

GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP
Newsletter No. 57
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Dear Members,

First of all, best wishes for a safe, peaceful, healthy and happy 2007. I know that the home of at least one member, Barbara Buchanan, leader of the NE Vic Branch, was threatened by fire in recent weeks. Fortunately Barbara's house was saved and so was her garden, though the external fences were burnt. I hope no other members have been (or will be) affected by fires over the summer period.

I also hope you enjoyed a pleasant time over Christmas and managed to stop worrying about rain (or lack of it) for a while at least. Melbourne is on Stage 3 water restrictions at last (it should have happened a lot earlier). Restricted watering is allowed on two prescribed days a week: dripper systems only (no above ground sprays) between midnight and 4 am; hand watering with hoses fitted with trigger nozzles between 6 & 8am and 8 & 10 pm; no new pools of any size. So not too bad, especially compared with some areas in Victoria on Stage 4 restrictions - no watering of gardens. There's a 3 to 6 month delay on water tanks here and a wait for dripper hoses. Yet as recently as 12 years ago we were not allowed to have a water tank in Melbourne. There's been recent comment concerning the targetting of gardens and gardeners in these restrictions, being easy to monitor, while large scale use - and waste - in some sections of agriculture and industry remain unquestioned. Australia exports huge quantities of 'virtual' water (water used in their production) in, for example, rice, cotton, beef and dairy products such as (think about it) powdered milk.

Gardens, and garden design, will adapt to changing circumstances - the general principles stay the same. I wonder what will change most- I'm sure attitudes of many people to water collection, storage and use are changing already. There's much thought too about different ground surfaces - hard materials, whether impervious or porous; all sorts of mulch and their effectiveness; living groundcovers. Over time, the suite of plants we use may alter as some prove hardier in the new conditions than others. In the dryer areas of southern Australia, plants such as eremophilas may well increase in popularity. In Victoria we'll study the new 'Grow What Where' with renewed interest. If the drought breaks for a while, is it possible that attitudes will suddenly revert to what they used to be? Or have they now really changed for ever?

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Please see details of meetings and contacts on pages 22 to 24

MELBOURNE: Sunday March 11 11.30 am

**CANBERRA: Thursday March 15 9.30 am at the Innovations Centre, University Drive,
 University of Canberra**

SYDNEY: March 17-18 Vincentia region [South Coast] - please contact Jo Hambrett

NE VIC: to be arranged - see page 24

Visiting members from other areas are welcome at meetings!

CORRESPONDENCE

Use of royalty money

Sue and Brian Harris NSW

To refresh, I've been working on the local daycare dementia garden for the last 11 months (time does fly). When I asked for help Shane Doherty came to my rescue and she has designed some plans for the remaining area. The director of the centre has approved one of them and is ready to go. And here lies another problem. The Dept of Aged Care has washed their hands of any funding to finish this garden. They considered that the project was taking too long and have pulled any funding out.

The Nowra group has been paying for plants so far but our funds are limited. Nowra Rotary has come to the party to put in the paths and sitout areas. The design is a circular one with paths that intersect and a raised vegetable garden so that people can dig. Jo was very pleased when I showed her Shane's plans. Rotary are doing the paths as part of their continuing community project for the area. The director is busily holding raffles and the residents (clients) have raised a whole \$200 and have agreed that this should be for the purchase of plants. The nursery is willing to donate some plants but we are still stuck with this horrible soil that will, without rain for 4 weeks, be nice and rock hard. Mulch is a mere distant luxury. Shane's plan calls for screening plants, hedging (lavendulas or prostantheras for the smell), native grasses for the underplanting (looking at the new release shorter grasses, as against the taller poas and lomandras) as well as small pockets of groundcovers.

There has been much talk in the past issues of the newsletter regarding how the group could spend some money and I am asking that the members consider community projects such as this one and others that may come up, where members have been willing to spend many voluntary hours working on a project that will benefit the community. We have raised awareness of the local APS group with a morning tea that was given to us and a newspaper article appeared in the local paper.

So, I'm asking that the GDSG consider a grant for the remaining project that will be forthcoming. At this stage I'm not asking for an amount -just a consideration. Of course, we'll be working hard in the next months (hot as they will be) just getting the soil up to scratch before planting. This is a true community project with many people, not only from APS Nowra and GDSG, involved but organisations that are willing to help in their own way.

I'm seeing Marj, the director, tomorrow to see if we can get together an 1MB (banking institution) grant. Unfortunately I don't think they're granting any money until February. The other one I've approached today is Westpac. I'm waiting a reply to see if they are willing to come to the party and then I can do the formal application. In the meantime, I've contacted Abulk (they grow the grasses) and again, am waiting on a call to see if they can help. Unfortunately it's not just plants, it's the soil that is in desperate need of organic matter (it's full on clay just like we've already worked), irrigation and mulching. I've already got prostantheras propagated and potted on, I also have beautiful gardenia 'Prof Pucci' that are just waiting for a lovely hole to call home (but not in that clay!). By my propagating the plants I only ask a small price to cover the costs and just enjoy seeing the results. That's gratifying! In the meantime, Marj just keeps rolling with the raffle. I thought about opening my garden for an 'open garden' but we're still netting fruit trees and there's no rain. I can't see an open garden until autumn. It's always sad when government departments try cutting costs at the detriment of the very people they're trying to help.

Good to hear how your work is progressing, Sue and Brian, though (as always!) with some frustration and difficulty. It is certainly a very worthwhile project - as are the voluntary community projects of various types that many of our members are engaged in.

I've consulted the committee (leaders of the four Branches and our treasurer/membership officer) about your request. As I'm sure you realize, the funds raised from royalties from the sale of our book have been donated to the Garden Design Study Group by the members involved, specifically to further the aims of the Study Group. Ideally it should be spent to achieve as widespread (non-localised) a result as possible. For example the idea of funding a design prize (using Australian plants) at a horticultural college, though worthwhile, was rejected because it would only be available to people attending that particular college. It was suggested that the prize could be rotated annually between various colleges, but then it would develop no standing in any of them. The most obvious use for the money would be towards the (large) cost involved in producing another high quality book (or possibly a series of booklets) of general interest and usefulness.

Unfortunately there are many excellent community projects such as yours which merit support and funding but which are very local and not focussed on the aims of the Study Group. Best of luck with all your money-raising efforts. It is sad that more government money seems to go in administration rather than at the coal face/grass roots. At least there's always the satisfaction of knowing that what you're doing is so worthwhile. Congratulations on that.

Shirley Pipitone suggested other possible avenues of support - perhaps the local APS could do some fundraising, or local businesses may be prepared to donate materials if a plaque was placed in the garden acknowledging their contribution. Maybe the Department could be persuaded to continue the funding given the delay is probably mainly caused by the work being done voluntarily - and if they were reminded how much it would cost if the whole job was done commercially. I think that should be a significant factor. Diana Snape

1. The 'Criteria for a Descriptive Assessment of a Garden Design' by Chris Larkin, was spot on and one I will be using as a template in future.

2. I agree 100% with Jo Hambett's article re mulches. For a mulch I use the readily available coarse eucalypt 'leaf litter' that is the result of tree loppers mulching gums they have cut down. To me, it is visually attractive and 'finishes off' the garden plantings. This mulch initially allows moisture penetration but soon matts down to a near impervious layer. Many times I have loosened the mulch after one of Sydney's increasing rare downpours and the soil underneath is nearly always bone dry. The best mulch may be fine (about 10mm or so) crushed rock or gravel but this is costly and heavy to spread and not that suited to suburbia and children. Not sure what the answer is to this one. Perhaps just continue to use 'leaf litter' and loosen it every few months as it mulches down.

3. Another thoughtful article by Chris Larkin on 'From the inside looking out'. I was trying to make the point that viewing gardens from inside the house should always be considered when designing a garden. Depending on the house design, climate and how the owners use the house, you often can find that the garden is viewed more from the inside looking out than from looking at the garden from outside the house. Then again, in warmer tropical garden, with good seating and overhead shade, the outside view may be the most seen. Regards, **Jeff Howes** NSW

Many thanks for the newsletter. I particularly enjoyed Leigh Murray's 'A Small Wildlife Garden'. I am always looking for more wildlife-attracting ideas. And green groundcovers - constant remulching is a pain!
Joy Stacey Qld

In these days bean counters want more value for money than ever. Councils are discovering that native trees used as street trees generally require more maintenance and are not as long lived as most

exotics. The real problem may be poor selection, careless planting technique or inappropriate maintenance. This needs examination by someone with a very long term commitment or a good succession plan.

