

GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP**Newsletter No. 56****November 2006**

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<http://asgap.org.au/design.html>

Dear Members,

I was delighted to receive two wonderful and inspiring designs to include in this NL - one of a 5m x 5m courtyard and the other of a whole new garden. Thanks to Leigh Murray and Glenda Datson for these designs, which I hope will encourage more members to draw plans - they need not be as professional as these two are! A plan is really the only way we can communicate clearly the details of a design. A simple 'bubble diagram' can be a starting point, indicating general areas and types of plants before any details are filled in. Both Glenda and Leigh give irresistible descriptions of the plants they have chosen and the reasons behind their use. Lots of other plants are mentioned in this NL too - and we'd like to know *your* ideas on plants for small areas and also groundcover plants. Barbara Buchanan asks the members of her Branch to suggest Australian plants suitable for a tapestry or parterre, so please join in on that one too.

Shirley Pipitone outlines just how the ACT Branch will go about designing a garden. An article by Margaret James on a designed suburban area, Elliston, will be of interest to many members in places other than Melbourne. It reflects the uphill battle we still face trying to first achieve and then preserve Australian landscapes in urban Australia. Jo Hambrett has previously written about a very similar problem in Sydney. Jo and Chris Larkin both describe interesting gardens visited by members and the tricky subject of criteria for assessing gardens is raised by Linda Johnston.

Already in early spring, areas of south-east Australia have experienced unseasonal hot weather and bushfires. As Al Gore shows us in the film "An Inconvenient Truth", the fact of climate change due to human activity is now an obvious truth accepted by all scientists. I certainly don't think we should abandon gardening (and designing gardens) - an important and worthwhile human activity - but we should be trying to minimise our use of water in the garden. I think low water use must be one theme underlying any future book our Study Group works on. Jo questions the assumption that mulch is always a good thing and I know I would avoid organic mulch if I lived in a fire-prone area. I'd like to find out how green, living mulches survive fire, assuming they are sufficiently succulent to stay green and living in hot, dry conditions - a challenge.

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NEXT MEETINGS

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NE VIC: Saturday October 28 at 10.30 am at John and Helen van Riet's
CANBERRA: Sunday November 19 at 10 am at Vaidehi and Brenden Sargeant's
MELBOURNE: Sunday November 26 at 12 noon at Margaret James'
SYDNEY: March 2007 down the South Coast
Visiting members from other areas welcome!

CORRESPONDENCE

Many thanks for GDSG newsletters. We are passionately interested in native vegetation/wildlife, having a 576 ha property in the Upper Hunter with 75% natural bush, and a native plant garden.

We wonder if you can suggest someone who might be able to help identify two plants - one growing as small trees in rugged bushland on our property, and the other, a plant given to us in a pot by Gloria Duggan (also a SGAP member). It has grown in our garden into an attractive round shrub covered in yellow daisy-like flowers. My husband (a veterinarian) thinks it is a senecio, but we unable to identify either of these plants through books or speaking with National Parks rangers and nurserymen. We have photos, if you can suggest anyone.

We're trying to find time to write articles on garden design, but at the moment life is hectic.

Jenny and Ted Finnie (SGAP members)

You might email a picture to Natalie Peate, the current leader of the Australian Daisy Study Group, If the small bushland tree is indigenous, there is probably an indigenous nursery or landcare group in your area who could help you with its ID. We'll look forward to your having time to write an article on garden design. DS

As always an excellent newsletter. I'm still busy - recent travels to Singapore (three times); Europe & UK for 3 weeks; as well as Mackay and Townsville, etc. Still intend to start a GDSG branch here in Queensland but do not want to do this until my time is more my own. Nothing worse than starting something then setting it aside.

The drought still continues unabated in Brisbane and surrounds - even though Gold Coast has received massive local rainfall. We are down to buckets and soon no garden watering at all - quite a challenge for those not following water-wise garden techniques. Well established trees and shrubs are dying in the Botanic Gardens (same restrictions) as well as in our own gardens. There is just no sub-soil moisture. We are not looking forward to Spring as much as you, as this season is normally our driest (if it can get any drier)- we now wait for 3 - 4 months for summer rains after Christmas - but even these have failed year after year. I really despair at the nursery industry heavily promoting succulents and cacti with rarely a mention of the native plants who have adapted so successfully to life on this the world's driest continent. Hopefully the Australian Garden will have some effect but unfortunately I fear this will be basically confined to the temperate south of the continent. I am trying to promote a similar garden for the Sub-tropics and Tropics in either or both of the BG's at Mackay and Townsville (both current projects). Wish me luck! Recent discussions with the Qld Minister for Primary Industries have been positive but still a long long way to go! **Lawrie Smith** Qld

Good luck with your attempts! I'm sad that trees and shrubs are dying in the Botanic Gardens. DS

The following may be of interest to members. John and I went to a number of the gardens two years ago and saw some very interesting design ideas. Best regards, **Christine Wadey** Vic

Rotary **Garden DesignFest 2006** will take place on the weekend of November 18 and 19, exhibiting over 30 superbly designed gardens by some of Melbourne's most acclaimed garden designers. *The gardens will be open from 10.00am till 4.30pm.* All the gardens have been planned by professional garden designers who have sought the property owner's permission to open the gardens for display, firstly to help lift the awareness of Rotary's selected charities and secondly to raise much needed money. Designers and their staff will be on hand to chat to the public.

Purchase of your **\$25 ticket** (on location at the display gardens) provides you with access to all gardens over the weekend; however, **individual** or **garden trail** tickets can be purchased for up to 5 selected gardens. You can contact the coordinator, Michael DeVincentis, from the Rotary Club of Kew,
 or the Chairman of this festival, John Patrick,

Requests for garden designers

Shirley Pipitone ACT

The local ANPS Canberra Region website is generating quite a few requests for garden designers who work with Australian native plants so ANPS Council might consider putting a suitable list on the website. ANPS Canberra has particularly high ethical standards in relation to issues such as promoting members' private interests, and they would not want to be associated with any even remotely dodgy designers.

So they would want to consider the key question: on what grounds do you include and exclude people? Some qualified designers wouldn't necessarily want to be on a list on the website because they aren't working any more, or get enough work anyway etc. But the problematic designers are those who aren't qualified or have little or no experience etc, but who would like to be on a list. The Society couldn't be held responsible for whether people are happy with the designer they chose from its list, but it would want to be seen to be showing due care. So how do you decide who is qualified? Who has enough design knowledge of Australian plants?

Some questions which occurred to me immediately are:

- Do you include everyone and their quals?
- Do you only include people with an established reputation (that cuts me out plus any other recently graduated Landscape Architects like me who are dedicated to Australian plants but have little or no experience and who are also likely to charge less)?
- Do you only include people with specified quals? That might cut out people with other quals such as agriculture or geography who could actually do great design work. Think of George Seddon who is really an English and History person (if my memory serves me right), not a botanist or a LA or an ecologist.
- Do you include Landscape Architects who say they espouse environmentally sustainable designs but in fact only do what their clients want which is usually mostly exotic plants? In my opinion none of the LAs in Canberra would be suitable for such a list although some are more likely to use native plants than others. Most of them would probably not want to be on a list anyway because domestic design is only a small part of most practices - the market is limited because the fees charged by LAs are beyond what most people are prepared to pay.
- If you specify that they must have good knowledge of Australian plants, how do you assess this?
- Do you only include members of ANPS?
- How do you stop unscrupulous people, people whose values differ from those of ANPS, from joining ANPS so they can get on the web list?

I suppose much of this is really the question: How professional does the list have to be? Do you really not worry about it, just compile a list and see who comes up?

Have you been through any of this and reached any useful conclusions?

I remember we tried to compile a list in the early days of the GDSG and found it to be difficult, with the problems you have raised. I think it's probably not really useful to try to produce an Australia-wide list. However I think it could be important for each Branch of the Study Group to attempt it for their area.

If we were to list garden designers, I think the person first has to have been a member of the GDSG and APS/ANPS for some time (say a minimum of 6 months?) so that they are known, at least to some

extent. Then I think the only way would be to list each person with

- (1) all their relevant qualifications (those they consider relevant)
- (2) a very brief summary (say one or two lines) of their experience in garden design
- (3) a very brief summary of their experience growing/designing with Australian plants

and, if possible, (4) a reference to design work done.

