natural style, I very seldom use any edging material as I feel it contrary to the natural look. One would not see edges in nature e.g. along bush tracks. Sometimes an edging material is required where a gravel surface meets a lawn area. Here a 3" x 1/2" timber edge can be used on end, buried mostly in the ground and scarcely visible, rather than a brick or concrete edge to which the eye is drawn. A sloping garden down to a pathway can be planted adequately with groundcovers or low shrubs to stop erosion. I know blackbirds are a problem but there are ways of taking care of them.

Having said that and having been recently to Cherree Densley's delightful garden with her amazing variety of Australian plants I was not conscious of conspicuous edges.

Advantages of edging pathways

Pat Webb Vic

Cherree's comments were good and I found myself saying "hear, hear" many times. Ideally I'd love to have none at all but that's not practical, I feel. However now in our tiny new garden I don't have those decisions to make!

*Please see further comments on **edging** in the following article. DS*

GARDENS

A coastal garden - 2 1/2 years on

Gillian Morris NSW

When I last wrote we had just moved to Kiama, right on the coast - clay, wind, salt and too much shade were the factors we had to work with. There were a number of useful suggestions from NL readers, some of which I adopted, some I didn't. I am bored to tears with agapanthus and everyone has them here! We now - 2 1/2 years later - have a large native garden at the back and a small, mostly Australian one at the front. This latter incorporates roses (because my parents bought them as a house warming present!) and

lavendar, herbs, *Rhododendron lochae* and a number of prickly grevilleas (unknown), leptospermums and eremophilas, beside a good hakea windbreak. There are also some other odds and ends recently planted - we were away for most of last year and what didn't die grew like there was no tomorrow - and neither the gas man or the water man could find the bottles/ meter. So, what with having to provide a path and replant as well, this front bit is looking fairly new. It gets full sun, so we'll see what happens.

The back had much the same story - a lot of pruning needed and bare spots. I have grevilleas big and small, eremophila, callistemon, lomandra, prostanthera, westringia of several kinds (*W. longifolia* does well), dwarf *Acacia fimbata* (Fringed Wattle) (the biggest is 2 metres - they're doing well but to my horror they all have white scale! so the green is on top mostly), isopogon, eriostemon, leptospermum (never again - too much webbing, despite being grown to be resistant - probably not enough sun), a NZ Christmas tree, banksias of varbus kinds, a couple of *Melaleuca armillaris* (Bracelet Honey-myrtle) (already there), a pink/mauve flowering eucalyptus that I'm fairly sure from my research is a *E. leucoxyton*, and two other white-flowered eucalypts that nobody seems sure about - too big, but lovely.

Most things have settled - what dies, doesn't get replaced. I water rarely, so they have to survive and cope with the large dog as well on their own. The *£ ficifolia* died as did the protea, boronias and, to my surprise, a prostanthera. I think I've managed to save the darwinia and the 'rainforest' hill (N-W aspect) with tree-ferns, casuarina (original), ferns, Birds Nest Ferns and palms puddles along.

I note Cherree's comments on edging. The back garden has no lawn or paths, just shells and pebbles in the middle and surrounding a centre bed. The bed edges are wide and irregular and edged with fairly large rocks. It looked a bit 'bracelety' at first but the grasses and other drooping plants have softened the edges. Under the rocks is a channel, as we are on a steepish slope, and the channel allows the water to pour in and drain away without flooding the garden or the pebbled area - very useful as we sometimes get really heavy rains. I would endorse all of Cherree's points about edging - it's a bit contrived at first but things do soften.

The front edging was more of a problem as there is a strip of grass outside all the houses along which the postie rides his motorbike, so I can't just plant to the road, which I'd otherwise do. We've used bricks, sunk level, which look unobtrusive next to pea straw mulch and more or less keep the grass out. Another bed which has had no edging is, as of yesterday, defined by pea straw mulch; it is possible to mow right up to it - may work. All our edging is a compromise between the practical (like Cherree's points) and the informal. I think it works - the curves help. You wouldn't want straight lines in the sort of overplanted, bushy garden we've got.

'Garden design' with a new meaning

John Webb Vic

'Garden design' has taken on a whole new meaning for us - our home is in a Retirement Village with established gardens throughout its 18 acres - our area of garden is measured in square feet rather than the one third of an acre we had at Balnarring.

Fortunately our unit had been vacant for six months when we moved in - the previous resident had been enthusiastic but, over time, our area had been quite neglected. So we didn't feel guilty about making fairly radical changes. A number of exotic plants were quickly removed - though we have left a few which will "make a statement" while our new plantings establish.

The front of our unit faces west - beautiful now in the autumn (the sunsets have been magnificent) but, no doubt, very hot in summer. We have a paved path also facing west, but which will get winter sun when the deciduous trees next door shed their leaves. It is screened by a six foot fence of spaced vertical

timber which gives us filtered light. It will be quite shaded in summer.

There are various pieces of 'common land' - that is, the responsibility of the village gardener. But with 230 units in the Village he is quite happy if we do a little judicious work.

Our main objective in planting our front flower bed was to give a little height - say a metre - to screen the garage and carpark which are set about a metre below the level of our unit. We don't want to obstruct any of the sky. The main plant in this area is *Grevillea* 'Moonlight' as a focus. Lower are *G. aquifolium* and *G. x gaudichaudii*. Between these we have planted a variety of brachyscomes, *Bracteantha viscosa* (Sticky Everlasting), *Chrysocephalum semipapposum* (Clustered Everlasting) and *C. apiculatum*. At the moment, a number of Pat's container plants fill the gaps - *Lechenaultia biloba*, a dwarf adenanthos and three pots of *Rhodanthe manglesii* seedlings.

The long narrow bed at the side of the unit is dominated by a camellia and an unidentified conifer (shock, horror!). Pat has planted a number of ferns and correa, *Goodenia ovata* (Hop Goodenia), *Epacris gunnii* (Coral Heath), *E. longiflora* (Fuchsia Heath) and *Brachyscome segmentosa*. The conifer will disappear in the spring to be replaced by a *Correa baeuerlenii* (Chef's Cap Correa). Our Huon Pine, still in a pot after 13 years (not the same pot) is also parked in this bed and is looking very happy in this position.