John Hoile NSW

I'm a bit surprised that native trees fall behind exotics in terms of maintenance and length of life. As you say, the real problem may lie elsewhere - lack of knowledge and experience may be big factors. DS

After an interesting conversation with Jo Hambrett in reference to mulch {cf page 18, NL 56, Nov 2006} I believe we need an update from a soil scientist on the question of mulch. What is a good mulch? What is a bad one? What mulches suit which soils/weather conditions? What can be done to improve a mulch that's become hydrophobic? Why are fine particles a problem? What is the best overall compromise mulch and when must one find a specific kind of mulch or avoid mulching altogether?

I'll confess to being a greater supporter of mulching. However does it really keep the moisture in the soil, suppress weeds and add humus to the "A" horizon? **Geoffrey Long NSW**

I'll write to Kevin Handreck and see if he has time to write an article for us. Perhaps another member might know a soil scientist who might be able to help? DS

My husband Andrew and I live on 53 acres on a hill about 3km inland from Port Elliot on the south coast of the Fleurieu Peninsula . We are reforesting what was a denuded piece of farmland with little but wild olives, boxthorn, briar rose growing on it when we bought it in 1997.

Since then we have planted approximately 10,000 trees, shrubs (mostly self-grown 'Trees for Life' seedlings) and garden plants (some bought, some propagated by us).

We had the garden laid out by a professional designer and had chosen most of the Australian plants ourselves. All was growing beautifully until this year (no winter or spring rain). We will have to replant much of it next rainy season and I'm interested in plants likely to survive with no additional water, as more seasons like this are likely. Our soil is heavy but good. We want the garden to merge naturally with the bush that we have planted and so are interested in natural bush design elements, including use of logs, rocks, etc.

We look forward to the newsletters. **Judith Baghurst S.A.**

You have done an enormous amount of work in reforesting your land - congratulations. I hope you find that many of your currently distressed plants do survive. I think we are all wondering what the future holds in terms of severely reduced rainfall, as the sudden manifestation of the effects of climate change have caught most of us surprised and unprepared. There's no doubt we have a lot to learn. However I do think local plants have a better chance than most - I certainly hope so. Otherwise it may be plants from similar but slightly dryer areas of Australia. Good luck with some rain soon! DS

Thank you for your comments. My next task is to document what plants have died and in what soil/moisture conditions, and more positively what plants have survived. I have been surprised so far by some plants in each category. There are subtleties at play here that I know little about: why, for example, what I thought were hardy prostrate grevilleas and correas tend to have died first. It seems they had lateral/horizontal roots (in our soil, anyway). I wonder if this is an overall characteristic of prostrate plants?

There is much to be discovered, and much to be learned (by me, I mean.) Perhaps we will need a Drought Study Group in the near future? I agree about trying to find plants from similar but slightly drier areas. We might also plant a few trees in the actual garden area. I had resisted because I did not want them to impinge on the views, and nor do we want to increase fire hazards near the house. However, a little dappled shade would help, and as eucalypts mature, many are almost transparent in terms of seeing views beyond, aren't they? Kind regards **Judith**

DESIGN

Concept design for a tapestry garden

Jan Hall Vic

This sketch (page 7) is one result of the topic we chose to discuss at the October meeting of the North East Vic Group. The site we have in mind is overlooked (viewed) from a new strawbale house set into a steep slope of the Warby Ranges. The setting offers an opportunity to use the pattern of contrasting foliage, and flower colour would be a seasonal bonus.

A country garden of Australian plants would not be the place for a strictly geometric design. Instead, the idea is to arrange for a pattern of irregular shapes partly outlined with densely planted tufting species or climate-friendly low hedges. An alternative for low maintenance might be to use curving strips of crazy paving set into mulch or gravel. Gravel paths sloped to guide rainfall into the garden would surround the entire area. For interest at ground level a low mound is placed inside the space and surrounded by the tapestry/mosaic patches.

Several ideas for the mounded centre:-

1. Use the granite boulders to be found on site as an outcrop surrounded by rounded shrubs replicating the rocks.
2. For a little height, a weathered log or several Gynea Lilies (*Doryanthes excelsa*) rising above a mass planting of a single shrub species e.g. *Acacia* 'Green Mist'.
3. A 'sea' of waving grass - perhaps 2 species or 2 forms of e.g. *Poa labillardierior* *Themeda triandra*.

Some plants to fill the tapestry (drought & frost tolerant species): selection depends on the scale of the area and may mean multiple planting of one plant to equal the spread of the others.

Acacia cliftoniana

A. genistifolia (Spreading Wattle) prostrate

A. lasiocarpa

A. maxwellii 'Prostrate Form '

A. pravissima (Ovens Wattle) prostrate - e.g. 'Bushwalk Baby'

Chrysocephalum apiculatum (Common Everlasting) - particularly the low matting form

Enchylaena tomentosa (Ruby Salt-bush)

Eremophila glabra (Common Emu-bush) - mat form, green or grey foliage

E. glabra 'Kalbarri Carpet'¹

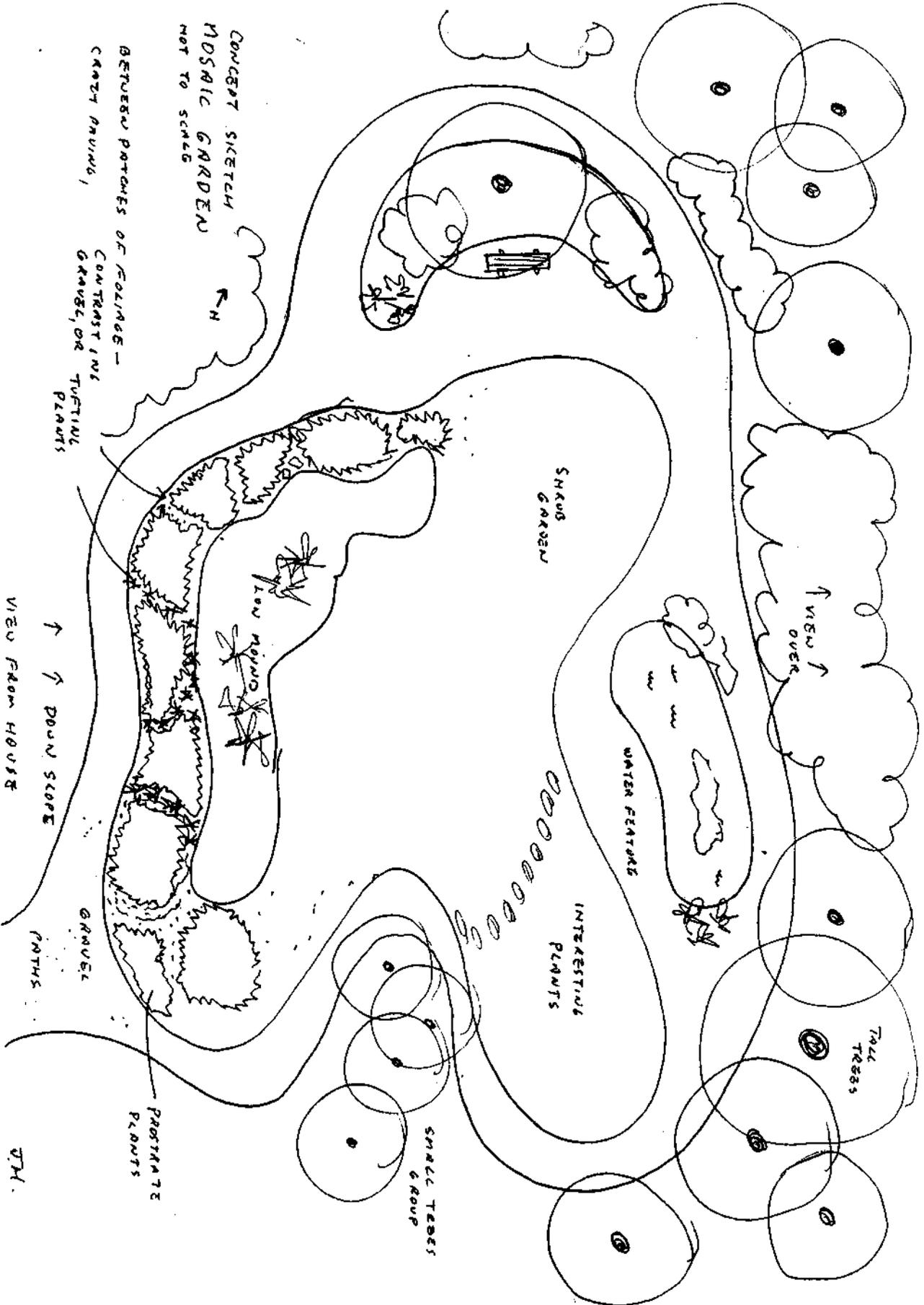
E. subteretifolia - dense, mid-green foliage

Myoporum parvifolium (Creeping Myoporum) - dark green, semi-erect form

Rhagodia spinescens (Hedge Saltbush) prostrate

I hope this sketch is good enough for the NL. Perhaps it will encourage other rank amateurs to dash off an idea. It's all about 'seeing' a picture in the mind's eye and transferring that to paper. On this site, members do see it differently but we hope our input was of some use to the owners, who do propagate but do not want a lot of fancy maintenance. They can grow multiples of the plants they like and use indigenous grasses, shrubs and trees already growing on their block for low care fillers.