There still remains the problem of a person who appears well qualified (or says he/she is) but you know is not. If we encourage people to report back on their experience with a garden designer, that would help. However it's always a case of 'buyer beware'. For example, you can't list fees - the 'buyer' has to ask around. You don't know how hard-working someone is or how soon or how quickly they will do the work, though it helps to speak to some-one for whom they have worked.

It IS difficult but if we want to encourage 'design' and 'Australian plants' we must do what we can to help the general public. As long as we say these are 'suggestions' not 'recommendations' and the choice is up to the individual, we must be doing some good. DS

DESIGN

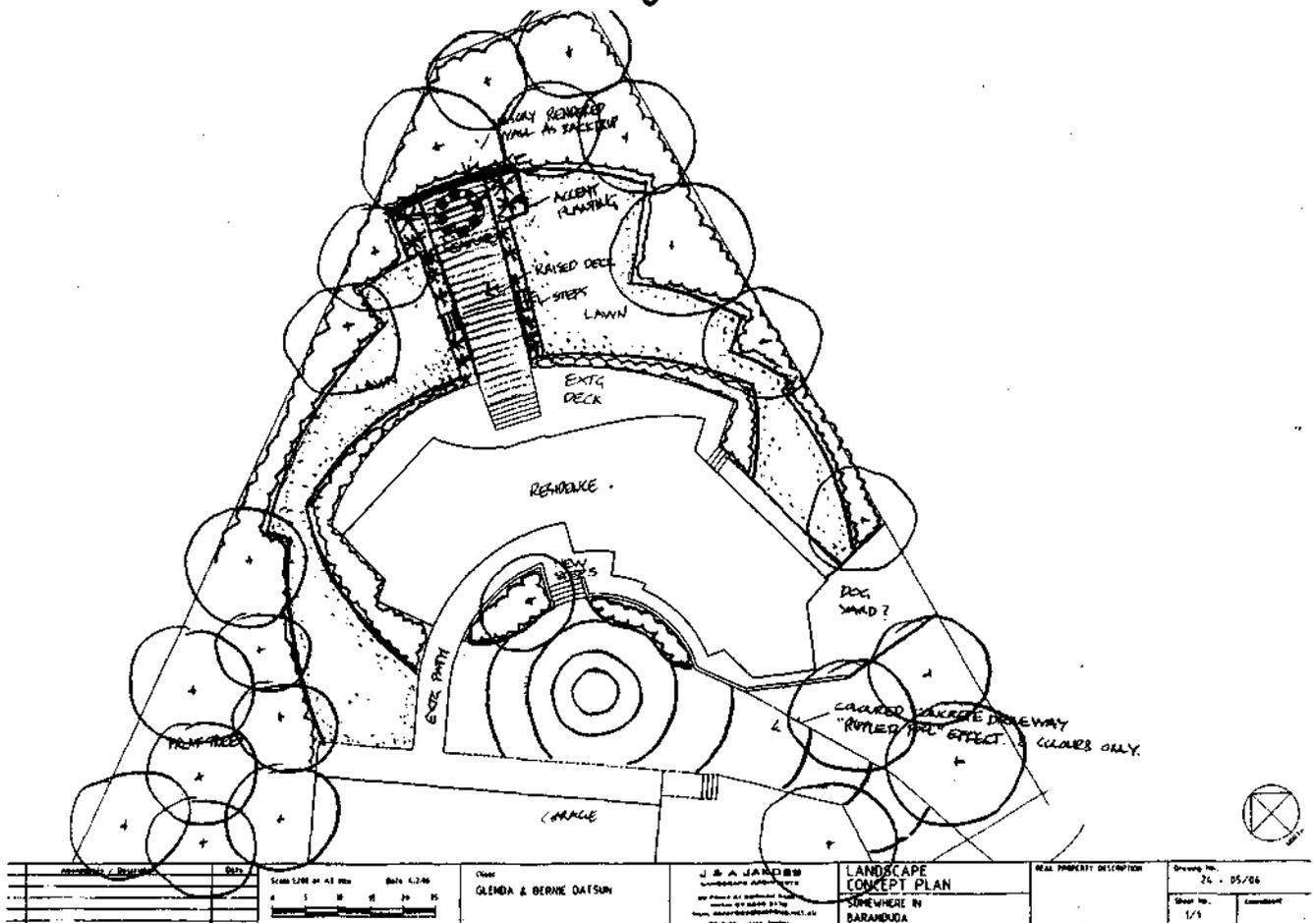
Design for a new garden

Glenda Datson Vic

Since changing houses 18 months ago, we had a landscape architect friend draw up a concept plan. We have modified it a little but I enclose it to give readers an idea of the layout, with our solar passive home facing due north and looking straight into the garden. The shapes replicate the outlines of the house - those at the rear garden bed are more or less those of the front of the house and the beds against the decks follow the shape of the deck. The concentric circles represent delineations in change of concrete colours, however that would be an expensive way to go unless we sprayed the colour on and then there would be a maintenance issue with a reseal required regularly. So we think just a straight exposed aggregate drive with colour in the concrete mix would be a better option. We would prefer gravel but there is a bit of a slope and a pot hole where the water collects and as gravel always ends up pushed out to the sides or in the carport then we think sealing the drive will be better. We may collect the water from the drive and run it around to the back garden but it is difficult to get a concreter interested in that. There is a very gentle slope across the block to the north and we have a sandy clay soil with excellent drainage.

We have almost finished repainting the house and garage which was white and stuck out like a sore toe. We have used two shades on the bagged walls (Joey and Drovers Hat) - brownish-pinkish mushroom colours, which went well enough with the blue window frames which we are stuck with. We have chosen a greyish purple for the fascias and the new fencing to the service and dog area. We are thinking of exposed aggregate (different colour stones) with a purple dye in the concrete (not too bright) if they will do it.

After having most of the deciduous trees removed we have planted five *Eucalyptus* 'Silver Princess' in the garden beds on the left and right of the drive with an *Agonis* 'Burgundy' against the carport wall (looks good against the dark mushroom). We have left the existing shrubbery for the time being as the Blue Wrens and Silvereyes nest there. Have planted *Leptospermum* 'Flamingo' (variegated if you don't know it, with a deep pink tinge to new growth) as a low clipped hedge on the curved retaining wall against the house, then some *Acacia* 'Kuranga Cascade' beside that to hang over the retaining wall facing the front door. Then next to that where the bed widens out in front of the plain bagged wall next to the front door a *Eucalyptus sepulcralis*



underplanted with *Banksia blechnifolia*, *Brachyscome* 'Mauve Delight' and *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*. The banksias are suffering iron deficiency so if they don't recuperate with iron sulphate they will have to be removed. I have found it is rather too shaded there in winter for banksias but we will see how they pull through.

Out the back I have planted an informal hedge of *Leptospermum brachyandrum* along the fence where you look directly north across the reserve with *Rhagodia spinescens* hedge to be clipped low in front of that. Have put in a *Callitris rhomboidea* for vertical scale immediately to the left. Have planted a hedge of 3 *Eucalyptus formanii* on the eastern fence, then a couple of hakeas then 3 *Callistemon* 'Candy Pink'. The eucalypts will screen the neighbours' back yard. Then, where the view to the tree block is, we have planted a clump of *Grevillea petropholoides* so that you can see over the top but they will give a tufting effect with their emergent flower stems. Have planted a couple of *E. leucoxyton* rosea dwarf varieties in front of each deck so they hang over and the birds will hang out of the trees right in front of us. If they obscure the garden view I will just trim them to suit.

Then in the bed in front of the neighbours on the east, in front of the screening, I have just planted a selection of favourites. I hadn't intended to do this but on a plant collecting trip I unfortunately did some impulse buying of new varieties of small grafted WA grevilleas, isopogens, dryandras, melaleucas, lechenaultias and dampieras. They will certainly provide good colour but if I find the effect is overwhelming then I will just pull some out and start again. Where the garden is shaded by an existing *Melia* we have planted several correas. These may need a bit of water occasionally but the rest should be waterwise once

established. I have chosen some nice copper coloured tubs for the verandah in which I will plant some *Agonis* 'After Dark', clipped to different heights and shapes, and also some purplish pots for other small plants of suitable flower colour. The purple pots should go with the purple fascias. I have planted lots of tufties leading the main pathway to the deck. We haven't done anything about the hard landscaping there yet. Maybe instead of the suggested decking we will use concrete sleepers level with the soil surface leading to the seating which will go in front of the hedge. These should require no maintenance. We will place them at stepping distance apart and interplant with a ground cover like *scaevola*. Once the garden is established I hope to plant a Wallaby Grass lawn.