In the 'common garden' areas near us, we are gradually introducing Australian native plants - so far *Brachysema lanceolatum* (Swan River Pea), *Rhagodia nutans*, *Thryptomene calycina* (Grampians Thryptomene), *Grevillea lanigera* (prostrate) (Woolly Grevillea) and a few anigozanthos, dianella, hibbertia and scaevola. Our pergola supports a *Hardenbergia violacea* and we have designs on a spot for another hardenbergia or climbing kennedia. As you can see, overplanting is the name of the game for the Webbs!

There seems to be only one other Australian garden in the Village, though there are occasional grevilleas, correas, brachyscomes, alyogyne as well as eucalypts and allocasuarinas scattered around the perimeter and along some of the pathways. We are looking forward to seeing our little patch developing.

P.S. We are helping another new resident with her rather overgrown area and have dared to suggest some Aussies to fill the gaps!

From a recent 'Gumnuts'

Garden of the Year Finalist

Warren and Gloria Sheather (not members of GDSG) (vallaroo@blueDin.net.au) advise....

¹¹ we are one of the 6 finalists in the ABC's "Gardener of the Year" competition. We won the NSW section. The ABC has filmed the garden and interviewed us over the past two days. There will be a segment in the TV program and an article in the 'Gardening Australia'¹ magazine. The winner will be announced in August or September. Should provide some publicity for native plants. Our garden can be seen on our web site at: <http://home.blueDin.net.au/vallaroo>

Good news that a garden of Australian plants is getting good publicity - watch out for this. DS

Suggestions for a narrow courtyard garden (See NL34 p10)

Pat Webb Vic writes:

It's nice to have a chance to re-do an area of your garden - and narrow areas nearly always pose a challenge. With limited sunlight, I would concentrate mainly on ferns and correas. I love the *Correa baeuerlenii* (Chef Cap's Correa) and see you have two of those. What about three pottery containers? - there are some lovely ones around these days. There are the dwarf syzygiums - *S. australe* forms such as 'Tiny Trev' and 'Bush Christmas' and compact forms of *Acmena smithii* e.g. 'Minipilly'. *S. australe* 'Bush Christmas'

has red young growth. *Backhousia citriodora* (Lemon-scented Myrtle) makes a lovely container plant, responding well to pruning (both root and tip) but does need water in the long, dry periods - but then, all container plants do. My great favourite in a container where there is little sun is the *Lagarostrobos franklinii* (Huon Pine). I love the foliage and, again, it responds well to gentle pruning and is a slow grower. My original plant is now 13 years old and looks very happy in a shady position.

Of course the wall lends itself to a water feature with a small fountain. What about a sculpture for this area or a ceramic and metal wall mounted piece of art? Lots of fun ahead for you, Dianal

Thank you Pat for some appealing suggestions. DS

Barbara Setchell Vic has suggested using *Australina pusilla* (Shade Nettle) as groundcover in our new 'courtyard' garden. This plant has attractive foliage which complements the textures of ferns (and it does not have stinging hairs). The flowers are insignificant but this does not matter.

We had thought of using Mazus pumilio (Swamp Mazus) but from pictures of the austraiina (and then the plant Barbara gave me!) it would look really nice and more appropriate. Cuttings are in! DS

Merele Webb Vic has suggested Winged Spyridium (*S. vexilliferum*), a low shrub with white (or very pale) floral bracts for many months of the year. For a taller shrub, Mint Bush (*Prostanthera ovalifolia*) 'Variegated Form' for its variegated foliage with lighter colour.

We have Sovridium vexilliferum elsewhere in the garden and it is a lovely shrub. DS

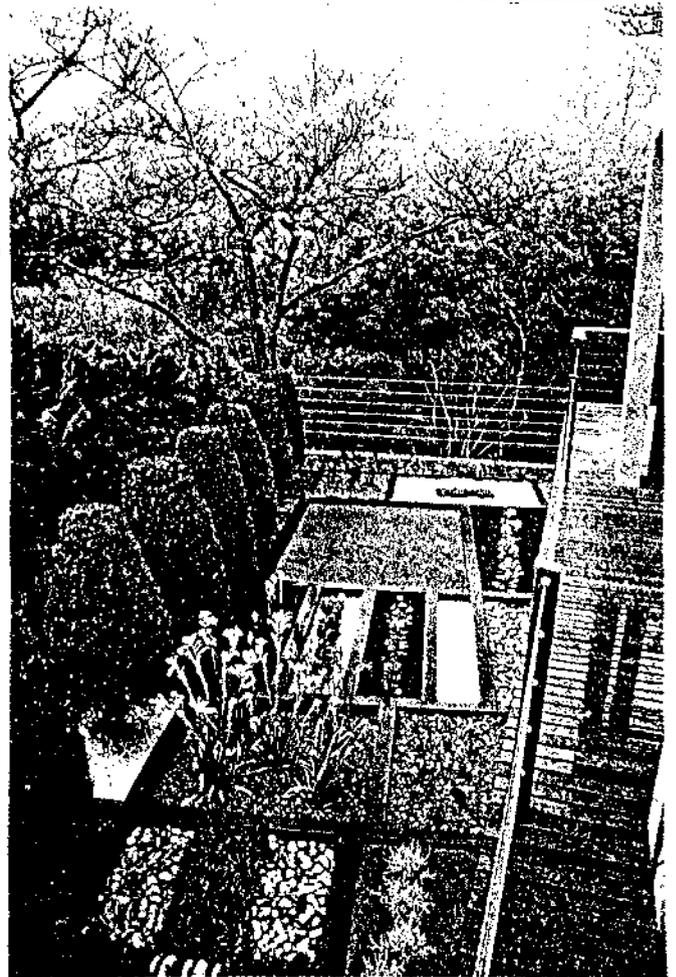
BOOKS, MAGAZINES & the INTERNET

'Landscape Australia' 23 (2) - 2001

Bento (lunchbox) garden

This photograph (in colour) was on the front cover of 'Landscape Australia' 23 (2) - 2001 (May/July). It shows the bento (lunchbox) garden for the Australian Consul General's Residence, Kobe, Japan, designed by Taylor Cullity Lethlean and completed in 1998. This design won two awards at the National Landscape Architecture Awards 2000. This photo of one 'room' of the design was taken by the designers. The formal 'lunchbox' pattern contrasting with surrounding natural trees (not the formal conifers) and the beauty of the restrained colour scheme appealed to me - salmon pink, soft greys, pinkish-grey, white and dark greens. The description didn't say what plants were used but Kangaroo Paws were visible.