I'm sure the owners appreciated all the ideas from the NE Vic Branch, Jan, including your inspiring plan. DS



We recently moved into a new home unit with a small courtyard totally devoid of plants. Our aim was to develop a garden as rapidly as possible, with particular emphasis on screening the bare fences and brick walls which surrounded the courtyard on three sides.

A collection of mature tropical rhododendrons in tubs transferred from our previous home gave a good initial cover on the north and west sides. Sasanqua camellias are being espaliered on the west fence, with clematis weaving through the trellis above. This provides cover without encroaching too much on the limited garden space, and allows the winter sun to penetrate. A selection of hardy natives will cover the brick wall on the east, with lower growing species in the foreground. Prostrate species spill over the edges of the hard paved area to give a meadow-like effect, while other smaller plants in pots and tubs are dotted around the paving.

Native species will gradually replace the tropical rhododendrons. Since the courtyard is quite small, the challenge is to maintain an attractive outlook and a pleasant relaxing area while keeping the scale of the plantings in check. (For plan, see page 9.)

Planning or designing a garden - is there any difference?

Diana Snape Vic

(This article was first printed in the APS Vic Newsletter, *Growing Australian*, Dec 2006)

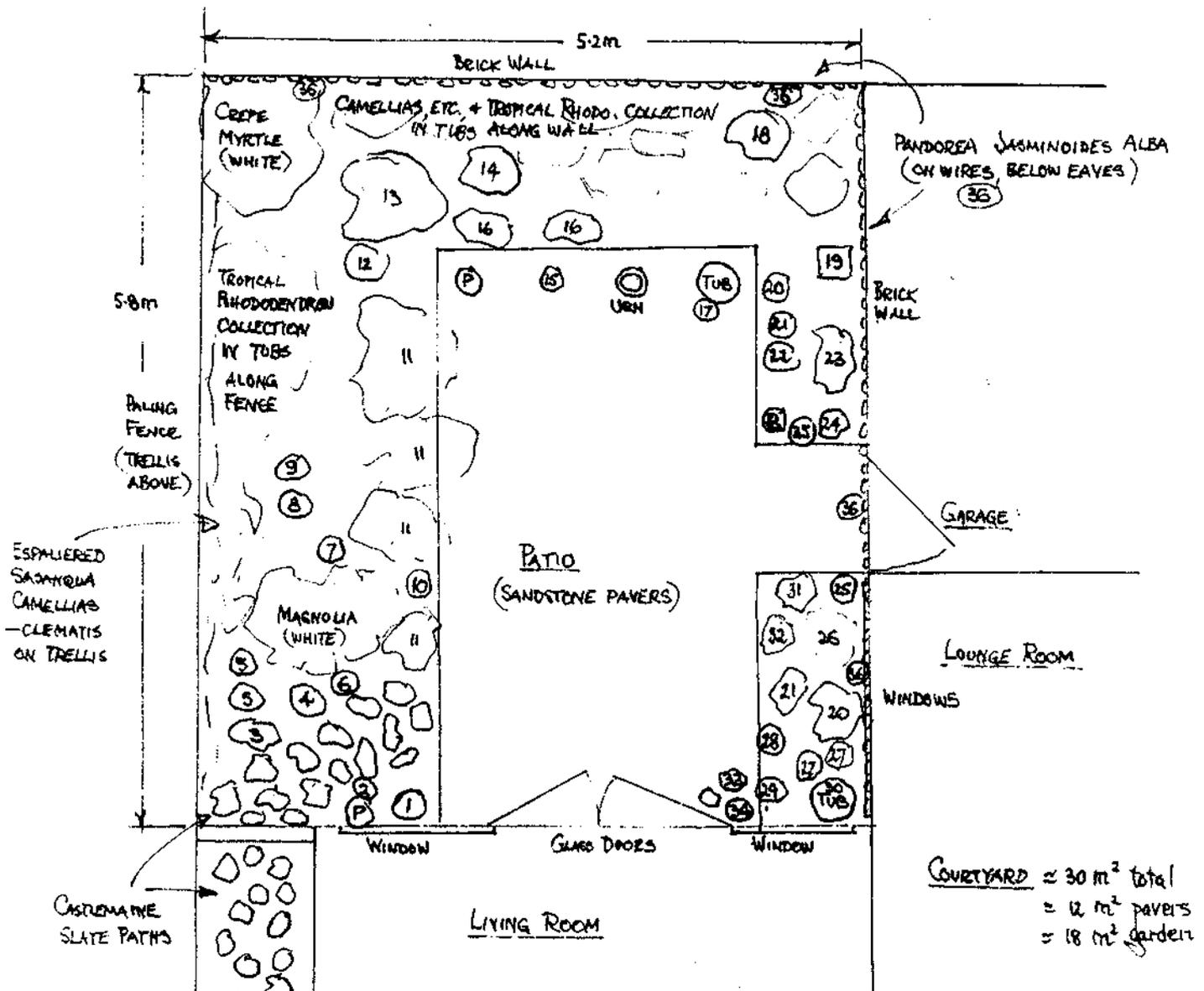
Planning and designing are words with very similar meanings and we can define them or interpret them as we choose. So this is just my interpretation

I think all we gardeners do a lot of planning for our gardens, involving many practical aspects. We plan the garden to serve the needs we have in mind for it, now or in the future. We plan entrances, paths, outside eating areas, utility areas, possibly a pool (little, big - or both). We put in plants to screen fences or other structures we want to hide. If we plant a tree, we usually place it carefully thinking of future height and shade. We plan the size and shape of garden beds. We Australian plant growers know to build up beds to improve drainage. We often improve soil too by digging in organic material, plus some gypsum if it's a clay soil.

We try to group together plants with similar water requirements, especially when water is increasingly scarce. We know where north, south, east and west are from our block (lots of people don't!) and consider whether a plant likes sun or shade. Some grow best sheltered from any wind, others like free air movement. A basic criterion is how big a plant is supposed to grow. If small, or a particular favourite, it probably goes in the front of a garden bed rather than the back.

With the actual selection of plants and their placement in the garden, there are two different approaches. Which usually comes first? Is it buying a plant (and then finding a suitable position for it)? Or having a vacant position (and then deciding what type of plant - or what particular plant - we want for that spot)? I guess over the years of a garden it's often a mixture of the two. We all want each plant in our garden to be healthy in its position, to grow well and look beautiful. But is that the end of the story?

For me, designing a garden involves all that practical planning but then goes a little further. We try to integrate 'hard' and 'soft' landscape and also combine plants in such a way that the garden as a whole looks beautiful. It's a complex business! Ultimately, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so there are no fixed rules.



PLANT SCHEDULE - AUSTR. PLANTS

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 <i>Baeckea virgata</i> dwarf (pot) | 19 <i>Leionema coxii</i> "Hedger" |
| 2 <i>Rhodanthe anthemoides</i> | 20 <i>Dianella</i> "Baby Bliss" |
| 3 <i>Baeckea virgata</i> miniature | 21 <i>Dianella</i> "Tas Red" |
| 4 <i>Homoranthus papillatus</i> | 22 <i>Lomandra confertifolia</i> "Little Pal" |
| 5 <i>Correa exalata</i> dwarf | 23 <i>Acmena smithii</i> (compact form) |
| 6 <i>Philotheca buxifolia</i> "Cascade of Stars" | 24 <i>Epacris impressa</i> (pot) |
| 7 <i>Hypocalymma angustifolium</i> (compact) | 25 <i>Adenanthos sericeus</i> "Silver Streak" |
| 8 <i>Ptilintzea pedunculata</i> (pot) | 26 Kangaroo paw - yellow |
| 9 <i>Stylidium</i> species (pot) | 27 <i>Leucophyta brownii</i> nana |
| 10 <i>Cotrea prostrata</i> | 28 <i>Orthrosanthus latus</i> (dwarf) |
| 11 <i>Brachyscomus</i> - blue, pink, white, yellow | 29 <i>Paterersonia longifolia</i> |
| 12 <i>Pratia pedunculata</i> "Buckland Blue" | 30 Grass tree (<i>X. australis</i>) |
| 13 <i>Syzigium</i> "Cascade" | 31 <i>Chrysocephalum tomosissimum</i> |
| 14 <i>Crotopetalum gummiferum</i> "Wildfire" | 32 <i>Chrysocephalum apiculatum</i> |
| 15 <i>Correa alba</i> (pot) | 33 <i>Lomandra confertifolia</i> ssp. <i>rubiginosa</i> |
| 16 <i>Correas</i> - prostrate | 34 <i>Thelionema umbellatum</i> |
| 17 Grass tree (<i>X. johnsonii</i>) - tub | 35 <i>Thelionema caespitosum</i> |
| 18 <i>Eucryphia moorei</i> (Pumwood) | 36 <i>Pandorea jasminoides</i> "Alba" |

However there are concepts we can use as a guide and ways that we can develop our sense of design. After all, it's important we are happy with our own gardens.