I know I have used too much variety but I also needed to have a diverse garden for birds because the higher the diversity, along with the structural layers, the more bird species will utilise it. We will probably plant an indigenous garden off the end of the garaging. I have seen a very good one here which I hope to replicate in some way. Well, that gives you a run down on what is happening. We just have to wait for growth now.

A Small Wildlife Garden

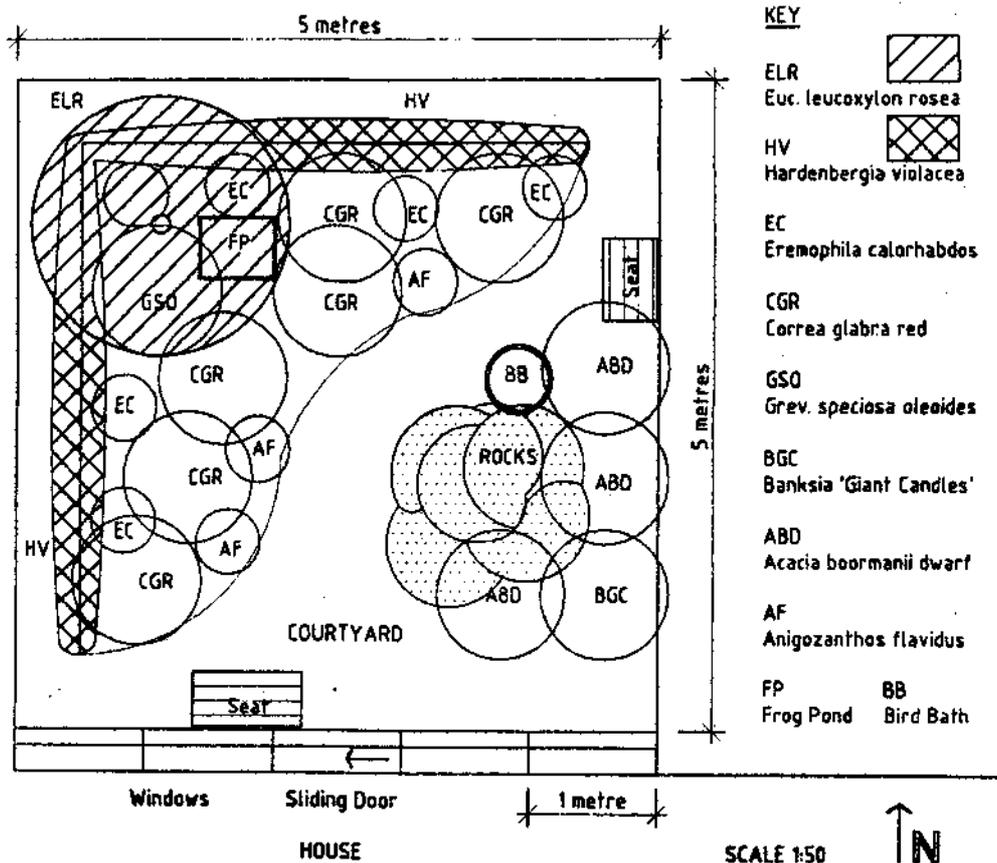
Leigh Murray NSW

Despite being a rank amateur with no formal training in design, I found the idea of designing a small 5m x 5m garden such an appealing challenge that I decided to have a go. What would I do if the only garden I had were just such a small space? As someone who often has to stay indoors for long periods, my primary aim would be to attract wildlife, to have movement and sound that could be appreciated from indoors. I've imagined a heavily planted courtyard garden surrounded by a wall or brush fence, in front of north-facing windows.

The crucial element for this garden would be a slender tree with sturdy branches to act as a landing pad for passing birds. I'd sacrifice a little northerly winter sun for the benefit of having a bird-attracting tree, keeping it well pruned to maximize sun penetration in winter. Birds can enjoy quite a skimpy tree (our spindly *Eucalyptus caesia* of less than a metre spread is a big hit with birds - they love to perch in it). My first choice would be a nectar-rich, long-flowering eucalypt, probably a dwarf form of *E. leucoxyton rosea* (eg, 'Euky Dwarf') or perhaps *E. caesia*. Other possibilities are *E. curtisii*, *E. lansdowneana*, *E. mannifera* 'Little Spotty', *Acacia rubida*, *A. spectabilis* and *Banksia marginata*. All of these should suit training as a slender tree. Climbers provide excellent habitat for small birds. So the second main element would be climbers trained on to an L-shaped structure on the north and west sides of the courtyard. The supporting structure, probably wire trellis spread between star pickets or timber posts, would be set about half a metre inside the fenceline. This is just enough space for me to squeeze along to prune and train the climbers, to keep them where I want them: out of shrubs and trees and neighbours. My colour preference would be purple or white *Hardenbergia violacea* or, more rampant, the gorgeous bright white flowers and feathery fruits of *Clematis aristata*. A lighter climber I'd consider is *C. microphylla*, which has cream flowers.

As well as climbers, I'd include several scrambling twiners, such as *Billardiera scandens* and *Eustrephus latifolius*, and that very scrambly shrub, *Epacris longiflora*. Because climbers usually leave an untidy gap at the bottom of the trellis, I'd grow a tall carpet of low shrubs (kept to about a metre high) such as *Correa glabra* red or *C. baeuerlenii* or *C. reflexa*.

In the main bed, I'd add tall skinny shrubs (several *Eremophila calorhabdos* and a *Grevillea speciosa* ssp.



oleoides), clumps of *Anigozanthos flavidus*, a *Grevillea* 'Poorinda Royal Mantle' as ground cover, and a small frog pond based on a 60 litre recycling crate placed in the ground beside logs. The frog pond would be outfitted with rocks, lots of oxygenating water plants (eg. *Vallisneria spiralis*, *Marsilea mutica* and *Myriophyllum verrucosum*), and small fish (preferably indigenous, definitely not goldfish).

Then on the south-eastern side of the courtyard, I'd put rocks and logs as habitat for lizards, a *Banksia* 'Giant Candles' pruned to a tall skinny shape, and a few small acacias (eg, *Acacia boormanii* dwarf), I'd add *Xerochrysum viscosum* daisies, small strappy plants (eg, *Lomandra* 'Tanika' or *Dianella* 'Little Jess'), and a shallow bird bath. Amongst the rocks, I might try a *Kunzea pomifera*, *Enchylaena tomentosa* or *Einadia nutans* (all have tasty berries, popular with birds and lizards). I'd mulch the whole courtyard with tiny pebbles because they allow excellent water penetration, don't become water repellent, and make a good firm footing for paths. And I'd have a bench seat or two for sunning and outdoor observation.

The plants mentioned are top-class plants for wildlife. Most are long-flowering and nectar-rich, with small tubular or spider flowers that don't favour the large honeyeaters at the expense of little birds. All of them do well for us and none are weedy in our conditions. In other areas, different species might suit better. However, the basics for a small wildlife garden remain: a tree, climbers, a large bed of shrubs, a frog pond, rocks and logs, a bird bath, and easy access for pruning so that plants can be kept within bounds and performing at their peak. Although I might modify the plantings after some years of observation, this is how I would set about creating a small garden for wildlife.

In 2007, when Canberra Branch members have had 12 months of looking at gardens and hopefully sharpening our understanding of design a little, I want the group to design an actual garden or part of a garden for one of our members, or someone (or community organisation) close to us - preferably a member because there might be quite a lot of muddling about at first and I don't want to worry an outsider about what they've let themselves in for!

Other Branches have done this in the past but I don't know how much actual designing the Study Group is doing at the moment, so it might be useful for members from other areas to know how we are planning to go about it.

First we would need a site, so I have asked members to volunteer their garden, or part of it. We need to keep the project manageable so it will preferably be only a small garden, not on a complex site. I have also let members know that I am not going to do the design drawing because, if I do, then no-one else will learn. We don't have to produce a professional-looking design, just a workable scale drawing.