The jury citation for the whole design read: "Beautiful design, sensitive to cultural context and cross-cultural referencing. It exhibits strong internal consistency of theme and elements, achieved through an overall serene aesthetic in conversation with some playful Australian comments. The flexible spatial resolution allows for both domestic intimacy and large ceremonial gatherings." DS



The May issue of 'The Garden', Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society, has several articles of interest. The first is a description of the latest personal garden to be made by the noted British designer Penelope Hobhouse. The remarkable thing about the illustrations is how much like an Australian garden it looks, rather than the usual English style garden. Yet the accompanying plan shows a very geometric, four square layout, particularly on the south (sunny) side, where there is no lawn at all. Even on the north side of the house the lawn is restricted to wide walks. Here, though, there are extensive views over the countryside where the unmistakable character of the trees is quite in keeping with the expected look.

In winter apparently the geometric structure of the southern walled garden shows through, while in the growing season plants spill over and obscure path edges narrowing them to a winding foot track. As this is meant to be a retirement garden, designed to be easy to maintain, there is far more use of shrubs than of the usual more showy herbaceous perennials - this is what gives it the Australian look (called Mediterranean here). However as Penelope Hobhouse greatly enjoys maintenance there are various clipped and controlled feature plants - yews, robinias, bays - giving a repetition to bind the whole together. This area is a gravel garden; the gravel covers beds and paths alike and has to be renewed when it disappears into the clay below. Gravel gardens have also been made by Beth Chatto and John Brookes and again there is something of an Australian (or Mediterranean) plant garden look in their creations.

Despite having written the widely acclaimed 'Colour in Your Garden' in 1985, Ms. Hobhouse is now more concerned with *shape* and (reading between the lines) *foliage type and texture*, which is here described as plant associations, growing together plants from similar environments of similar appearance, so that the whole looks as if it belongs together. Such advice is not new to APS growers, although I have to confess I have great trouble adhering strictly to it. I think I need another lifetime to do it properly. All in all I have a gut feeling that Australian plant gardeners are in the forefront of garden design trends.

What is a 'good' garden?

The 'Viewpoint' article in the same journal, written by Peter King, editor of 'The Good Garden Guide', is enough to deflate any ego puffed by such thoughts. He basically asks 'what is good?' in garden terms and describes how difficult it is to define precisely and how it has changed during the time (over 10 years) he has been associated with the book. He is quite unequivocal that good design and fashion have no intrinsic connection. Most things in today's world are mass produced, designed for everyone and therefore no-one. Our gardens are one area which can be designed specifically for us, our own space.

Peter King then lists attributes found in 'good' gardens. First structure, an idea he does not develop, which again is not easy to pin down precisely but usually easy to recognize. Then style, which is individually developed by the garden maker(s) to reflect their personality and the genius of the place. Other people may not be in tune with the personality component but, if the genius of the place has had due recognition, the resulting style can be generally appreciated. In a great condensation he recognizes two styles, the designer's and plantsman's (collector's to us) and the ultimate triumph is when both are successfully combined.

In a further simplification I would suggest that most Australian plant gardens to date have been more of the collector's style and what we are trying to do in this Study Group is to get the underlying structure bit right, strengthening the design. When we do this, more gardeners in Australia will come to accept the genius of the place and use more Australian plants.

The following site was referred to on one of the mail lists that I belong to:

<http://aardenina.about.com/librarv/weeklv/aa012498.htm> Colleen Keena Qld

Book reviews, please

Remember we always appreciate receiving book reviews. It doesn't matter if the book has been reviewed in the past - not everyone will have seen the earlier review *and* it's good to have a reminder *and* we *don't* all have good memories. (Several books are mentioned elsewhere in this NL.)

I'm currently reading '*The Looking-Glass Garden: plants and gardens of the Southern Hemisphere*' by Peter Thompson. It looks at Gondwana plants and gardens - in South Africa, South America, New Zealand and Australia - a fascinating new context for ours compared with European and Northern Hemisphere plants and gardens. I'll write a review for the next NL.

DESIGN IDEAS

Creating garden vistas

Diana Snape Vic

One aspect of design I think we could and should concentrate on more is the deliberate creation of beautiful vistas within the garden. It is often difficult to take good photos of a garden simply because this aspect has been overlooked - I think a good vista means a good photo and vice versa. If you have a camera, you can use it to try framing the vistas in your garden to see how they look. (If you don't have a camera, your imagination will do.) Depending on its size, a garden need not have many vistas but those it has can be very satisfying. We can choose a small number of viewpoints from which to plan and develop vistas - there are a limited number of long axes in a suburban garden so these will probably be the ones to develop first. These vistas will change over time as plants grow. The relatively rapid growth rates of many Australian plants have both benefits and disadvantages in achieving and then keeping the effects we want.