A key concept is that of symmetry or balance. A formal garden may be highly symmetrical, with one side a mirror image of the other, and this has its own simple and obvious (but static) beauty. It does not change over time. A naturalistic garden (influenced by Nature's gardens) will be asymmetrical but can still have 'balance' and a beauty that is more variable, more complicated and, I think, ultimately more rewarding. Each area of a garden has a balance of substance (or 'mass') of plant material and space (or 'void'), as does a garden as a whole. We can judge for ourselves what 'looks good' - or doesn't; if a lot of people agree it looks good, it probably does! The concept of 'balance' in a garden is a tricky thing. A tree and some grass clumps on one side of a path can 'balance' a group of shrubs on the other - but not necessarily any old group of shrubs. We have to learn to look.

We always do look at the plants themselves but it's easy not to see their setting and the spaces between them. A tree (or a tall, arching shrub) encloses space, gathers it into the garden, so a tree extends a garden upwards. Large shrubs give a feeling of shelter and protection but they do occupy a lot of space. In contrast a combination of groundcovers and low plants gives a very open feeling, makes the garden feel spacious. However, without some height a garden seems low and constrained. In a small garden, a small tree with a single trunk may be the solution. Plants of different shapes and sizes add interest, relating to each other in different ways. A path is a useful element, as it carries the space above it through the garden. Most gardens have a combination of these different elements.

Another important aspect of design is proportion or scale. This can include the height of a tree in comparison to that of a house, or the width of a shrub in relation to that of a path. Have you ever planted a groundcover next to a rock and then seen the rock gradually disappear? Is the area of that garden bed the right size with respect to the adjacent lawn or open area? Does that little plant look lost in the big bed - should it have the company of some more little friends? Or does the large shrub dwarf that small garden? Again this may just be a matter of taste but there is often general agreement about the answers to such questions.

Can we design attractive vistas through the garden, or attractive views from each window of the house? Sometimes they just happen but it's much more likely if we try to make it happen. It is often difficult to take good photos of a garden and, if you can, it usually means there are nice vistas. Garden writers sometimes refer to 'rooms' in a garden, areas which are well screened and designed to feel separate and different from other areas. Do we want such 'rooms', with a surprise as we round each corner, or just partial screens with a more integrated feel to the garden as a whole? Or some of each? Or perhaps no screens, with all the garden seen at a glance?

Then of course there are the Australian plants themselves. This is where the challenge really starts for the Garden Design Study Group. For hundreds of years, garden design using the plants of the northern hemisphere has been studied and written about. Their plants are very different from ours; the soil conditions, climates and seasons are very different. The natural environment that shapes our perceptions is worlds away from theirs and our gardens reflect that. We may have a mental image of how our garden should look and our choice of plants will fit in with this image. Horticulture using Australian plants is still young and we still have so much to learn about them. New forms - cultivars and hybrids - are being produced all the time.

Think of the immense variety of the forms of Australian plants! Shrubs vary from solid blobs (of all sizes) to filmy, ethereal shapes; from tall, elegant structures (some grevilleas, callitris) to low, arching forms (thryptomene or micromyrtus). Trees can have a single trunk, a pair, or a number, like a mallee. Eucalypts in particular have a variety of irregular forms. Branches can be upright, horizontal or droopy. For a 'tuftie' in the garden we can plant a poa or themeda with soft foliage or a bold, strap-leaved dianella or *Orthrosanthus multiflorus* (Morning Flag). Groundcovers can be as flat as a pancake - like *Pultenaea pedunculata* (Mat Bush-pea) - or vary in height from ten centimetres (*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*) to half a metre (Fern-leaf Banksia, *B. blechnifolia*) or more. The variety of forms is endlessly amazing and combining them to complement each other is a real design challenge.

Each plant has its own type of foliage - just picture the range of leaf sizes, shapes and colours. Some look wonderful together, some (such as soft, broad green leaves and fine, prickly grey ones) don't. With horticulture, the range continues to expand, especially for foliage colour. Fortunately, if we group plants according to their natural growing conditions, for example arid area plants, their foliage will be appropriate for those conditions and will generally look good together too. We might choose to group plants with leaves that blend together or else contrast markedly, for a special effect. Possible combinations will be infinite in number.

And then, in season, there are flowers with their colour... the icing on the cake? Some gardeners focus on the beauty of these alone and you can do this if you just plan a garden. Designing takes into account the whole plant and the whole garden; it aims at beauty for the whole year.

An imagined small garden

Diana Snape Vic

For my imagined small garden (plan page 12), I pictured a flat area with a window wall with door on its southern side. It's enclosed by moderately high fences of some pleasant material which I don't mind being visible (eg panels of horizontal slatted timber). A curved path (irregular flat stones, pebbles and leaf litter) leads to a seat (S) beneath a compact form of *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* (Yellow Gum). Two narrower curved side paths diverge from it, forming part of a circle corresponding (roughly!) to the canopy of the eucalypt. Any exposed garden soil is mulched with leaf litter.

For my limit of 12 species (with much repetition) I kept largely to indigenous (to Melbourne) plants which we grow in our garden now. *Acacias acinacea* (Gold Dust Wattle), pruned as required, screens the northern and north-western walls. Upright forms of *Correa reflexa* continue a partial screen, with prostrate forms of the same plant behind the seat. Also in this area are two forms of *Lomandra confertifolia*, ssp. *leptostachya* with green foliage and ssp. *rubiginosa* blueish. Around the seat and along the edges of all the paths on both sides are a mixture of *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* var. *ramosissimum* (beautiful and tough), *Brachyscome multifida* (white) and *Wahlenbergia stricta* (double).

Close to the window are Wallaby Grass (*Austrodanthonia racemosa*) and *Wahlenbergia stricta* (Tall Bluebell), with *Epacris impressa* (Bega Red form). On the eastern side of the main path, a *Bursaria spinosa* pruned as a small tree is quite close to a simple, sculptural water bath (B). In this area grow forms of *Dianella caerulea*. Three *Acacia cognata* 'Green Mist' are allowed to mature as sprawling, sculptural plants.

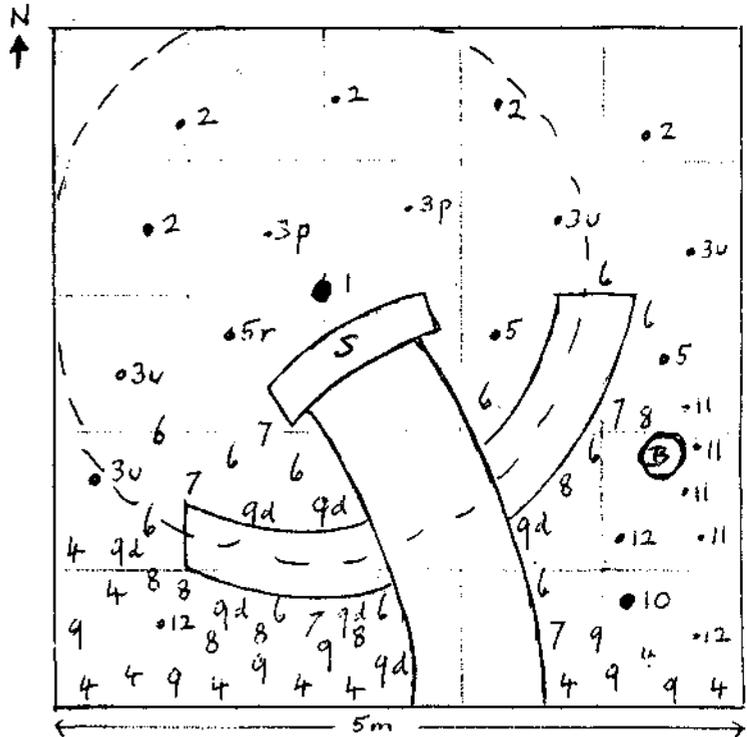
The only colour I've avoided is pink, though I think gardens with a lot of pink can be lovely.