What I have in mind is that we visit our project garden every second meeting, whether meetings remain monthly or not. We can continue to alternate between Thursdays and Sundays for our design project meetings.

At the first meeting we would do a thorough site analysis - everything from soil condition and prevailing winds, to the borrowed landscape and views within the garden - and analysis of the clients' needs. This would lead to a written brief for the garden design - the kind of statement you could give to a designer to work from. Often designers work out the brief for the client because it is common for clients to have difficulty knowing what they really want until they start to document it.

At the second meeting we would need to examine the possibilities. For example the garden might have a natural depression perfect for a small pool. It might have only one spot suitable for clothes drying or summer evening outdoor living. The owner might want a quiet area to sit among the casuarinas and listen to the wind murmuring in their foliage, but you would need a minimum of five casuarinas to achieve the effect so you would have to balance this desire with competing demands. The owner of a steep site might really want a large pool but the site makes a pool quite impossible or very expensive so they may settle for a spa. At this stage we would also have generated rough sketches of possibilities.

At the third meeting we could come up with an overall outline plan - broadly dividing the garden into areas for different purposes i.e. from the completely mundane such as clothes drying to the kind of area where you might sit and seek serenity, and showing all major design elements such as paths, space for outdoor entertainment, the character of each area and types of planting proposed. Then over several meetings we could generate specific detailed plans for each area of the garden.

Of course we would then want to visit the garden over and over again to see how implementation of our design was progressing and probably offer further suggestions.

The Elliston Estate

Margaret James Vic

I will be delighted to welcome the GDSG to my house at 6 Cremin Court Rosanna in November. Cremin Court is part of the Elliston Estate, named after Ellis Stones. It may be interesting to the GDSG as an example of suburban design which aimed to connect the built environment with the natural landscape.

Early in the 1960s, Heidelberg Council purchased land used as a golf course on the east side of the railway

line between Rosanna and Macleod. The Council decided to retain about half the area as open space, with the other half devoted to housing. The subdivision, prepared by architects Earle Shaw and Partners in 1968, provided for courts and crescents opening directly on to the park. Merchant Builders purchased the housing allotments in 1969 and engaged four architects with a brief to design houses which related to each other and to the environment. As the landscape was recognised as crucial, Ellis Stones was brought into the team as a consultant to design and develop the landscape. He used rocks, gravel and timber for the hard landscaping and - with Bev Hanson - planted native trees and shrubs to create a flowing unified effect in the courts, connecting visually with the parkland.

Stones, as an active environmentalist in the Yarra Valley, became concerned at the MMBW's plan to enclose the creek which flows through the park in a concrete drain to avoid flooding. He was successful in influencing Heidelberg Council's decision to reject the Board's solution and retain the creek as an open water course. The Council engaged Stones as landscape architect for the park, a decision which reinforced the connection between the housing estate and the park. Stones wanted the landscape to be 'strong and simple, with one continuous flowing feeling'. His plans for the park included retaining the views and vistas created by the fairways; low log fences to mark boundaries without obscuring views and preventing access; timber play equipment and other furniture; and rockwork in parts of the creek to contain water flows. He died in 1975 while working at Salt Creek; his rockwork at the Macleod end of the park is still intact and effective.

Stones wrote about the naming of the estate:

I like to think that this was not merely a tribute to a person, but a recognition of the importance of the role of landscaping, firstly, as the total unifying element in the park and throughout the development, and secondly as a vital aspect of a personal environment. This feeling for landscape, so evidently important to Melbourne's founding fathers, had almost seemed to have disappeared during the last eighty years. I hope that this is a sign of the beginning of a new appreciation for landscape.

He was perhaps too optimistic, as the concept of connecting housing with the landscape failed to have much marketing appeal. Merchant Builders were unable to sell sufficient houses and were obliged to withdraw, leaving most of the housing subdivision open to other developers, who sold the allotments under the name 'Golf Links Estate'. The architectural and landscaping conditions imposed by Merchant Builders on the contracts of sale ceased to exist and so the original Elliston concept can be seen only in the area bounded by Bachli, Cremin and Ferrier Courts and in parts of Von Nida Crescent and Pickworth Court. (Melway ref. 20 E 11) The name itself has fallen into disuse.

The housing and the park are subject to a heritage overlay under the Banyule Council planning scheme; interpretation and enforcement are variable. Most of the Elliston houses have changed owners several times and been subjected to building alterations and preferences for exotic plantings. One of my regrets is that the original timber letterboxes, with their compartments for milk bottles, have largely disappeared.

Remnant vegetation can still be found in the park: River Red Gums and other eucalypts; acacias such as *A. melanoxylon*, *A. mearnsii*, *A. pycnantha*; indigenous grasses (*Themeda triandra*, *Austrodanthonia* spp) and several stands of the endangered *Dianella amoena*. The golf club planted Sugar Gums, pines and other exotics, many of which are still present. More recent plantings have been mainly indigenous flora, but weeds remain an enormous problem.

The park is heavily used and much loved. Resident action in the past has protected the park against attempts to exploit the land for other uses, such as an electricity substation, a retarding basin and a mobile phone tower. More recently, controversies erupted over the introduction of a master plan which focused on the construction of paths and other artifacts but did not provide for vegetation management beyond some extra planting at the entrances. More interventions are planned in the next couple of years by Melbourne Water (rock work in the creek) and Yarra Valley Water (a new sewer). The local councillor is establishing a reference group for the park, which may provide a forum for more successful community consultation. More information can be found at www.roppa.org.au

From the inside looking out (continued)

Chris Larkin Vic

Im sorry that the last newsletter didn't contain more articles on this topic. On the other hand the North East Vic Branch has decided to discuss this at their next meeting so there is bound to be something more.

Jeff Howes' couple of paragraphs on the subject made interesting reading. Jeff said he thought his courtyards looked better viewed from inside than from out. Jeff, do you mean than when you are standing (or sitting) in them or viewing them from an outside vantage point? If you mean the former then it highlights the fact that viewing something - which is what you always get when looking from a window to the outside - is quite different from viewing something that you are actually inhabiting at the same time, so to speak. In fact 'view' might not be such an accurate word for what you are doing when you are 'in the scene' looking around. What is so wonderful about looking directly out a window is the view-line is much more restricted; no matter how clear the pane of glass the observer remains removed and objective.

Courtyards by definition - spaces enclosed by buildings - are connected to buildings more than to the gardens and for this reason, and because of the way we use them as 'outdoor rooms', we are most likely to pay a great deal of attention to how they relate to the house and how they are viewed from the house. Looking out at a courtyard, and beyond to a garden, will, I imagine, in almost every case be nicer, more interesting and restful than the view back to a house.

I think the real challenges with respect to front gardens are partly to do with accepted conventions regarding the kind of 'formal' front we display to the public and partly to do with privacy and security issues. Front gardens as a rule are not designed for the enjoyment of the home-owner primarily - and views of them from the house do not seem to rate highly. Jeff is right in saying that sometimes the view from front windows is completely obscured by large shrubs in an attempt at privacy, although even where tall fences provide maximum privacy the garden is unlikely to be organised in any significantly different way. Without adequate screening from the street I'm sure we would be embarrassed to be seen gazing out our front windows - the behaviour could be seen as odd, like attempting to sticky-beak at what is going on in the street, or with the neighbours. No such inhibitions need stop us from gazing fondly from our back windows onto the scene beyond. There are a lot of complex, and possibly competing, design criteria to be considered for the front yard. There is a common desire for some screening from the street for privacy while allowing through-views so the homeowner does not feel isolated from the world beyond their front boundary; there is also often a concern that too much privacy from the street will enable thieves to operate with less chance of detection. Just as with the back garden, there are a lot of different questions for the homeowner to ask themselves and seek to answer honestly before embarking on the project.

While on front gardens, it is also worth noting that many people feel restrained to complement and fit in with neighbouring gardens to preserve a consistent neighbourhood feel. In this regard it is not uncommon for people to grow non-Australian plants in their front gardens while devoting the back yard

Nature. The curator of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens then gave a tour of the beautiful gardens. They have a number of Australian plants but the winter can be quite devastating for them. While most of these survived the 04-05 winter with some foliage damage, the 05-06 winter had a week of -9 degrees C minimums which penetrated deep into the ground causing many deaths. *Eucalyptus gunnii* (Cider Gum) was one of the survivors, also some correas and dianellas.