I've been trying to analyse what is required for a beautiful and satisfying vista. Here are a few ideas :-

- Open space at eye level is obviously essential so that you can see through the gardenscape. Pruning or even removal of plants may be necessary to rescue a vista which has disappeared over time, or to develop a new one. Open space is also needed to balance the mass of vegetation in the vista.
 - Sufficient open space at ground level (and other levels) so you can walk comfortably through/into your vista. I think you should be drawn into the vista and this can't happen if, for example, a substantial garden bed cuts across it. Main pathways are probably the most obvious starting lines but a narrow wallaby path is enough providing there are adjacent areas of low vegetation too. Sections of the path may disappear but not the main path.
 - A vista is really defined by an attractive focal point at the end, with reasonable height (appropriate to the garden's size) - a tree, a feature shrub, a group of shrubs or other plants, a sculpture, a building. It draws the eye and also encourages the viewer to enter the vista to look more closely.
 - Upright trunks to line the vista or leaning, drooping or pendent trunks or foliage to frame it, add emphasis and interest and help guide your eyes to the focal point. They can break the length of the vista and add to its complexity and fascination.
 - As applies for the garden as a whole, we should design to include a variety of form and foliage within the vista to provide some stimulation and contrast but also sufficient repetition of form &/or foliage to tie it all together and create harmony. Care must be taken using colour.
 - It is important to have no really discordant element within the vista - if something is not right, it should go.
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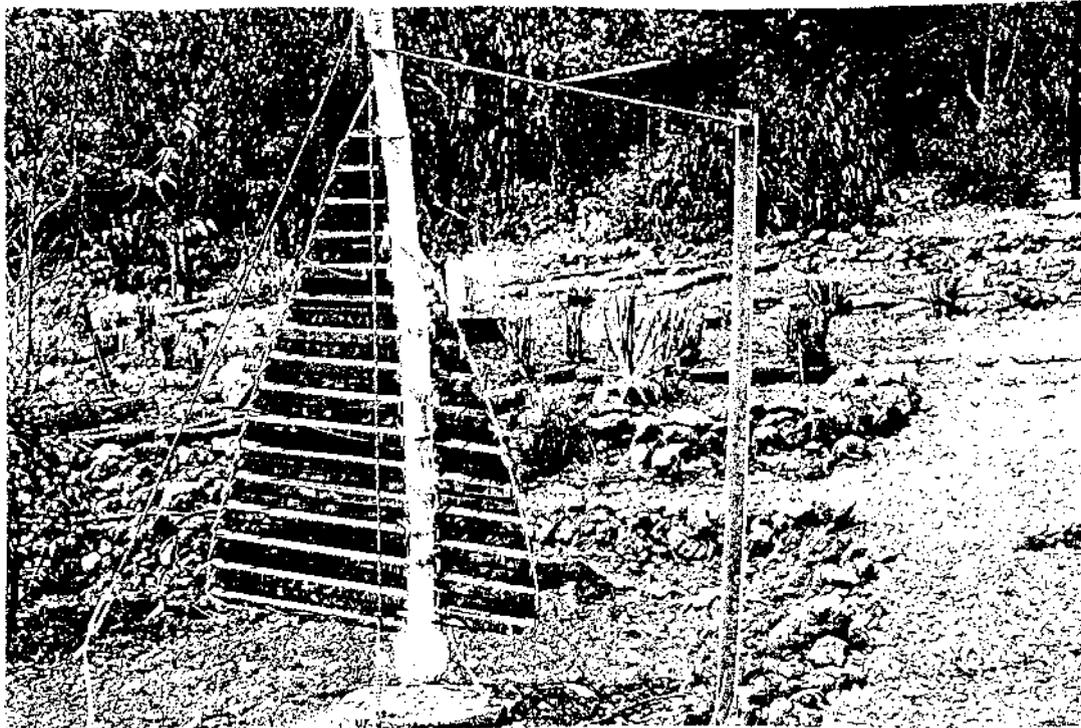
A wind sail

Geoff Simmons Qld

Garden ornaments can take many forms, usually statues based on European examples that to my mind are not a very good reflection of Australian culture. Most with Australian themes are based on birds and animals. A few years ago i had a pergola erected and a piece of the roofing material was left over - i decided to use this and a piece of bamboo to make what I call a wind sail. This structure is depicted in the enclosed photographs. The sail is pivotted so it changes direction as the wind changes. The guy ropes are needed to keep the sail erect in strong gusts and so far over several years it has stood up to the wind.

(I have never been on a vessel with sails.)

This is another innovative and unusual design from Geoff, using materials at hand. His wind sail stands proud against a screen of plants in the background. DS



PLANTS in DESIGN

Rainforest plants

Nan Nicholson NSW

Earlier this year **Geoff Simmons** Qld wrote: "Reading through Volume 5 of 'Australian Rainforest Plants' by Nan & Hugh Nicholson, I note that there is the caution in several descriptions that the plant should not be grown outside where it grows naturally, e.g. the climbing fern Lvaodium reticulatum. Perhaps members should be aware of this fact and a list would be an interesting item for the Newsletter."

I followed Geoff's suggestion and wrote 10 the Nicholsons of Terania Rainforest Publishing to ask whether they had compiled a list of rainforest plants which should not be planted outside their natural area. The following is Nan Nicholson's thoughtful and thought-provoking response. DS

Your letter posed an interesting question and the short answer is that we have not prepared a list of native plants which should not be planted outside their natural area. Over the years we have been slowly developing a harder line on which plants should be grown and, for our own place at least, we now feel that all plants should be either (a) edible or (b) local natives. This means that we have gradually been ripping out

most of those wonderful north Queensland rainforest plants that make first-rate garden plants.

Other people will probably choose not to be so extreme so we don't push the point too heavily in our books. However Hugh and I have seen too many apparently harmless 'native' plants starting to take over new environments. We are all duped to some extent in our perception of what a native plant is by the lack of political boundaries within the Australian continent.

Our advice to your group would be to use plants from sources that are as local as possible when planning any gardens. Despite the fact that so many rainforest plants are so adaptable if they are given basic water requirements we would prefer to see more gardens devoted to locally native plants which may be able to provide vital habitat for local fauna species.

For those people who want to grow 'foreigners', it is possible to make a rough judgement on which ones are likely to take off and should be destroyed. Any plant which suckers readily and/or which produces many seedlings under the parent tree should be treated with caution. Bird-dispersed fruits (usually fleshy and brightly coloured) could be dispersed more widely than is first appreciated and should be watched especially carefully. Ruthlessness is preferable to letting loose yet another invader, though I admit it is hard to pull up a beautiful plant.