I've always wanted reflective walls in our garden, so I think I'd at least have a reflective surface on the windows. From the seat, all I'd see would be garden. (We have such a surface on bedroom windows of our

current house and, from inside, I can still see outside clearly.) Now I think of it, maybe we should have it on some of our windows overlooking the back garden!

Plant list

1. *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* (yellow or white flowers)
2. *Acacia acinacea*
3. *Correa reflexa* (u=upright, p=prostrate)
4. *Austrodanthonia racemosa*
5. *Lomandra confertifolia* (r=ssp. *rubiginosa*)
6. *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* ssp. *ramosissimum*
7. *Brachyscome multifida* (white)
8. *Epacris impressa* (Bega red)
9. *Wahlenbergia stricta* (d=double)
10. *Bursaria spinosa* (pruned as small tree)
11. *Dianella caerulea* forms
12. *Acacia cognata* 'Green Mist'



PLANTS

Use of lomandras in design

Colin Turner Vic

With a range of sizes and forms, foliage colours and textures, interesting flowers and general reliability, *Lomandra* species deserve to be more widely grown.

Lomandras are promoted for massed plantings or linear edging. Massed plantings at very close spacing are common along major roads and freeways. Often impressive due to their scale, these plantings would be static and boring without the moving perspective created from our cars. Varying planting densities or mixings species or forms to create swales of different heights, colours or textures might create greater interest and variety in these plantings.

Nurseries often market lomandras and other tussock or clumping species with labels denoting "accent on foliage." This is a fundamental misrepresentation of their function in landscape design. What should be noted is the contrasting form of these plants. Without trunks, stems and branches the linear leaves appear to radiate from a fixed point and our eye is naturally drawn to that point. Thus individual plants can be used to create accents in a garden. Placed at intervals along a path they can add interest to our journey by progressively switching our attention from one area to the next.

Incorporated into large-scale plantings of trees and large shrubs, informal massed plantings of lomandras (at sufficient spacing to allow for the natural form of individual plants to develop) can be very attractive. These linked under-plantings unite an area and create a much more open and relaxed effect by providing visual access to more of the design. Similarly, drifts of smaller species in the garden can introduce a feeling of

greater depth by encouraging the eye to move deeper into a garden bed, or "movement" by directing the eye towards a new area or vista.

Indigenous species should be included in revegetation projects to maintain local character and provide important habitat for butterflies. In informal (naturalistic) gardens *Lomandra*s seem to naturally compliment rock outcropping and are attractive adjacent to boulders around ponds or pools. In formal gardens many species are suitable for border plantings. In a modern style (that might be labeled architectural or sculptural!) fine leaved species combined with grass trees (with trunks of varying heights) can produce a simple but stunning effect. Such an arrangement is readily applicable to a discrete area such as a courtyard garden or to large containers or planter boxes in private or public spaces.

With such a range of potential applications it can only be hoped that a wider range of *Lomandra* species will be more commonly and imaginatively used in Australian landscape design in the future.

Groundcovered

Sue Harris NSW

I read the article on groundcovers for a dry continent and wholeheartedly agree that the best groundcover we have is *Myoporum parvifolium*. There are several forms - one to suit everyone. It will grow in part shade to full sun and has a most wonderful cover. Sometimes a little too vigorous for its own liking though and if one is not careful will climb over and smother smaller plants. In some places where it's extremely dry it will just sit and sulk. I believe it needs to be well watered to establish but once established, it really takes off. It looks fabulous, as you said, going down an embankment. A great plant.

Of course, there's always *Brachyscome multifida* - the old fashioned blue form. Not exactly a groundcover but near enough. If it's cut back fairly often it will perform brilliantly. If left untouched it can look a tad untidy. But the upturn is that it's so easy to propagate. There's always more in the nursery to replace the scruffy existing ones. I have the white brachyscome too but find it a tad tricky. It seems to prefer the more shaded spots whereas the mauve loves the sun.

Tree litter can also suppress groundcovers and eventually wipe them out. A light sweep of the broom every so often brings them to the surface again (no, I'm serious). *Scaevolas*, especially *S. ameula* and *S. humilis*, are very effective groundcovers for our garden. These small plants tolerate sun and semi-shade and will quietly sucker through the garden. The hybrids, although more showy, are shorter lived. 'Purple Fanfare' and 'Zigzag' to name a couple, look great for a few seasons but flower their hearts out, only to finally expire. Again, these plants are easily propagated. *Kennedia prostrata* is another groundcover that sometimes goes unnoticed. It was one of the first plants to re-establish itself after fires and has since disappeared at our place under leaf litter but I managed to obtain seed and now these seedlings will be going back into the garden. This little plant, with its bright red pea flowers deserves a second chance as it's unfortunately classified in the same league as the VERY vigorous *K. rubicunda*. Another useful plant but is too vigorous for the average garden.

Another plant that sometimes goes unnoticed but is endemic to the south coast of NSW is *Rulingia hermanniifolia* - a small rigid plant that could be classified as a small shrub but I like to refer to it as a groundcover. These can be massed planted to form a living carpet. With its glossy deep green leaves and

dark red venations and small creamy flowers in spring make this little plant worth putting in the garden. *Rulingia hermanniifolia* is native, or rather endemic, to this region so likes the conditions but it still can drop dead overnight.

Groundcovers perform the duty of mulch when their leaves eventually fall and serve to nourish the soil underneath. A living mulch! Wonderful!

GARDENS

The Elliston Estate

Chris Larkin Vic

We had an interesting last meeting of the year at Margaret James's home in Rosanna. Margaret's home is part of the Elliston Estate, which was a bold experiment in urban design in the early 1970s. The initial concept for this former golf course was to have a subdivision of courts and crescents opening directly onto parkland equal in size to the land for housing and including a natural creek. Merchant Builders engaged 4 architects to design houses and Ellis Stones, a leading landscaper and environmentalist of the time, to develop a complementary landscape to bring cohesion to the vision. We can speculate that the idea of exercising so much control over the living choices of possible buyers spelled an early death for the project which was only realised in a very small way; land failed to sell with the necessary speed required by the conditions imposed by Council and Merchant Builders had to withdraw.

Bev Hanson came along to our meeting with original plans, books and other relevant material; Margaret, who has a great interest in preserving what is most valuable about the estate, and particularly the adjoining parkland, also had a wealth of material for us to look at. Margaret was an original purchaser into the estate; Bev Hanson, who is one of our members and a landscape gardener held in great regard, worked for Ellis Stones at the time. Bev in fact planted many of the original shrubs and trees for Stones.

After some initial discussion of the history of the estate we took a walk around the block, venturing a small way into the park to experience as much as possible, in the few streets developed by Merchant Builders, what the originators of Elliston Estate had in mind. The Merchant Builder homes are set a reasonable way back from the front street which allows for privacy but it is the flat-roof design of the houses with their simple street profiles that enables this to be achieved. The house designs are in stark contrast to houses bordering the estate and those built by other developers within the estate. If Margaret's house is anything to go by the understated house fronts in brown brick belie the amount of space and light you experience once you pass over the threshold; views of the front and back gardens are also important to the design which appears at every level to want to connect the inner and outer space. Despite most gardens having many exotic species (and maybe more exotic than Australian plant species), Stone's idea to unify the whole through the landscape has been achieved to a large degree through rockwork, the shape of garden beds and paths but most particularly by a canopy of now mature eucalypts. The overall effect is of houses nestling in a tranquil Australian bush setting; this effect is informal and very relaxed.

We don't often have a chance to see how we feel about an exotic garden as the odd one out in the street full of houses with naturalistic gardens but we had the opportunity on our walk. One of the houses had 'reformed' its garden into a well managed and manicured exotic garden with azaleas etc bordering a lush

green lawn. It was remarkable how uptight this garden made me feel - it was loud (or do we think of this as lush?) and attention seeking; controlled compared to its casual neighbours with their leaf-drop and grey-greens which achieved greater privacy for their homes.

One of the intentions behind the vision of Elliston Estate was to engineer the way residences would feel and relate to each other - Merchant Builders were trying, through a quiet and harmonious whole environment experience, to minimize the hard boundaries between residences and encourage a sense of community. Margaret said to a large extent they succeeded with the idea; there were children running in and out of each others homes and neighbours being neighbourly and familiar. This visit to Elliston Estate, now not known by that name, has been instructive in two ways. Firstly, it leaves me postulating that maybe one of the main reasons that Australian gardens hold so little appeal is because they are generally the odd ones out in a neighbourhood, whereas in a world where they were the norm (as we experienced in at least the overall feel of the gardens) they would appear tranquil and in keeping with the broader Australian landscape. Secondly the visit made me reflect on the power of architecture (house and landscape) to make us experience particular feelings, like the feeling that a home and garden is a safe and tranquil environment in which to relax and care for our loved ones and neighbours.