Kew Gardens had an interesting collection of Australian flora about two years old planted in a section of one of their enormous conservatories. These included *Acacia baileyana* (Cootamundra Wattles) planted two feet apart and banksias, hakeas, melaleucas and grevilleas. I wondered how long before the area would need completely replanting as everything grew into each other in such a confined space. There were smaller plants as well, such as Kangaroo Paws (*Anigozanthos*), brachyscomes and scaevolias. We often saw the latter in hanging baskets, also paper daisies and *Isotoma axillaris*. On the coast we saw *Eucalyptus archeri* (Alpine Cider Gum), *E. gunnii* and *Acacia dealbata* (Silver Wattle) growing in tubs as foliage plants.

In the Joseph Banks Museum in Lancashire was a *Banksia integrifolia* grown (or descended) from seed Banks collected in Australia. There were Silky Oaks (*Grevillea robusta*) too, which we also saw planted on either side of a eucalypt (*E. gunnii* again?) in the middle of a formal flower bed in the main historic area of Bury St Edmunds.

Chris Larkin suggested that the following article might be reprinted in our newsletter. (Ifs intended for people with less knowledge of Australian plants than you have!) I think categories of plants are always important in design - their role first and then their individual attributes.

Green groundcovers for a dry continent

Diana Snape Vic

This article was first printed in 'The Age', Saturday December 17, 2005.

Recent rainfall across the country unfortunately does not change the underlying situation. Australia is the driest inhabited continent - which is why many States now have water restrictions. However we still value the appeal of green ground surfaces in the garden.

Many Australian groundcover plants have evolved to live happily with our dry climate. In our garden, all lawn has gone. In addition to hard surfaces - brick, timber, mulch - more than twenty different groundcovers grow in open areas, under trees or between shrubs. In comparison with grass they conserve water and they also prevent or at least inhibit weed growth.

One hardy and reliable groundcover plant that survives unwatered and yet manages to look green and lush is Creeping Myoporum (*M parvifolium*). Several foliage forms are available. One with fine, mid-green leaves and another with slightly thicker, darker green foliage both grow exuberantly. In our garden each plant spreads to cover an area of several square metres. A third form has an attractive reddish-purple tinge in its foliage. All forms have white or very pale pink flowers from spring to autumn. Creeping Myoporum can sucker so is useful for soil-binding, especially on banks. At Tarrawarra Art Gallery and Vineyard, between YarraGlen and Healesville, multiple plants have coloured green a sloping bank of 30 or 40 square metres. Like most of the following plants it does not completely replace a lawn which bears much foot traffic. Stems can break when walked on and although the plant recovers, initially it looks a little sad. However a path or stepping stones will fix that problem.

Mat Bush-pea (*Pultenaea pedunculata*) really hugs the ground. An individual plant spreads to a

metre or more, with small, dense green foliage. The little pea-flowers are usually yellow with red ('egg-and-bacon'). Different forms have pure yellow, orange, or even pale pink flowers and a combination of these can look stunning. In the northern Grampians, not far from Zumsteins, dozens of plants grow naturally in sun or open shade on the forest floor. In spring they look like colourful rugs with shades ranging from yellow through gold to orange-red.

Several daisies provide attractive groundcover. Cut-leaf Daisy (*Brachyscome multifida*) has dainty green foliage and purple, mauve, pink, yellow or white flowers. Most forms resent being too dry but we have found the white one to be drought hardy, spreading to a metre or so. The leaves of Common Everlasting (*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*) are a delightful soft grey-green. Among the different forms, *C. apiculatum* var. *ramosissimum* is an excellent one that we have used extensively, for example as part of our un-watered 'nature strip'. It thrives even in drought and layers to cover a large area, bearing little bright 'yellow button' flowers for much of the year. Daisies appeal to butterflies among other native insects.

Many prostrate or low shrubs, up to 200mm high, make fine groundcover plants. Correas, with small green leaves, are hardy, good in semi-shade and tolerant of dry conditions. In autumn and winter they are especially attractive with abundant flowers. *Correa decumbens* reaches a spread of 2m, layering as it goes. Its slender red bells, tipped with green, stand up rather than hang down. One favourite of mine is a form of Common Correa (*C. reflexa*) which is very prostrate and spreads to a square metre or more. Its bells are a lovely pink edged with cream. The flowers of low-growing forms of White Correa (*C. alba*) are white or pale pink stars rather than bells. In our garden, the most prostrate form (white) has grown slowly to just under a metre.

Hibbertias or Guinea-flowers are very green but not conspicuous until spring, when hundreds of gold flowers suddenly light up their patch. They grow and flower well in sun or semi-shade. *H. pedunculata* (Stalked Guinea-flower) forms a low, compact mound with tiny foliage and small flowers. It can easily cover a metre, rooting as it does. Some tough hibbertias, like Scrambling Guinea-flower (*H. empetrifolia*), spread enthusiastically but grow to 0.5m or so in height.

For big areas, prostrate or low versions of many large shrubs exist - acacias, banksias, callistemons, grevilleas. Most are not lawn-substitutes, though one of the champions of them all, *Grevillea X gaudichaudii*, forms a decorative carpet 3m in diameter. It has attractive green, lobed leaves and displays red toothbrush flowers.

One groundcover plant can be repeated to great effect, or a wonderful patchwork created. If you still want a green lawn, why not try Australian grasses which require no watering and almost no mowing? But that's another story.

Of course this article just describes a small number of groundcover plants. Coming back from the ASGAP Conference in Perth last year, Brian and I called in at the wonderful Arid Lands Botanic Gardens in Port Augusta on a Wednesday morning when their Friends were having a plant sale. So now we are trying out half a dozen prostrate or low-growing eremophilas in sunny, well-drained positions, to see how they grow in our very different climate.

Some groundcover plants are restricted in the areas they will grow, others are tolerant of a range of conditions. They can play important roles in the garden: please tell us your favourite ones and how you use them.

This was the topic for our last Melbourne Meeting and it elicited some quite different responses. Now that the exercise is complete I think it might be valuable to ask members to select 6 different plants and design a small garden bed, as I'm sure in thinking about associations this would in most cases produce a different listing. This might in turn be of even greater value to Melbourne members, at the very least.

Diana Snape and Colin Turner wanted to select plants to paint a picture - plants that would work together or had natural associations. Diana decided to go largely indigenous selecting a small eucalypt like a (yellow) *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* or a *Bursaria spinosa*, *Acacia acinacea*, local *Correa reflexa*, a grass like *Themeda* (Kangaroo Grass), *Lomandra filiformis* or ssp. *coriacea*, white *Brachyscome multifida* and *Epacris impressa*. Colin on the other hand was thinking how well some plants worked together like *Lomandra confertifolia* ssp. *rubiginosa* and *Chrysocephalum ramosissima* and how *Archyrodomyrtus beckleri* combined well with *Phebalium elatius* ssp. *beckleri*, *Viola banksii* and *Cryptandra amara* dwarf.

Margaret James had her thoughts high-jacked by the recent Fred Rogers seminar on Acacias and just couldn't go beyond mentioning them: *Acacias iteaphylla*, *leprosa* 'Scarlet Blaze', *amblygona*, *lasiocarpa*, *glaucoptera* prostrate, *paradoxa*. (Paul Thompson did postulate at the seminar that you could design a garden purely using Acacias!)

Peter and Wilma Garnham should be expert in this area since moving where they only have a very small garden - yet unseen by the group. Their selections were: *Crowea exalata* fine leaf, *Baeckea virgata* dwarf, *Correa alba* and *C. reflexa* prostrate, *Lomandra confertifolia* ssp. *rubiginosa*, *Dianella caerulea* 'Cassa Blue', *Thelionema umbellatum*.

Joan Barrett listed the following: *Philothea verrucosus*, *Cryptandra amara* small, *Tetratheca ciliata* or *thymifolia*, a boronia like *B. thymifolia*, *spathulata*, *scabra*, *rigens*, ferns like *Asplenium attenuatum*, tufted perennial herbs like arthropodiums.

Bev Fox picked some of her favourite, most reliable plants: *Hibbertia pedunculata* and *H. vestita* tall form, *Brachyscome multifida*, *Lomandra* species, *Philothea verrucosus* double, *Libertia paniculata*, *Dampiera* species.

