

GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP
Newsletter No. 59
August 2007

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OR google 'Australian Garden Design'

Dear Members,

Chris Larkin's thoughtful article raises many points worth considering when we think about the design of our own gardens, or those of others. It's easy to be vague and not really think clearly about specific aspects of garden design. There's so much that goes into creating a garden and of course there's not just one correct answer to every question we might ask. Articles such as those by Chris and Shirley Pipitone can help us focus our minds a little better and evaluate gardens (including our own) in a more constructive way.

Congratulations to Ann Raine whose beautiful garden was shown in 'Gardening Australia' ABC TV on Saturday June 2. An article was also published in the June 'Gardening Australia' magazine. Such exposure is most valuable in showing members of the general public what can be achieved in a garden when Australian plants are used well. It's the old story - leading by example is the best way; people learn from what they are shown rather than what they are told. Ann has written an article for us about the development of her garden over the last few years and she also tells us about her media experience - not too terrifying.

John Hoile raises some good questions on the fitness for survival of some Australian plants sold by some nurseries. With the current concerns about water availability, it is important that we who promote (and especially sell) Australian plants are accurate about their requirements and limitations (if they have any!!) as well as their qualities and merits. (It's not really that our plants have limitations - we have limitations in our ability to provide them with what they need to grow well.) We certainly don't want a repeat of the mistakes of the missed opportunities of the sixties and seventies. The truth is of course that some Australian plants can be difficult to grow successfully, while others are hardy in most situations. The research undertaken in recent years in regard to growing conditions will eventually bear fruit for those difficult plants. Research has shown, for example, the widespread requirement for certain micorrhizal fungi to help plants cope with our impoverished soils. We knew that bushfires promoted vigorous germination or growth of many plants - but now the actual chemical in smoke which triggers this has been identified. Who knows what future research will discover about our plants, which will help us grow them more successfully?

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NEXT MEETINGS

Please see details of meetings and contacts on pages 17 to 19

NE VIC: Sunday August 12 10.30am at Freida Andrews and John Lloyd's

CANBERRA: Monday August 27 10am at Maureen Mutton's garden

MELBOURNE: Sunday September 9 at Bev Fox's garden

SYDNEY: October 1-5 ASGAP Conference in Newcastle

Visiting members from other areas are welcome at meetings!

CORRESPONDENCE

The following link is from the May newsletter of this Victorian reference I gave you last e-mail.
http://www.saaonline.org.au/info_sustainabledesign3.html

Perhaps a few ideas of a potential direction we as in the GDSG could go — perhaps/maybe not. If so it all could end up on the ASGAP web site? Last comment on this topic. Kind regards, **Jeff Howes** NSW

GDSG website

Jo Hambrett NSW

Re Jeff's garden design online article and your response -

I do think the website will be an increasingly valuable resource for getting information to people. I'm not sure about plans, I do think good photos of plants and gardens are worth a thousand words though and of course the plants would have to be divided up into the areas they occur in and their preferred habitat as well as ease of growing and procurement.

The easier it is to use the quicker and more effective will be the uptake. Possibly something like.... a big map of Australia colour-keyed, or something like that, indicating temperatures and soil conditions - I have a book with it in somewhere and it's very helpful and scientific. All the district groups from all over the country could provide us with 6 names and descriptions/ photos of easily grown/easily obtained species (trees, shrubs [large, medium, small] groundcovers, tufties, strap, annual, perennials, orchids, etc.), in the different micro climates that occur in each shaded area - coastal, woodland, alpine or whatever.

Tried and true drought resisters from each area

Then a list of our professional members.

Then a list of nurseries our members use/recommend.

Then a HELP line - members phone numbers for people to ring [am just throwing out suggestions here!]

I shall go and check out the website now to see if there has been any movement lately.

I think plantsman and author Tommy Garnett prepared a map like that some years ago now and we have a copy of it somewhere too - it's just a case of finding it! DS

Garden bed preparation

Suellen Harris NSW

Loved the newsletter but may I clarify a few points about the garden and how it was established and how it's fertilised.