Mulching - A Country Perspective

Alan & Jan Hall Vic

Jo Hambretts' notes on mulching are very timely and I generally agree with all she says and would like to enlarge with observations from our experience. Initially we try to use local products which are in keeping with our district landscape and we keep in mind the impact of transporting bulky materials in fossil-fueled trucks over long distances. For us, the most effective local materials are organic, screened red gum chips and inorganic gravel and sand, again mindful of where these materials are quarried. These chips permit a free flow of rain or any irrigation to the plants and stay put in our very dry, windy environment. We tried covering paths with red gum sawdust because it cost only our labour but, over the season, it blew 'somewhere else' - although it did stop the weeds for a while.

We made an early mistake by not requesting that the nice, red/brown coloured gravel we chose was screened, as the fines' it contained causes it to set like concrete. This mulch does work well for the plants and holds them firm against the wind. We now use lots of lovely 1/4 minus graded and washed river gravel and coarse sand from the same old local deposit. The plants are happy and it is relatively easy to pull out weeds in comparison with trying to extract them from hard clay.

'Green' ground covers grow quickly in the gravelled beds and have made those areas a pleasure to maintain. On the other hand, due to the large area of our 1 ha block, we do use a large amount of low cost composted waste from the Council. It does contain too much dust and fines but I try to give each plant a collar of sand and gravel plus some old cow manure or blood and bone under the mulch to help combat water repellency. At least no weeds grow under this mulch and helps deal with our site's entrenched weed population. This mulch restricts natural water penetration and we do have to watch that our young trees and shrubs get their share of rain - when it comes. We also routinely use Seasol or Maxicrop to soak and water in new plants. They also receive water crystals as extra insurance for life between drinks. I have read that gravel gardens are the latest trend - I think we may lead the way with this one!

Ros and Ben Walcott's garden, Red Hill ACT

Prologue

Shirley Pipitone ACT

The Canberra Branch visited Ros and Ben Walcott's garden on Canberra's coldest morning last winter - chunks of ice lay about on the ponds and we walked around briskly in our coats and scarves. The garden has now been open several times under the Australian Open Garden Scheme, with funds raised going to the Friends of the Australian National Botanic Garden. Ros's story is worth hearing - in 3 episodes.

Episode 1: Background

Ros Walcott ACT

On a visit to Canberra on a wet and grey winter's day in 2000, I discovered a challenging garden *tabula rasa* in the suburb of Red Hill. The 9300 square metre property, with a slope of nine metres from the back down to the front, was first developed in 1926 as a residence for the French Ambassador. It had a small awkward house on it, a large cotoneaster hedge along the front and 80 year-old *Pinus radiata* along the side boundaries. Called *La Cerisiae* (the cherry orchard), a romantic nod to the scraggly fruit trees planted behind the "heritage" hedge, the property had been lying idle for over a decade while neighbours contested a proposal for high density housing on the block.

When my husband, Ben, and I returned to New York, we began negotiations to buy the Red Hill property because we planned to retire in Australia, my home country. We had gardened for 30 years on a one hectare site in Long Island, which sloped down into a tidal estuarine marsh. The soil was an acid sand and the climate consisted of harsh winters, with plenty of snow and ice, hot, humid summers and annual rainfall of 1250 mm, about double Canberra's rainfall. We grew azaleas, rhododendrons, roses, hydrangeas, daylilies, peonies, thousands of bulbs, and a wide variety of other perennials. Our garden there developed over time, with no formal plan.

In the United States we were active members of the Garden Conservancy, which organizes Open Days for garden visits, and also works to conserve notable gardens in America. Through this organization we visited private gardens in many different parts of America. We also went on several tours with *Horticulture* magazine to Morocco, Portugal and Madeira and also visited numerous gardens in France and Britain. When we began to plan the garden in Canberra we drew on our varied experiences and decided to build a mostly native garden, in keeping with the local soil and climate. We wanted to create something new with unfamiliar plants. We had no experience of growing Australian native plants and no knowledge of gardening in Canberra, so we decided to engage a landscape planner with knowledge of native plants, Helen Cohen, who was also associated with the architect who was designing the house. We wanted house and garden to be intimately linked.

Over a period of approximately two years starting in 2001, with consultation with Helen by email, phone and letter we developed a plan for the garden. We had some basic design principles including:

- o the garden would contain mostly plants native to Australia
- o there would be little, if any, lawn. Where we needed open space we would have a meadow of grasses, forbs and lilies
- o we would hire someone to help in the garden and provide necessary machinery, such as lawn mowers, hedge trimmers, etc.
- o we would not maintain a compost heap, as we had on Long Island, but buy mulch in bulk as needed
- o the garden would be attractive to birds and other wildlife
- o plant foliage and shape would be more important than flowers, even though flowers were needed to attract many of the birds
- o we would attempt to retain all rainwater for use in the garden

- o there should be some open water to attract wildlife
- o we did not want a series of enclosed garden rooms, rather different areas that flowed into each other
- o there would be more emphasis on the natural rather than the formal in the garden design, including wide paths in curved shapes
- o native plants would only be trimmed to enhance their natural shape, not to create any formal shapes
- o Ben wanted to grow some citrus, never having lived anywhere where it was possible to do so.



Episode 2: Garden design and construction

Our new house was sited to face north to catch the winter sun along the whole length of the house. Wide eaves ensure that the summer sun does not overheat the house. The design has wide paths meandering through the garden and large raised beds. The upper pond with waterfall can be recognised in the photo. The light blue-greens of the meadow are visible to the left of the house.

Site preparation

The trees on the block had received no maintenance for decades and needed a lot of attention. With advice from Dr Robert Boden, a number of trees were removed, mostly old and diseased *Pinus radiata* that were being smothered by wisteria vines. Others included seedling wattles, cottonwoods and decrepit fruit trees and willows. We trimmed up the eighty year old *P. radiata* both for safety, and to allow us to grow new plants under the frost protection of the pine branches.

Site preparation also included removing the original bitumen driveway which had wandered right through the middle of the garden, and replacing it with a gravel drive on the side of the block. The huge cotoneaster hedge along Wickham Crescent was also removed, and the ponds, paths, waterfall and paving

were constructed. The water features of the garden are covered in Episode 3 in the next Newsletter.

Soil improvement

The clay soil is pH neutral and was improved with Dynamic Lifter. All beds were mulched with wood chips, about thirty truckloads. In the three years since the original garden construction we have spread at least another thirty truckloads of 'forest litter' which has improved the soil immensely. Another soil improvement is the addition of about 15 Straw Necked Ibis for about 2 months each year, who work over the entire garden, both aerating it to the depth of 20 cm and removing scarab beetle grubs.

Planting

Helen Cohen worked closely with **Able Landscaping** and **Hazelbrook Nursery** to source the five thousand plants that were in her garden plan. As we were planting during the worst drought in Canberra's history, many plants were not available and substitutes were found for some. Over a six month period, from July 2003 to December 2003, the basic planting was completed: 2,500 plants, including 40 trees. Planting has continued at a reduced rate in the three years since the original basic planting, and we now have about 4,000 plants in all, including 30 tree ferns, 30 eucalypts, 150 wattles, 270 grevilleas, 160 correa, 120 callistemon, 250 lomandra, 75 leptospermum and 100 melaleucas.

The meadow, which is 1100 square metres in area, was planted with over 20,000 grasses, lilies and forb seedlings in November 2003. The soil was not amended in this part of the garden, as ripping the ground would have encouraged more weeds. The meadow planters used a drill to make a hole, then added a gel containing both water and nutrients and planted the seedling. This is a very quick and efficient way of planting a meadow. Three planters took three days to plant 20,000 seedlings. We consider the meadow to be a great success. Butterflies and rosellas use it constantly. *Ammobium alatum*, *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*, *Microlaena stipoides*, *Poa sieberiana* 'Aranda', *Themeda australis* 'Mingo' and *Wahlenbergia communis* have spread rapidly.

We have learned a great deal about our property in three years. Certain parts are very wet, and we have had to move all acacias to drier parts of the garden. Certain sections are well drained and we can grow Western Australian plants there. Other parts are wet clay and we have concentrated on melaleucas and callistemons for those areas. We have lost very few plants to cold and frost. Most plants have been lost during January and February, not because of lack of water, but because of excess heat. We have tried to keep up with trimming and pruning all plants, but fall behind on this task at times. We have found it necessary to purchase advanced plants in order to get the framework of the garden established. In future, we expect to be able to add younger and smaller plants and wait for them to grow. In the first year or so, cockatoos caused major damage to the new plants, especially the eucalypts and the tree ferns. Some of the eucalypts were so badly damaged they had to be removed, and we moved 20 tree ferns nearer to the house, where the cockatoos are somewhat intimidated by our presence. The last year has been free of major cockatoo damage.