Brian Snape seemed seduced by colour and this is his selection: *Chroizema cordatum*, *Phebalium* 'Green Screen' (possibly *lamprophyllum* x *elatius*), *Correa pulchella* salmon, *Lechenaultia formosa* orange, *Anigozanthos humilis* 'Joey Paws'

And lastly my selections where I tried to select resilient plants across a spectrum: *Hibbertia pedunculata*, *Grevillea dimorpha* fine leaf, *Banksia spinulosa* dwarf (Golden Candles), *Correa reflexa* squat bells, *Crowea exalata* form, *Orthrosanthus laxis*.

GARDENS

Criteria for describing gardens

Linda Johnston ACT

ACT teachers were on strike the day we visited the Russell garden so I took my boys along, even though I was a bit concerned about whether they would behave. But they actually enjoyed the garden, exploring the paths and so forth, and I give the garden design some credit for that. However, there is nothing in the criteria to cover use of the garden. Any garden is designed for a person or collection of people, who have particular desires, plans, activities etc. At the Russell garden, I wanted to ask: who uses this garden? how many people? what ages? what activities? etc and then of course, does the garden meet those needs? I

think there should be a criterion "fitness for purpose", for want of a better term. I can say with confidence that the Russell garden is very suitable for short visits by young children.

More on the criteria: most if not all of the people completing the form do not actually use the garden, and although they'll be using their own subjective appraisal of the various criteria on the form, one could say: so what, they don't have to live with it; everyone likes something different. It's often said that a garden reflects the personality of the owners. Surely a hugely important assessment of any garden is whether or not the users of the garden are happy with it.

There are gardens which are open to the general public, gardens which are very private, and some in between, such as schools, churches, and those belonging to people who have lots of visiting friends. So there needs to be something in the criteria about that. Note too with "fitness for purpose", that the purpose of a garden can change over time, eg as the users get older, the number of people changes, etc. So something about flexibility or room to grow/change with owners could also be useful.

A good suggestion from Linda.

For those members who do not have a copy of NL 44 - the following criteria were developed when some members were asked to 'judge' gardens in competitions (when the 'judges' don't normally question the owners of the garden.) The criteria were thought to be useful also in assessing one's own garden (for which 'fitness for purpose' is certainly known) and, in addition, those of other members.

The second set are Shirley Pipitone's adaptations. DS

CRITERIA FOR A DESCRIPTIVE ASSESSMENT OF A GARDEN'S DESIGN

Chris Larkin Vic from Newsletter No. 44 November 2003

Pathways to and from house and through the garden

Practical in purpose, width, surety of surface

Pleasing in shape (producing flow and rhythm) and choice of surface

Relationship of house to garden

Views & vistas from house

General access from house to outdoor living and garden

Pleasing spaces to look at and be in

A balance of open (e.g. paths, ponds, low ground covers) and closed spaces

Framed space - vistas and trunk gardens

Garden seats

Harmony, unity and balance

Between house and garden and the surrounding environment

Within the garden (overall structure, visual balance & proportions)

Blending of hard landscaping and soft

Successful soft landscaping

Effective screening of external and internal areas

Framework of trees - balance of shade and sun

Foliage contrasts and textures

Appeal to the senses - light, colour, fragrance, sound, touch

Predominance of Australian plants appropriate to the environment

Repetition of visual links

Delights and surprises**Environmental concerns**

Use of water (ornamental and conservation)

Inclusion of indigenous plants

No use of weed species to the area

Provision for wildlife

Overall management**Summary of criteria for assessment of garden design****Shirley Pipitone ACT**

sense of arrival

dominance of Australian plants (essential in an Australian garden)

overall structure and balance

relation of garden to house

effective screening - of both external and internal areas

framework of trees - balance of sunshine and shade

harmony and unity

contrasts and textures

paths to lead around the garden

vistas - from the house and within the garden

use of water, both ornamental and conservation

blending of hard landscape into soft - includes sympathetic use of rocks

inclusion of local (indigenous) plants

provision for wildlife

appeal to the senses - light and colour, fragrance, sounds, touch

delights and surprises

pleasing spaces - to look at and be in

suited to purpose

Boongala Gardens, Kenthurst**Jo Hambrett NSW**

We had a good roll up of members interested to see the result of 20 years of gardening by Australian plant specialists, Mai and Jenny Johnson. Mai explained that the land was originally an orchard of 11 acres; it then fell into disuse, the citrus trees dying and privet, lantana and blackberries taking their place. Mai's uncle owned the land but was unable to manage it due to increasing age and blindness. Whilst still running the retail nursery Mai and Jenny began to plant out their garden; Mai's uncle deriving much pleasure from reports of the various bird sightings in the emerging garden or smelling crushed leaves of the many aromatic species of Australian plants being used in it.

They have gradually pushed the invasive species back, attacking one area at a time, methodically planting eucalypts and using the privet as a nurse species then, when the eucs are old enough, removing the privet and using it as mulch on the new beds. The gates and fences are rabbit proof. A thick concrete strip is under the gate, allowing it to sit snugly on top and a couple of rows of rocks are placed along the bottom of the fences. This makes the top "show" garden area, rabbit free.

This area is planted out with many unusual and interesting species planted on raised beds of riprock [much less expensive than crushed sandstone], generally in full sun. Flannel flowers, waratahs, scaevolae, WA grevilleas, eremophilae, banksias, Kangaroo Paws, NSW Xmas Bush and a zillion others are going

gangbusters in the spring sunshine - orange, reds, cream, blue, pinks, greys, the scene is saturated with colour. When an overview of a large garden is possible, the amount of bronze in the foliage of many Australian plants always surprises me. Form is not forgotten with dwarf [1-2m] *Banksias ericifolia* and *spinulosa* providing tight rounded balls studded with star shaped leaves on the outside. Both are highly decorative and would make great looking hedge plants. This area is to show each individual plant or groups of plantings off, so one can see what it would look like in the garden. It is, in essence, a large collector's garden rather than a designed space.

A huge rocky ledge provides the levels and protection for the rainforest area, which is all on Hawkesbury sandstone. Mai has planted corridors on either side of the paths, linking the display garden and the rainforest area. On the western side are tough, indigenous, buffer species and on the other protected side are rainforest species. The privet has been removed or ringbarked and its trunks used to put elkhorns, staghorns or orchids on and the indigenous pittosporums have been left as nursery trees for the short term at least. Fallen termite nests provide good tucka for the orchids. Another huge termite nest at the top of a large tree provides a nest for kingfishers. Planting through this linking area consists of *Dietes robinsonia* [Wedding Lily], Pencil Cedars *Polyscias murrayi*, native guavas, Burdekin Plums and the "finch hi-rise" as Mai calls the Bunya Pines! He was quite right, on closer inspection we could see all the nests, almost one on each tier of the tree branches; the little birds obviously enjoying the protection of the spiky leaves.

In the rainforest area, Mai has reinforced and enlarged a natural watercourse to make a large, deepish area for an ephemeral creek bed. Five pardalote nests are in the sides of the creek. Here are just a few examples of the planting throughout the area: Bangalow Palms, *Grevillea baileyana* [rainforest grevilleas], the Mt Spurgeon pine from Qld, *Doryanthes excelsa and palmerii*, native hydrangeas, native ginger, Walking Stick Palms (*Linospadix monostachya*), Coachwoods (*Ceratopetalum apetalum*), climbing peppers, *Microcitrus australis*, the stinging tree and its antidote the Cunjevoi Lily [rubbed not eaten, Mai warns!] and *Callitris macleayana*, the rainforest callitris. Rock Figs (*Ficus platypoda*) and more orchids are planted straight onto the rocky ledges.

Mulch or Helpful hints from good gardeners

Jo Hambrett NSW

I have had a couple of truly enlightening talks with fellow APS and GDSG members over the last fortnight. I would like to, as they say, share them with you!

One was a marvellous article by the very knowledgeable Phil Watson in the APS Tasmania's "Eucryphia" magazine called - Mulches Aren't Just Mulches. Here Phil talks about the various types of mulch, but specifically focuses on Landscape mulches. In a nutshell he makes the point that "many landscape mulches leave a high maintenance legacy simply because they are composed of more than the surprisingly small figure of 5% fine particles. Quality mulches are screened to a uniform particle size which sieves out the fine particles".