I hesitate to make a prescribed list of plants since one species can behave meekly or aggressively within a few kilometres, e.g. Pink Euodia (*Melicope elleryana*) is a native of NE NSW, where it grows within about 1km of the coast. Since it has been widely planted it is now naturalising further inland where it did not occur previously. It may or may not turn out to be a problem but I am suspicious of any plant which shows up as seedlings within a few years after one specimen is planted.

I won't go through the species mentioned in our books that are a worry, especially since they may or may not be a problem in your area. I usually make mention in the books of the potential weed status of native plants grown out of context. However plants may become a problem only after a time, e.g. Fine-leaved Tuckeroo (*Lepiderema pulchella*) which is a threatened species in NE NSW, is now naturalising prolifically out of its normal range. Similarly, the red Atherton form of Native Ginger (*Alpinea caerulea*) is becoming way too common in NE NSW.

I hope this letter does not make you feel that you shouldn't be planting anything! By all means go for it but just try to be ecologically aware and appreciative of your own local species. You could also read Tim Low's book 'Feral Future' if you haven't already.

My response to Nan Nicholson's letter included the following:

Thank you for your detailed response to the letter I wrote on behalf of the ASGAP Garden Design Study Group. I can certainly see that the complexity of the situation makes it very difficult, if not quite impossible, to write a list of Australian rainforest plants which should not be planted outside their natural area. There are just so many variables to consider. The information and warnings in your books are there for any reader who is considering using a particular rainforest plant in their garden.

I (and many of our Study Group) have come to similar conclusions about plant selection to those you have outlined. We now recommend the following: when filling a niche in a garden design, look first at local plants, then (if you cannot find a suitable local one) further afield, in the region or State, then Australia-wide.

One of the problems is that it's hard to accept that seeds of the beautiful rainforest plant in your suburban garden, a long way from natural areas, can be transported there by birds. I have read Tim Low's 'Feral Future' - a devastating book that I think all Australians should read. DS

Blended gardens**Jeff Howes NSW**

I was reading '*Australian Rainforest Plants for your Garden*' by Darren Marsfield in which he discusses the use of Australian plants for some of the more commonly used plants in amenity horticulture. I am of the opinion that to increase the use of native plants in Australian gardens, they need to be promoted on the basis of how they can blend in and complement a lot of the introduced plants that are found growing in gardens already. While my garden is 99% pure native, it is in the minority in suburban Sydney and I suspect the rest of Australia.

The following edited extra from Darren's book may be worth a comment or two from members who have had some experience in growing the native plants he offers in lieu of more often used exotic ones.

"Gardenias, Hibiscus, Dietes, Crepe Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia* spp.), Murraya and Xylosma are household words in the world of amenity horticulture. But it is a little known fact that all of these plants have native counterparts. There are five species of Gardenia and about six *Randia* (a closely related Genus referred to commonly as Gardenias) which occur in our rainforests. All have the sweetly scented white flowers of the well known exotic, although the flowers are generally smaller. They are all worthy of cultivation and require much the same conditions as the exotic gardenia. In the garden situation they offer not only the perfume of the flowers but a range of foliage types from narrow to large rounded leaves.

There are about 50 species of Hibiscus which occur in Australia and only a few are regarded as rainforest plants. The Coast Cottonwood (*Hibiscus tiliceus*) is commonly used in coastal towns and as a street tree in Byron Bay. The Native Rosella (*Hibiscus heterophyllus*) grows on the edges of rainforest and has a beautiful white flower with a purple centre.

The native Murraya (*Murraya ovatifoliolata*) closely resembles the exotic version (*Murraya exotica*). It use should be encouraged. Like the gardenias it enjoys similar conditions to that in which we have become used to growing its exotic cousins."

There are many more examples in his book and it is worth reading.

'Australian Horticulture' June-July 2001

It was good to see a few articles on Australian plants in the latest edition, including **Gwen Elliot's** one on our delightful fragrant flowers. Another article describes propagating superior forms of *Eriostemon australasius* using techniques such as grafting and tissue culture; another the work of Merv Hodge ('father of the grafted grevillea'), who is now concentrating on pimeleas such as *P. physodes* (Qualup Bell). Such research is important for introducing Australian plants into the general nursery trade and providing designers with beautiful and reliable Aussie plants with which they can design.

SNIPPETS**Street trees****Gillian Morris NSW**

From my experience in both Sydney and South Coast NSW, Water Gums (*Tristanopsis laurina*) thrive and look great. They do reach the wires but not by much and don't seem to be a problem. *Eucalyptus leucoxyton* 'Rosea' puts up with a lot of wind and salt and is very pretty, beginning to flower at about 4 metres. Native Frangipani (*Hymenosporum flavum*) might not be predictable enough for a street tree, with differing rates of growth, width and density.

***Agonis flexuosa* 'After Dark'**

We have an *Agonis flexuosa* 'After Dark' in the centre bed at the back - full sun for most of the day. It is 2 metres but spindly and a bit disappointing. I prune where necessary - am I game to do more than tip-

prune here, in the hope of stimulating growth? It's a pretty colour but a bit sparse with not a lot of foliage. It came from the people who developed it - maybe it needs more water?

Please let us know your experience if you've tried this form of ~~Aeonis flexuosa~~ for example in regard to pruning. It could be most useful because of its unusual colour. DS

Glass pebbles (or 'jewels') for the garden

Diana Snape Vic

With my mind on courtyard gardens at the moment, and also being keen on recycling, I recently noticed an article on the use of recycled glass which has been crushed, graded, washed and tumbled with sand to remove any sharp edges. It's then dried and packed ready to be used in gardens in a number of different ways, e.g. as mulch in containers. Pieces come in two sizes, 3-6 mm and 6-10 mm, and in four colours - amber, green, white and the more expensive blue. For details about Enviro-Glass you can contact GCo by phoning (03) 9452 9242. (I resisted the temptation).