See the next Newsletter for the third and final episode describing the Walcott's garden.

Judging gardens

Shirley Pipitone ACT

In 2006 I had the pleasure of judging the ACT Housing Garden Competition, that is, the gardens of public housing tenants in the ACT. Along with blurbs about me and a photo, I managed to get a brief mention of the study group and ASGAP in the local free newspaper promotion of the competition. Fortunately I managed to find a location in my garden for the photo so it didn't show any weeds and also to minimise the visibility of my large *Pandorea pandorana*, which was badly affected by a 9° frost not long before. They

cropped a lovely *Philotheca verrucosa* in front.

There were 41 entrants in the competition and judging occurred over two weeks in October/November 2006. In the process of judging the competition, I went through a really interesting process of refining the criteria I was using, starting with a sheet of criteria which appeared in the NL many years ago. I modified this by adding some points to cater for the eight categories of the competition, and some check boxes to save writing time. The outcome is at Attachment 1 (page 21). But I found using this sheet very difficult to work with because it tends to focus on small details such as "contrasts and textures" and "framework of trees", and then leap to relatively undefined concepts such as "delights and surprises" and "overall structure and balance". In fact, elements such as the framework of trees contribute greatly to the structure of a garden, and use of contrast can be a delight. With this sheet I tended to try and write as much as possible about each garden so I could be sure I remembered its distinctive characteristics.

When I came to comparing the gardens, I found that what I had written was often not very useful. So I started again from scratch and devised a rating scheme based on 10 criteria. I didn't have time then to specify in detail what each criterion encompassed, but I have now done so, and Attachment 2 is the result for general garden judging. For categories such as vegetable gardens and children's gardens, I would use a slightly different set of criteria. For Australian plant gardens, I would probably just add "predominance of Australian plants" to the *Fascination with nature* criterion, and "predominance of indigenous plants" to the *Sustainability* criterion.

If ACT Housing asks me to judge the competition again this year, I will use this sheet, possibly adding check boxes to more of the criteria. With this sheet, I think I could go straight into an assessment of each garden without the need for much note taking.

I would welcome any comments.

Maureen and Norm Webb's garden

Norm Webb NSW

In March the Sydney branch of GDSG will be visiting the south coast, our garden is included in the busy schedule. Before that visit I want to outline what I see as the good and not so good points about our garden, in the hope members will gain a better understanding of what they will find. Also to know what we, the permanent inhabitants of this small 700sq metre patch, see as important.

The garden was started in 1990. We had built our house (virtually brick by brick) and saved all the soil (& clay) manually dug from the footing trenches. This was used to make a large mound in the front.

One large and one medium gum grew naturally so we naively (and crazily) added another four eucalypts. A few years later we decided it would be wise to remove two, leaving a *Eucalyptus scoparia* (Walangarra white gum) and *Eucalyptus cinerea* (Argyle apple). After 16 years that once pathetically tiny scoparia now dominates our front garden on the highest part of the mound. It is truly a magnificent tree and we both love it (Maureen more than I, as I have reservations).

The many good points about the *Eucalyptus scoparia* are - its beautiful weeping habit - the magnificent colours of pinks, reds, greys, etc, on its trunk when shedding bark - the wonderful birds and wildlife brought into our lives such as - small bird species, sugar gliders, ringtail and brushtail possums and even a Powerful owl (a story in itself). Sadly though suburbia creeps ever closer and we are now only left with brushtail possums and a lesser variety of birds.

The negative points (all from myself of course). Even though we stole half the council strip and built it up with good soil hoping to make a dramatic display of plants facing the street, it is near impossible to have these plants perform, as the trees drain every bit of moisture and nutrient from the ground. It has been a

disappointing exercise. The only plant proven to exist and grow happily under those trees has been *Lomandra longifolia*, now planted nearly en masse. As wilder storms become more prevalent I do have anxiety about falling branches.

It must be said that I find the front disappointing and am more inclined towards the rear garden.

There is no grass in the rear (or front) garden. Tons of sand was imported to make one large and smaller mounds. The path through the rear garden is rustic red gravel with some large and smaller sandstone boulders placed strategically. The garden shed was designed, built and coloured to enhance the garden as was the bird aviary and covered vegie patch. Lastly wire boundary fences were used to grow *Pandorea* and *Hibbertia* climbers to provide beauty and privacy, as well as habitat and support for small birds.

Our garden has many species of *Xanthorrea* and last spring, fifteen scapes were recorded.

Achievement hopes have been: -

(1) peace, beauty and harmony by blocking out what we class as ugly, eg adjoining houses, fences and clotheslines

(2) privacy by strategically placed buildings and planting shrubs and vines

(3) contrast in plants with colour, shape and size and contour of soil beds

(4) (most important for us) support for wildlife and birds and

(5) to set an example for others to follow.

The most disappointing aspects of garden design for me have been the difficulty of obtaining suitable plants and the failure of plants to perform as expected.

Some days I don't like my garden, but just when I think about getting another hobby, I suddenly fall in love with it again particularly on a special evening standing on our back veranda overlooking the garden, I get this wonderful feeling and I wouldn't change my hobby for quids. This feeling is further enhanced if a small bird (perhaps a blue wren) visits the water bowl or I enjoy a chat and a glass of wine with Maureen.

BOOKS

Member, Jonathon Persse [and husband of Georgina!] has edited a lovely book called "*Letters Lifted into Poetry*" [National Library of Australia 2006]. It consists of selected correspondence between poets David Campbell and Douglas Stewart 1946 - 79. Jo Hambrett says she can highly recommend it - "both poets reach deep into the Australian landscape, as well as its flora and fauna, for their inspiration and I'm sure members would enjoy it mightily."

In addition to the booklet mentioned in the last NL, member Ruth Crosson has copies of "*Native Plants for Curtis Region Gardens: Finding and Growing our Local Species*" (\$8). Any member planning to visit the Gladstone area would find these booklets interesting and helpful. Ruth's address is 230 Goondoon Street, Gladstone Qld 4680.

'*Grow What Where*' was written by 8 members of the Melbourne-based Australian Plant Study Group and the various editions have sold 60,000 copies. The edition we have was first published by Nelson in 1980. Listed under 100 headings are "over 2300 Australian native plants for every situation, special use and problem area". "*Grow What Wee*" and "*Grow What Small Plant*" were two other books in the series. Last year a revised version of '*Grow What Where*' was published by Bloomings Books and comes with a CD to make it easier to select a plant for any particular requirement. Its relevance is not confined to the Melbourne area. I'll look forward hopefully to receiving members' comments on this new edition.

ATTACHMENT 1

ACT HOUSING GARDEN COMPETITION 2006
JUDGE'S COMMENT SHEET - <DATE>

NAME: ADDRESS:	CATEGORY: 1.new 2.est 3.veg 4.common 5.small 6.pots 7.rose/cottage 8.children's
sense of arrival	
relation of garden to house or small area to whole garden	
overall structure and balance	
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	ornamental: conservation: permeable <input type="checkbox"/> tank <input type="checkbox"/> downpipes <input type="checkbox"/> harvesting <input type="checkbox"/>