He goes on to explain that the Unscreened Landscape Mulch initially soaks up all the rain and irrigation rather than allowing it to flow freely down onto the soil and the root zone. Due to its sponge like effect a substantial volume of precious water is lost to the soil, especially during light showers. ULM and especially uncomposted tree mulches are notorious for their tendency to become hydrophobic. The smaller particles fill up the air spaces between the larger particles resulting in an impervious layer over the soil. Coupled with this they form an ideal environment for the rapid growth of fungi which tend to bind the soil particles into a very compact hydrophobic mass.

I remember reading an article by Ivan Halliday in the S.A. APS magazine a few years ago in which he

came out strongly against the use of mulch at all, for much the same reason, it compromises the take up of water after light showers. I thought at the time this was a bit drastic but now, especially with less rain, I'm not so sure.

At our GDSG meeting today I had a very edifying chat with members Julia and Phil Rose covering a few subjects, one of which concerned mulch [if you think I am obsessed with mulch you are spot on - guess who put down a heap of fine mulch 18 months ago and is LESS than impressed with the result! But I won't go on...suffice to say there has been much muttering about waste of time and energy - two resources that are in precious short supply!] The Roses are convinced that inorganic mulch is the way to go. They have found by trial and error that coarse, pure sand is far and away the most successful mulch; indeed so beneficial is it that remulching is not necessary, one application is enough to give the plants such a good start that their resultant quick growth makes further applications unnecessary.

The point is that sand allows the water to get straight down to the root zone and prevents the upward capillary action of the soil, thus saving precious water. Phil feels that pebbles may have a similar effect. Organic mulch can be spread over the rest of the bed, if desired, well away from the root zone. Phil made the point that organic mulch like wood chips are fine if you put them down following a very heavy downpour, but how practical is that usually?

Another excellent tip I had recently came from an APS North Shore member who works with the council in bush regeneration. He said they have been able to improve their loss rate by 40% or so when tube planting by putting water crystals at the bottom of the hole and watering the plant in with a weak 'SeasoP' mixture. No more care is given after the initial planting as a matter of council policy and this method they have found has cut down on their losses dramatically.

Another problem with organic mulch is fire risk - on the other hand, with coarse sand in suburbia how do you stop all the weeds? DS

Two Melbourne gardens

Chris Larkin Vic

The garden of Bev Fox's sister Jan is now about seven years old. Roger Stone was responsible for designing the hard structure within the parameters set by the owners, which included a large central lawn area at the back of the house. Roger supervised the placement of rocks, mainly to retain the embankment at the front of the house and made wide border garden beds at the rear with large curved edges meeting the lawn. Over the 7-year period some plants have come and gone, most particularly a row of *Grevillea* 'Robyn Gordon's' along a back side fence which were frequently diseased and unsightly. Some plants are performing well providing quite a lot of structure in the garden but there was plenty of room for small plants and ground-covers to be used in the foreground.

Jan and John were bemoaning the recent death of a large tree, still standing, just over their back fence. It will make quite a difference to the feel of their garden as it provided a lovely natural backdrop right in the middle of the view-line from the house over the lawn area to the garden bed at the bottom of the garden. It is another reminder that we would all be advised not to rely on gaining privacy or a particular effect from what lies beyond our own boundaries, and therefore beyond our control. If we do make use of the borrowed landscape then when circumstances change we just have to get on and respond accordingly. (With subdivisions beside and in front of me I am currently giving a great deal of thought to how best to respond to the changes occurring beyond my boundaries.)

We went from Jan's garden to Bev's which is a real contrast in so many ways.

This is the second time members of the Melbourne Branch have visited this garden; the last time was about two years ago, just after it had been planted out. Those who had visited before were amazed at the

growth and were able to enjoy the colours of spring. Bev's garden was also designed by Roger Stone but with quite different instructions from the owner. Unlike her sister, Bev did not want an area of lawn in her back garden - instead she has a wide curved pathway looping around a large centre bed. Interest is created in a number of different ways. Roger has made the transition from a concreted area, beyond the steps leading down from the veranda, by carefully placing large paving stones within an area of granitic sand which abuts it. The gravel area adjoining the concrete expands the open space and softly curves around to a generous pathway that will take you on the journey around the centre bed.

Bev is a mad keen plants-woman who is back on track propagating since she purchased a glasshouse in the last 12 months. Bev's knowledge of plants and her enthusiasm for gardening has enabled her to produce a truly lovely, interesting garden with lots of different plants but also lots of repetition, of either the same plant or a relative, to bring overall cohesion and a peaceful feeling. Bev's front and back gardens are quite different with respect to moisture; the front is extremely dry due to one big old eucalypt in particular, while the back garden is increasingly wet as you move away from the house. That's the kind of spectrum that allows Bev to use a wide range of plants that will tolerate such different environments.

Trying a mini-grassland

Diana Snape Vic

We recently decided to try a mini-grassland in a small section of the front garden where we wanted soft, low foliage. It is an open situation though partially shaded. All plants are indigenous to Melbourne and have been planted from forestry tubes. The local grass we have used, *Austrodanthonia racemosa* (Wallaby Grass), has grown well for us in another more difficult area and does not grow too big (foliage to 20cm, stems to 60cm). In addition there are smaller numbers of Chocolate Lily (*Arthropodium strictum*), Pale Vanilla-lily (*A. milleflorum*), Wiry Buttons (*Leptorhynchos tenuifolius*), Tall Bluebell (*Wahlenbergia stricta*) and Blue Devil (*Eryngium ovinum*), with small, low plants Bent Goodenia (*G. geniculata*), *Lomandra nana* and *Pelargonium rodneyanum*. Some lilies had already been growing in this area for some time. Now it will be interesting to see how these plants get along together and whether weeds will prove a problem.

BOOKS

Have YOU read an interesting garden design book lately? Please tell us about it. It doesn't matter if the book has been reviewed in an earlier NL -your reaction and comments will be different from some-one else's. This also applies to articles in journals or papers.

New Dryandra book available

We have been asked to help publicise the new book, *The Dryandras*, written by Dryandra Study Group Newsletter Editor TonyCavanagh and Study Group Leader Margaret Pieroni. It is the culmination of many years of work by Group members on this fascinating genus of WA plants. APS Victoria and the WA Wildflower Society are the publishers and Bloomings Books will distribute it commercially. Warwick Forge, who published and ensured the high quality of *The Australian Garden*, acted as publishing consultant.

Members of the Proteaceae family fascinate Australian plant growers. *The Dryandras* is in large hardback format with full information on all 135 taxa and over 320 colour photographs. Line drawings and maps are by Margaret Pieroni, a most talented botanical artist. There is an illustrated glossary of botanical terms and tables to assist in choosing dryandras for different garden situations.

Copies are available to ASGAP members for \$64.00 plus postage (approx. \$8 to \$10), from APS (Vic) Book Sales (03) 9872 3583 and WSWA Book Sales (08) 9367 8414.

SNIPPETS**How low can you go?****Chris Larkin** Vic

The short answer is, I don't know. In my quest to remove jonquils spread by moving earth from our newly created drive onto a new garden bed, it didn't seem to matter how far down I dug, I didn't find the bulb. Five inches or twelve centimetres down the vigorous, leathery, green, strappy tops would give way to white, watery-weak stalks that sometimes broke away easily, leaving me digging down without any guidance to try to retrieve the bulb. But alas in some cases after digging further I just seemed to lose the scent and had to give up. I guess they will appear again next year and I'll have another go. This is my first experience of these imports as weeds in the soil, so I'm no judge of how easy it will be to eradicate them. Arum lily is a weed that I have battled now for many years and it is also a bulb, although it spreads most effectively by seed. I am forever pulling out small plants that appear throughout the garden and I find they are not actually difficult to remove if the plant is a young seedling. Dealing with parent plants is another matter entirely. To date I have had no success whatsoever because it seems impossible to remove all the bulbs and tuberous roots. There is probably a lethal spray that could be applied but I don't want to go down this garden path. What success have you had with this weed? Will constant removal of any green seen above ground finally weaken them unto death? Suggestions please.