MEETINGS

Melbourne Branch

Recently some Melbourne meetings have been arranged when the details missed out being included in a Newsletter. Organization is then difficult for Jan Fleming and myself. To help us contact those Victorian members who might want to attend, it would be helpful to have members' names for a 'Melbourne Branch' of the Group. If you would like to know details of all Melbourne meetings, please send Jan or me your name.

We would also then appreciate knowing if you could come to a particular meeting or not. It does help the person hosting the meeting to know approximate numbers in advance. Other members would always be welcome to attend of course but would not be sure of receiving notice of every meeting.

Melbourne meetings

Report of meeting on Sunday May 6 at Shepherds Bush Botanic Garden.

Bryan Loft (who is the Manager of the Garden for the Friends of Dandenong Valley Park Inc) showed us around informal, meandering paths through the area adjacent to the new area to be designed. It was fascinating to see what plants were growing well after recent dry years. With the established gardens, under trees such as eucalypts and allocasuarinas, maintenance of an attractive understorey seems to require extra effort. A couple of wonderful old eucalypts ('apartment blocks' for wildlife) featured. Tufted plants such as dianellas and lomandras were very successful as were beautiful, healthy correas. Old lomandras might benefit from cutting back or burning for renewal. Some acacias and some pea-plants such as *V7m/naria juncea* (Golden Spray), strikingly attractive plants initially, have been found to need replacement after just a few years. This raises the question of whether they deserve the regular work that's required in their renewal.

The new area to be designed has two concrete pads which can either be removed or incorporated in the design. An information shelter is to be provided and an area for increased car parking (kept to a minimum). After the meeting Bryan did some investigating and found that the current car parking area could be reorganized so that it did not have to be extended.

Some of the major factors taken into account and discussed were:

- the wish to design for a more formal look using all indigenous plants;
- the need for open, sunny areas with not too much shade from large trees;
- the pattern of pathways to provide sufficient access without breaking up the area too much;

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- choosing those indigenous plants which will continue to look good without excess maintenance.

Suggestions included:

- screen boundaries using creepers to enclose the area;
- pave the two concrete pads, instal seats and create a very formal garden between them;
- excavate for the paths, put in drainage underneath, and use fill to raise beds;
- use fill to create a low hill or mound south of the very formal area, for a seat and a curved grove of trees;
- plant north-south avenues of allocasuarina groves on either side of the main pathway;
- concentrating on massed rather than individual plantings of the most suitable ('best looking') plants.

Bryan will let us know how it develops and we'll include a plan later on.

Report of meeting on Sunday June 3 at Jan Fleming's

Jan had prepared an excellent, clear plan of her existing front garden for us to consider (please see page 19) and had already identified a number of requirements. She said:)

"When we moved here in May 2000 the garden comprised mainly exotic and environmental weeds. Many of these plants have since been removed. Several large pittosporums remain along the SW boundary and will be progressively replaced. It is our intention to move the remaining exotics to the backyard this winter. This will leave the front yard for a garden featuring Australian plants including, but not exclusively, indigenous. We would like the GDSG to help develop a concept plan and to suggest suitable plants. Considerations include:

- sloping block/level change(s) * play area for 11 year old son * NW aspect * septic system * shelter to house from summer sun & hot N winds * water feature * quiet courtyard close to house 'screening from street."

Many aspects were discussed at length, often with conflicting opinions expressed. For example, in regard to the pittosporums:- (a) progressive removal prevents sudden and complete change of shade and subsequent explosion of weed growth; allows gradual re- screening of neighbours' property, (b) if all are removed at the same time, the upper storey of eucalypts makes the sudden removal of the pittosporums' shade less significant; it's less expensive to have the removal carried out all at once.

Different members spoke for and against using White Cedar (*Melia azedarach*) to shade the front of the house, at the edge of a courtyard area (yet to be levelled). Further from the house, we considered options for a big, old dead eucalypt quite close to a living one - remove it altogether (a pity); remove some of the major branches but leave the trunk and some bird perches (a good compromise?); leave the whole tree (a bit dangerous, with an active 11 yo boy playing in the garden).

Treatment of the sloping block, use of large rocks and placement of the water feature were all discussed and shrubs for screening front and side boundary fences (Jan has already planted a number of grevilleas) - lots of talk but few conclusions reached. Starting almost from scratch gives so many possibilities.

Next meeting: Sunday August 5 at 1 pm at Chris Owens'

Chris will show us and tell us about frog ponds, a different and fascinating topic.