ATTACHMENT 2

ACT HOUSING GARDEN COMPETITION 2007
JUDGE'S COMMENT SHEET - <DATE>

NAME: ADDRESS:	CATEGORY: 1.new 2.est 3.veg 4.common 5.small 6.pots 7.rose/cottage 8.children's
Sense of arrival	Can I capture the essence of the garden? Does it reflect the personality and lifestyle of owners? Relationship of garden to house (or small area to whole garden)? In style, size, scale. Is entry to the house obvious, even if not visible?
Structure	Framework of trees. Appropriate size and species. Permanent plantings or structures for whole year. Symmetry or balanced asymmetry.
Screening and vistas	Effective screening of external and internal unattractive views. Good use of borrowed landscape. Creation of interesting vistas within the garden and from house to garden.
Sun, shade and serenity	Balance of sunshine and shade. Sunny places for winter, cool places for summer. Pleasing spaces to be in and find serenity.
Fascination with nature	Variety of plant forms and species. Harmony and unity achieved with planting or other elements. Use of contrasts and textures for interest.
Paths and hard surfaces	Appropriate path surfaces. Only a few types of hard surface. Appropriate location of paths for slope/ access utilites/ drainage and to be inviting and enticing. Appropriate proportion of hard surfaces. Enough paths to view whole garden. Appropriate location of outdoor living areas. Blending of hard landscape into soft. Sympathetic use of rocks.
Maintenance	Tidy edges relative to garden style. Free of garden weeds. Clean and safe hard surfaces not broken by tree roots. Good use of pruning according to garden style. Utilities area tidy, accessible.
Senses and surprises	Ornamental use of water. Other delights and surprises. Appeal to senses - light, colour, fragrance, sound, touch.
Suited to purpose	Is the garden lived in? Does it suit the owners' purpose e.g. children's play, reading, entertaining, quiet sitting, hobbies, disabled. Is it just for competition?
Sustainability and wildlife	Water conservation measures: tank <input type="checkbox"/> harvesting <input type="checkbox"/> downpipes <input type="checkbox"/> permeable surfaces <input type="checkbox"/> mulch <input type="checkbox"/> Provision for wildlife: birdbath <input type="checkbox"/> safe bird perches <input type="checkbox"/> no birdfeed <input type="checkbox"/> prickly shrubs <input type="checkbox"/> food sources <input type="checkbox"/> animal hut <input type="checkbox"/> cat cage <input type="checkbox"/> other <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability: no bush rocks <input type="checkbox"/> plants grouped for water <input type="checkbox"/> low-water plants <input type="checkbox"/> ric materials <input type="checkbox"/> no environmental weeds <input type="checkbox"/>

SNIPPETS**'Landscaping' and gardening****Sue Harris NSW**

Our gardens are changing all the time, whereas 'landscaping' tends to remain static. That's why we have hard landscaping, box hedges and cordylines!! It's a problem that the teaching institutions have had in the past and are still facing. There are landscapers out there that know nothing (very little at least) about plants. And there are horticulturalists that know very little about landscaping. TAFE NSW has finally recognised that there is a wide gap and have decided to put on a diploma course over two years that marries these two aspects.

But what about all those landscapers out there! Scary isn't it? For the most, members of the APS are gardeners and recognise plants for what they are. Gardeners have first hand experience of their plants, how to best grow them and maintain them. It's wonderful to see some people in action in their gardens.

- and we in the GDSG try to do both. DS

APS Maroondah Group in Victoria are undertaking an investigation among their members over this summer to find out which plants have not survived the hot, dry weather. The survey checks on details of plants that die such as age, soil type, mulch used, sun or shade, water regime. The results could prove interesting.

'Saying of the day' seen recently - applicable to gardeners and garden designers ?

We learn from yesterday

We live for today

We hope for tomorrow

FOR YOUR INFORMATION
MEETINGS**Melbourne Branch meetings****Chris Larkin Vic****Report of Melbourne meeting November 2006**

Our last meeting of the year was most enjoyable, interesting and productive; thank you Margaret James for your hospitality and making your home available for the occasion. For a report on our walk and talk on the Elliston Estate please see separate item called 'The Elliston Estate' (page 14). As part of the meeting we also looked at several different designs for small gardens which was an exercise set for the meeting. Thank you to those members who provided designs. For information on two of these designs please see separate items in this newsletter (pages 8 and 11).

Next Melbourne meeting - Sunday March 11

This next meeting will take us down to Frankston to look at the George Pentland Botanic Garden and on the way we will detour to look at a young front garden, including nature strip plantings. Please bring a folding chair and your own lunch, which we will have in the George Pentland Garden.

Please ring Chris to let her know you are coming.

Meet at 11.30am to look at a front garden and nature-strip plantings that are 2-3 years old at the home of Carol and Paul Belcourt. Plantings and initial design of garden

beds and paths were by Colin Turner and Chris Larkin - the design and installation of the treatment of the paths was carried out at a later stage by a separate contractor. Unlike some municipalities Frankston seems to be supportive of homeowners planting out their nature-strips. *Myoporum parvifolium* gives a good lush grass-like appearance and only has to be trimmed where it abuts the grassed areas; other plants in this area are low and tough enough not to need any particular care. Plants in the front garden have been chosen with a view to their survival in sand. With Colin and Chris's limited experience of gardening on sand it has all been quite experimental; they have relied on their knowledge of particular plants from reading and from observations of coastal gardens. The owners were keen to have a low maintenance garden and they especially did not want to have to mow a lot of grass - hence the elimination of any front lawn and a severe reduction in the amount of mowing needed for the nature-strip.

We'll then meet at 12.30pm at the gate on the corner of the George Pentland Botanic Garden in Frankston (Melway 102D4 - park in Williams Street near corner of Yuille St) for a picnic lunch. Leon Costermans lives quite close to the George Pentland Gardens in Frankston and as the chief friend of the garden he has a keen interest in their development as a botanical garden of Australian plants. This interesting site with undulating terrain, many mature plants and a large pond was designed as a golf course so there are good long vistas down what would have once been fairways. In 2006 Leon approached Diana Snape, who then approached Chris Larkin and Colin Turner, to help design a large, mainly border garden of Proteaceae plants and a 'Display Bed'. Work on the design of the Proteaceae beds was completed and subsequently planted at the start of spring. Work on designing the Display Bed will commence in earnest in 2007. In the meanwhile the main objective at the George Pentland Garden is to get the new plants through the worst drought conditions we have experienced in Victoria. They are currently trucking in recycled water in their efforts.

We have embarked on the idea of members presenting a design of a small garden for discussion at the meeting and for further inclusion in the newsletter. Several designs were looked at last meeting and we hope to see a few more this meeting. If you have not yet submitted a design then why not have a go? We are all learning. Remember that your design should specify soil type, orientation and seasonal moisture levels - in other words the exercise is 'real' rather than fanciful; it can be inspired or copied from what exists in your own garden or be entirely fictitious - but completely reasonable.

Proposed future Melbourne meetings

June 10th - see the plantings at the Studpark Community Centre in Rowville and meet at the home of Chris Larkin to see what changes have occurred due to the surrounding subdivisions.

September 9th

November 25th

Please ring Chris _____ to put your ideas forward.

Possible venues - Gardens at Glaxo, Xmas break-up at Cranbourne. Other suggestions welcome.

ACT Branch meetings

Shirley Pipitone ACT

Next meeting - Thursday March 15 from 9.30 to 11.30 am at the Innovations Centre, University Drive, University of Canberra. We will be discussing to what extent the design principles evident in this public garden can be applied in domestic gardens. Specifically we will be looking at plant form, repetition of plants, the garden as a journey, and water harvesting and ornamental use.

Sydney Branch meetings

Jo Hambrett NSW

Next meeting March 17th - 18th. a weekend meeting centred round gardens in the Vincentia region [South Coast]. We'll have a look at the residential dementia care garden that Sue and Brian Harris and Shane Doherty have designed, the gorgeous garden of Norm and Maureen Webb, a habitat garden, the bush care gardens and a nursery. People may come for the whole weekend or just one of the days.

Please RSVP: **Jo Hambrett by 11th March**

A fun Saturday night dinner is always assured (approximate numbers coming are needed for booking).

North East Vic Branch meeting

Barbara Buchanan has spent the whole summer to date worried by the fire situation around Myrhee. She and Alan are planning to move to Benalla, where they are staying part-time at the moment. Barbara will get in touch with members when things settle down.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Bryan Loft Vic

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.

Judith Baghurst

Angela Rutter

Renewals: June Copeland, Pamela Finger (3 years), Barrier Gallacher, Mary Graham, Win Main, Janet and Andy Russell (received in July - apologies), Ros St Clair, Gloria Thomlinson, Els Wynen, APS NSW

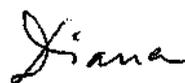
Bryan and his wife Judy are currently away on a three week trip to Vietnam. They left in late January and will be home by mid February.

Thank you to all members who have contributed to this NL in a number of ways to give us such wonderful variety - ideas, plans, articles on plants, descriptions of gardens, analysis. It is always great to hear from you and every comment is worthwhile. Please keep your thoughts or questions about design coming in - and maybe have a go at designing a small garden or courtyard area yourself. Designs such as these could play a central role when we start to gather material for a new book.

Also let us know about plants you have found particularly useful in your garden design, or groups of plants you think grow well in combination. It can help to think about plants in design categories, either as framework or feature plants, as ornamentals or infill. Do you have any favourite groundcovers and small plants (say up to a metre in height or spread)? Also books - did you enjoy a garden/plant/design book over the Christmas period? It doesn't matter if it has been commented on before, your viewpoint will be new.

Why not make a New Year's resolution that you will write (at least) one thing for the Newsletter this year? (Yes, I know most resolutions get broken!) The idea of a Study Group is for us to learn, and then to share what we have learnt.

Best wishes



Diana Snape