"Just as an assorted assemblage of mere words though they may be the best words in our language, will express no thought, or as the purest colours on an artists palette - so long as they remain on the palette - do not form a picture, so our garden plants, placed without due consideration or definite intention, cannot show what they can best do for us." Gertrude Jekyll (quote found by Jo Hambrett)

FOR YOUR INFORMATION**MEETINGS****ACT Branch meetings****Shirley Pipitone** ACT**October to January**

In October I am taking a break. I'm not actually going anywhere or taking a real break, but I've volunteered to judge the ACT Housing Garden Competition which will be about 3 weeks unpaid work. It is amazing what wonderful gardens some of Canberra's public housing tenants have created.

On ~~Thursday 19 November~~ we are visiting a garden which is familiar to many of us - the garden of Vaidehi and Brenden Sargeant previously Morrie and Fiona Duggan's garden. From 10 am to about 12.30pm. To think about before the day: how best to maintain the original character of the garden, design issues in dealing with an established garden e.g. shading, overgrowth, replacement of plants etc.

¹ On ~~Sunday 21 January 2007~~ we visit Pamela Finger's garden again partly to look at design for outdoor living, partly to plan 2007 activities, and partly for a social get-together. from 11am to 2pm. BYO lunch to share.

2. Possible field trip for 2007 - Canberra and NSW Branches

One of the Canberra Branch members has a rural garden in the Blayney district of NSW which triggered the idea of organising a joint field trip with the NSW Branch to the Bathurst/ Blayney district possibly

over the Canberra Day long weekend in March 2007, to look at Australian plant gardens in the area - hopefully there are some interesting Australian plant gardens there - and to look at the challenge our member is facing in putting a garden on a 20 hectare country site.

At this stage it's just an idea and Jo Hambrett is interested. If anyone else is interested in coming, or knows gardens in the area, please let Shirley know

3. Canberra Branch plans to design a garden

Please see article page 9. _____

Melbourne Branch meetings

Chris Larkin Vic

Report of last meeting. Sunday September 10th

A small group met at the home of Bev Fox's sister Jan, then visited Jan and Bev's gardens (report page 19). After touring Bev's garden we went inside for afternoon tea and discussed our different selections of six plants for a very small garden (please see separate article page 15).

Next Melbourne Meeting - Xmas lunchtime break-up Nov 26th

Meet at the home of Margaret James with BYO lunch at 12 noon

Please phone

Chris to let me know you will be attending so that Margaret can get some idea of the numbers involved. Margaret has kindly given us some background to her own garden and the once visionary ideas of Ellis Stones for the Elliston estate established in 1969 (see page 9).

Task for the next meeting/newsletter

At our last meeting members put forward six plants that they would include in a very small garden. This time the task is a little different and more concerned with designing a small garden area with a limited number of plant species. This garden area is to be around 25 square metres; its shape may be round, rectangular, square etc; it may include features such as a pathway, pond, rocks, walls, seats -the choices are yours. In plant-designing the garden you can use 12 different plant species and you must use some level of repetition. This garden bed may be one inspired, or copied, from your own garden or some other existing garden or it may be one of pure fancy. Ideally we would need to know something about this area in terms of sun/shade, soil and moisture, which could be information contained on the same page as your sketch or scaled drawing (multiple copies for discussion purposes would also be useful).

Future Melbourne meetings proposed

I would really like to get some feed-back about the proposed dates, which may need to change due to quarterly meetings, etc, and what kind of activities and garden visits you would like next year. Would any members like the group to visit their garden and make some design suggestions? Please ring Chris to put your ideas forward.

March 11th, 2007 - Look at front garden

on the way to George Pentland

Garden in Frankston for picnic lunch. Diana Snape, Colin Turner and I have been involved in designing two beds in this garden, to assist Leon Costermans who is the chief 'Friend' of the Garden. One of these is a large Proteaceae bed, the other a display bed.

Possible other dates for 2007 - June 10th, Sept 9th, Nov 25th

Possible venues - Gardens at Glaxo, garden at Studfield Community Centre and Larkin garden, Xmas break-up at Cranbourne.

Sydney Branch meetings

Jo Hambrett NSW

RSVP: Jo Hambrett

Sydney meeting 8th October 06

For description of the Boongala Gardens Kenthurst please see page 17.

Next meeting will be in March down the South Coast, to have a look at the landscape design solutions for a Dementia Day Care Unit garden by members Brian and Suellen Harris and Shane Doherty, as well as other Australian plant gardens in the area. As with most of our "country" weekends, it will be over two days with members having a choice of one or both days. A fun Saturday night dinner is always assured. Details will be in the Feb. 07 NL. If you think you may be interested let me know and I can email you as soon as I have the details from Suellen and Brian.

North East Vic Branch meetings

Barbara Buchanan Vic

For information ring Barbara Buchanan

The final meeting for 2006 will be held on **Saturday 28th October**

the home of John and Helen van Riet. Meet at 10.30 for coffee before business at 11am.

I regret that Glen Wilson is unable to have us this particular weekend but we hope to visit him next year. Glen is giving a talk to Wang Group on Thurs. 26th. Oct on Callistemons and visitors are welcome.

Agenda for Sat 28th.

- Report on Street Tree project progress.
- Ideas for Australian plants suitable for a parterre or tapestry, i.e. low growing, clippable plants with distinctive foliage color that can form a tapestry effect when seen from above. The idea came from a suggestion for the sloping ground below the Miles' house.
- Any left over ideas for gardens we have seen this year which you have missed presenting for one reason or another.
- Any items from the NL you wish to raise.
- Any activities you would like to include for next year, and next year's starting date.
- Any Other Business which will probably include surviving the drought.

I realize this is short notice and a busy time of year but if the chat does not bring you, the progress on John and Helen's garden should. I hope to see you there.

"For Fountains, they are a great Beauty, and Refreshment; But Pooles mane all, and make the Garden unwholesome, and full of Flies, and Frogs." Francis Bacon, "Of Gardens", an essay, 1602

New members

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

Dorothy Cassidy

Margaret Clarke

David Cohen-Belinfante

Shirley Lewis

Aileen Westbrook

Renewals: Sue Booker, Roger & Gwen Elliot, Marilyn Gray, Jan Hall (2 years), Pam Yarra (2 years).

If you haven't yet renewed for 06/07, please send your membership form and cheque, made out to the Garden Design Study Group, to Bryan Loft:

one or two members at the same address \$10; email-subscription members \$6;

full-time students or pensioners \$5; overseas members \$20.

If you have renewed but your name hasn't appeared in the NL, please let us know.

Also we really appreciate it if members can let us know when they do not wish to renew.

A diversion In August, Brian and I visited Scotia Sanctuary in far western NSW. It was wonderful to see the rare and endangered mammals which have been re-introduced into their natural environment, protected by a high, feral-proof fence - we saw bridled nail-tailed wallabies, bettongs, malas, stick-nest rats, one numbat and lots of bilbies. We learnt of the ways these animals interact with their natural environment, eg bilbies dig hundreds of little hollows into which leaves, twigs and seeds blow and water runs; the soil is turned over and aerated, so seeds probably germinate more readily in these hollows. Before white settlement and the arrival of foxes and cats, millions of small marsupials would have made our country a very different place. We cannot change the natural environment back to what it was but our gardens can at least aid the survival of insects, lizards, birds and small mammals, as well as plants. The beautiful scenery at Scotia shows the harmonious balance of repetition (eg in the mallee woodland) with variety (different mallee species, with each individual tree different; some in flower, others in bud; areas of spinifex, bluebush, etc.) which for me is one of the essential features of good garden design.

Back to this NL, where I have broken my old rule of always including common names of plants (where there is one). There just seemed to be so many plant names - an exciting range of plant suggestions for many different circumstances. What do members think about common names? Are they helpful, especially for members who are fairly new to Australian plants, or not?

Also please tell us about your experiences with your own garden's design over this summer, which threatens to be the hottest and driest on record in many areas of Australia. Have you changed things about your garden as a result of these conditions? How severe are the water restrictions where you live? Which plants have succumbed, which have just survived, which have come through with flying colours? To work towards a future publication, we need to start collecting this sort of information. Also I hope you are thinking about a plan for a small garden area - or just a description if a plan is too daunting - of size around 25 square metres, as in Chris Larkin's description on page 22 .

Best wishes for a happy and peaceful Christmas and holiday season - and no bushfires. Diana