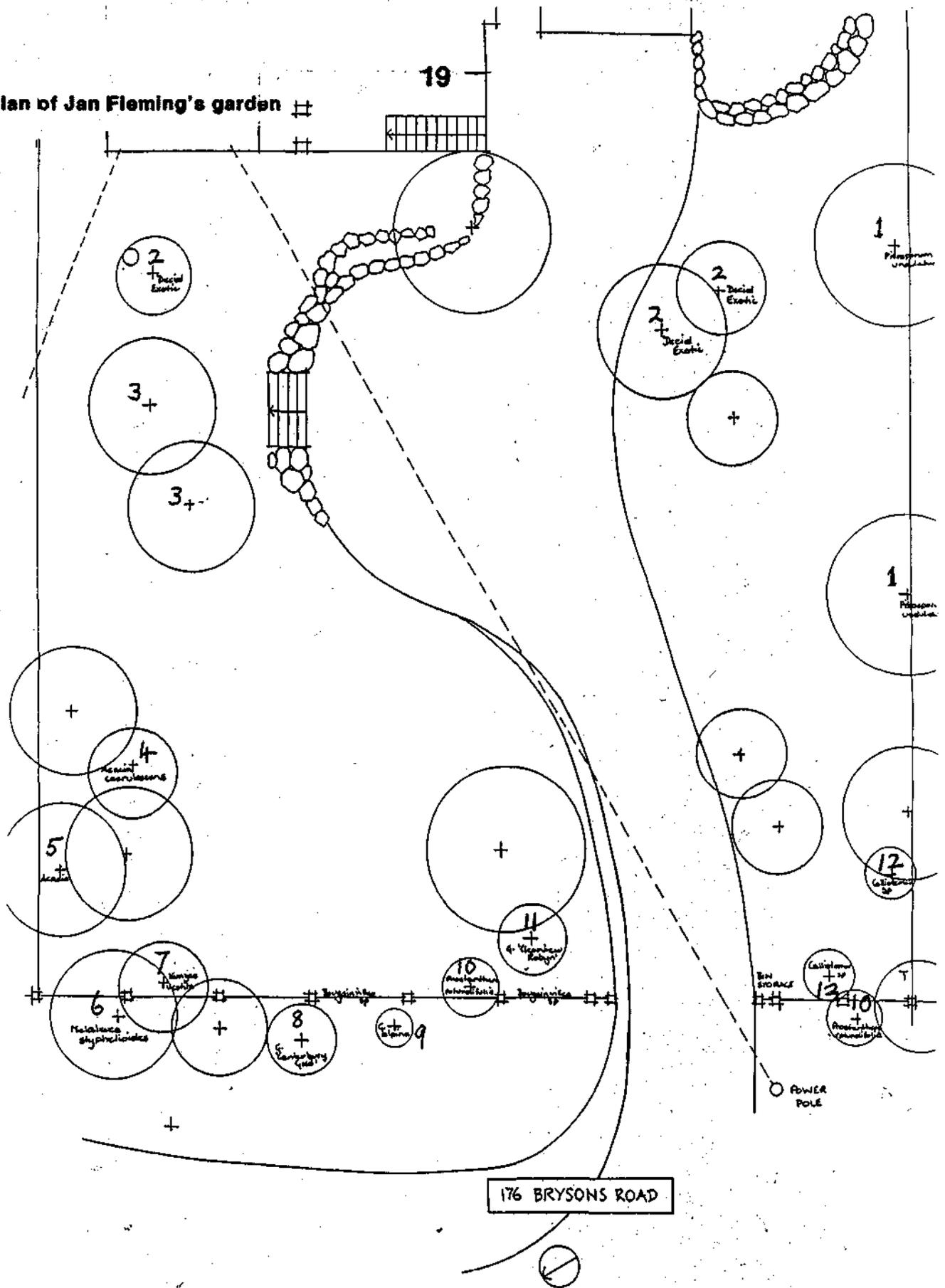
"Please note early start."

Chris's place is 3 or 4 km past Churchill National Park so, if the weather is nice, we plan to have a picnic lunch in the Park beforehand, from 12 noon.

After the visit to Chris Owens' we will move on to Chris Larkin's place nearby
for the rest of our meeting and to see Chris's recent work in her garden.

Please phone Diana Snape or Jan Fleming as soon as possibly,
to indicate whether you can come to the August meeting.

Plan of Jan Fleming's garden



- | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Pittosporum undulatum | 2. Deciduous exotic | 3. Large old eucalypts (one dead) |
| 4. Acacia caerulescens | 5. Acacia sp. | 6. Melaleuca stypheifoides |
| 7. Kunzea muelleri | 8. Grevillea 'Canterbury Gold' | 9. G. alpina |
| 10. Prostanthera rotundifolia | 11. G. 'Clearview Robyn' | 12. Callistemon sp. |

Sydney branch**Report of meeting on Sunday May 6 at Fernbrook Garden, Kurrajong Heights****Jo Hambrett NSW**

A wet morning delayed departure but at 1.00 pm the sun pushed through for a beautiful autumnal afternoon. It was great to see some new faces amongst our little group as we met outside Fernbrook Gardens, high above Sydney in the foothills of the Blue Mountains. The Musgroves (the owners) bought the land (25 acres) twenty years ago from the original farming family. Fernbrook is a good example of a blended garden and where the built environment (house and studio of botanical artist Elaine Musgrave) shows great sensitivity to the surrounding natural environment. The exotic gardens of Fernbrook consist of a series of rooms and patios where the plants are in the rudest of health and creatively placed and maintained - it was very hard to keep liking Les (horticulturist Les Musgrave) as he explained he had at least 2m of topsoil throughout the property - now I know where mine is! This was a great example for our group as plant health, placement and maintenance are very important to good garden design - Australian or exotic.

Interestingly the groundcover was a soft, dewy mixture of dichondra and hydrocotyle - it looked so right in the context of a temperate mountain garden running down to the glade, which is where the natural architectural beauty of the Australian plants came into play. The bottom of Les & Elaine's garden consists of a heavily wooded Turpentine and Lilly Pilly gully and a large flowing creek at the bottom, dotted through with huge Tree-ferns - what a picture - simple and elegant. The totemic trunks, water and dappled light provided a different experience again to the garden walk above us.

This large garden gave us much to discuss on plants and design as we slowly made our way back for tea in the courtyard. Why does something look right? Why does it look wrong? colour? foliage? placement? What can we take from this garden and implement in our own? (Les and the topsoil for one!)

All in all a very satisfying afternoon - thank you to all who came along.

Next Sydney meeting: Sunday August 19 to visit two sandstone coastal gardens with strong design elements. The young garden of GDSG member **Cheree Hall** (please refer page 4) was in the Australia's Open Garden Scheme this year. **Roz Andrews** is a horticulturist and AOGS selector. Her garden is an acre in size with views to Pittwater. She is blending an old established garden with a new garden and using both Australian and exotic plants.

Please phone Jo Hambrett to say whether you'll be able to come to this meeting and to obtain details.

NE Vic Branch**Report of meeting at Jan Hall's on Sunday June 3****Barbara Buchanan Vic**

We began outside, as we were all eager to see the rocks which had been made at a workshop led by Geoff Sitch which had been organized by the Wangaratta APS. The three rocks are at one end of Jan's grassland and look as if they have always been there. One even needs to look twice to see the bit of moss is newly applied. Jan has a few grassland daisies included and a suggestion was made that a grass-tree would provide a vertical emphasis. After reflection I am sure I prefer not - there are trees in the vicinity, any more would crowd the scale and mar the simplicity. There is some variety in the grasses and daisies and that, to me, is enough. Other effects noted include a blue-tinged Kangaroo Grass, Gloria Thomlinson's scaevola selection, the use of old paperbarks as a canopy in the rainforest area and the lush green growth of this spot. Paul Kennedy commented on the balance given by the trees - Paul's trees are growing fast but are some years behind. Since the rock-making day Jan has clipped her saltbush (rhagodia) hedge again and the smooth curve, with a separate ball behind, was much admired. I think it could well inspire a few imitations.

We discussed edgings as raised in the NL by Cherree Densley. The universal response was it all depends. If you mulch raised beds and have blackbirds - who is lucky enough not to? - then edging is a necessity. The big thing then is whether you make a feature of the edging (going formal?) or let it be smothered by planting.

The discussion topic for the next meeting arose from Chris Larkin's article in the last NL on designing for dry gardens. There is the example from nature of sparse planting to reduce competition for water and the crowded heaths where close planting provides for mutual shade and reduction of water loss. We are each to think about planting distances (not restricted to dry gardens) whys and wherefores so that we can compose a list of relevant considerations at the next meeting.

Next NE Vic meeting: Sunday September 23 at Elizabeth Brett's

~~Please phone Barbara Buchanan.~~

to indicate whether you can come.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Bryan Loft Vic

Financial Statement

May

BALANCE 1 May 2001 \$3,039.81

Plus INCOME

2001/02 subs, received \$555.0

Less EXPENDITURE

Newsletter expenses 29.15

May 6 meeting materials 23.62

~~52.77~~

BALANCE 31 May 2001 \$ 3,542.04

June

BALANCE 1 June 2001 \$3,542.04

Plus INCOME

2001/02 subs, received \$ 280.00

~~\$3822.04~~

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,

Maree & Dick Howarth

Mary Ivec

Ian Radford

Irene Stocks

Lucy Williams

New addresses

Allan & Helen Joyce

Colleen Keena

Pat & John Webb

APS Tasmania

If you have not already renewed your subscription, please help us by sending it in now.

Send your cheque, made out to the Garden Design Study Group, to Bryan Loft (address on page 1).

There is no change in the subscription (\$10; \$5 concession; \$20 overseas).

Renewals for 2001-2002

Thank you for your prompt renewal.

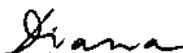
Please let us know if your subscription has been sent in but not acknowledged in the ML.

Ingrid Adler, Jacinta Allen, Ted Belcher, Shirley Bloomfield, Elsitia Boffi de Schulte, Lynne Boladeras, Judy Boldiston, Jennifer Borrell, Ian Bond, Leanne Brockway, Barbara Buchanan, Maree Burgoyne, Yvonne Coventry, Ian & Tamara Cox, Rosemary Cumming, Glenda & Bernard Datson, Sandra & Kim Davey, Jennifer Davidson, Gillian Davies, Arthur Dench, Catherine Drew, Joyce & Tom Edgerton, Rodger & Gwen Elliot, Wendy & David Evans, Ted & Jenny Finnie, Shirley & Graham Fisher, Jan Fleming, Linda Floyd, Christine & Angelo Gaiardo, Barrie Gallacher, Marilyn Gray, Caroline Gunter, Sue Gwitym, Cheree Hall, Jan Hall, Jo Hambrett, Bev Hanson, Lindy Harris & Grant Molyneux, Robyn Hartley, Anthony Heawood, Monika Herrmann, John Hoile, Annette Houseman, Jeff Howes, Judith Hunt, Margaret Ingall, Brenton Isted, Mark James, Julie Jones, Allan & Helen Joyce, Colleen & Geoff Keena, Catherine King, Josephine Kopp, Chris Larkin, Jennie Lawrence, Margaret Lee, Bryan Loft, Geoffrey & Ann Long, Kate Malfroy, Rosemary Manion, Neil Marriott, Fiona McCallum, Doug & Margaret Mclver, Margaret Moir, Gillian Morris, Helen Morrow, Deidre Morton, Penny Munro, Anne Neild, Barry Nilsson, Davis Oakley, Danie Ondinea, Christine Proud, Lynette & Peter Reilly, Pam Renouf, Tony & Joy Roberts, Nicky Rose, Gordon Rowland, Karen & Geoff Russell, Gwen Sanders, Jan Schapper, Peter Shannon, Geoff Simmons, Rosalind Smallwood, Ross Smyth-Kirk, Diana Snape, Elspeth Swan, Stephen Thomas, Phillip Tow, Rosemary Verbeeten, Jim & Pat Watson, Merele Webb, Tim Wilson, Debbie & Rudy Youssef, Alike Zouliou, APS Tasmania, SGAP Canberra, SGAP Queensland, Wildflower Society of W.A.

I am always excited by the amount that's happening in a garden of Australian plants in winter. Many are in flower or at least in bud and many have variations in foliage colour, especially in cold areas. This winter we're even planting because autumn was dry and the famous 'autumn break' didn't really come. On the other hand, the milder (so far) winter has made me less reluctant than usual to plant in cold weather as I think the plants and their roots will be able to cope - I'm hoping they'll settle in so they can get off to a good start in early spring.

Winter is still a good time to take stock of design in a garden. Ours will be open in the Open Garden Scheme in October - this really focuses the mind when you want the garden to look as attractive as it possibly can. It's too late for major, large scale planting to take effect, of course - that needed to be done years ago. If you plant a 'missing' tree now, you have to rely on the visitor's imagination to match yours in picturing how the tree will look in the future. That's no reason for not doing it. I like the look of a garden changing over time, not one with all its main plants of the same age, looking as though they were planted in the same 'blitz'. Plants of intermediate size can be replaced over a couple of years - if just one dies, it often seems that it is little missed and its space has its own value in the gardenscape. In a bare spot, 'little pretties', 'tufties' and small groundcover plants can be planted at the last moment and settle in quickly - the embroidery of the garden.

Best wishes



Diana