1 Bed preparation: Yes, we spray with glyphosate to kill the grass and yes, we use horse manure as it's cheap and plentiful around here. There is only the old oat or grass seed in it and therefore easy to remove. We also use it around the established shrubs and no, we don't compost it, we just keep adding to it, as in organic mulch/leaf litter. Horse manure is low in nutrient, adds organic matter to the silty sand soil and the worms LOVE it. In the past, we've imported soil when we've had earthworks for paths etc, but basically we just use the manure and establish a green manure crop to dig in. Imported soil is not all it's cracked up to be in its consistency so it's better to work with what we've got and improve. All prunings/loppings are chipped and put back into the garden as mulch.

2 We usually fertilise using bagged organic chook pellets and sometimes blood and bone late winter and that's it except for the fruit trees but that's a different matter again. With the use of organic manures and much there is no need to fertilise greatly. Of course, the rainforest plants do get a helping hand with extra fertiliser due to them being planted in what is really poor soil. They're responding slowly. We do make up a tea of seaweed and manure and this is watered down and given to some native plants (when we've run out of

other fertiliser) but is mainly used in the vegetable garden to give them an extra oomph. Because we use slow release fertiliser there is no need to segregate the plants in a mixed bed. Most of the plants in the mixed beds have the same requirements and soon learn to live together harmoniously.

3 Yes, these plants get a Suellenised prune -1 have a reputation! Love it!

PS Plant health and growth can be attributed to the fact that plants let you know if they are lacking nutrient or are stressed due to pests and diseases. It's wonderful to find time to actually walk in the garden and inspect the plants for signs of deficiencies and any nasties, and to remedy any problem promptly.

Comment on mulches

John Hoile NSW

I valued Kevin Handreck's expertise. Elsewhere, comments on use of gravel and stone as mulch seems to have been glossed over, that is the "heat island effect" which is created by non-organic materials reflecting heat. To me, a distinct benefit of creating a garden is to modify climate and the surroundings so they are pleasant for outdoor living and modify temperatures (summer and winter) in the interior of the house, so I don't need to run air conditioners and heaters, so that my "footprint" is lighter.

So that, in a holistic sense when total sustainability is taken into account, gravel and stone are used with great care. I fully appreciate the fire danger. I suggest that when the pros and cons are weighed up, other ways can be found to modify fire danger. It's a plant selection, design and maintenance matter.

I'd like to know more about the comment that organic mulch can cause damage in frost prone areas. My research suggests organic mulch insulates roots by 3 degrees C in mild frost areas. Growth is assisted. In the central west USA where frosts are worse than what we dream about, they rely on mulch to prevent root damage.

I love receiving the GDSG newsletter, especially the designs submitted. Always fascinating, and fantastic to hear other peoples' plant lists - indigenous species that do well in niches, etc. And the web links are a great resource. Thank you. **Aileen Westbrook NSW**

Aileen is a qualified Landscape Designer with a Diploma of Horticulture (Landscape Design) and a PhD in Science. She is interested in all aspects of garden design, especially contemporary and innovative. DS

I don't like the idea of taking on projects such as historical gardens, etc. I think another book with more photographs and less text is a good idea. Don't give grants to projects! **Ruth Crosson Qld**

I appreciate and look forward to receiving the Newsletter - a host of discussion pieces, new information and garden designs put together by Diana. While my garden design skills remain 'remedial', I am attempting a new one acre garden area where 100 olive trees were removed. **Jennifer Davidson Vic**
Good luck with your new garden area Jennifer. A shame about the olive trees. DS

John and I are looking forward to meeting members from other States on the 25th September when you visit an "interesting garden", 'Torwood', Tour 2, ASGAP Conference. **Annette Houseman NSW**

Great newsletter. I am particularly enjoying the discussion on mulch. Given we have the difficulties of wind / salt / clay / shade, plus (a) a steep slope with two big casuarinas, a *Grevillea robusta*, a *Melaleuca styphelioides* and a whole pile of other things and (b) the flat area with acacias, grevilleas, etc, shading everything out after 9 years, the question is first, to mulch or not, and with what, and second, how do you get the understorey started again?

I have been gardening with Australian plants for probably 40 years and still haven't mastered that one, even though I've picked up a fair bit on the way. All the similar gardens I've seen (wildish/ 'natural') have obviously had a lot of time and money and energy spent on them. The last two are in short supply! **Gillian Morris** NSW

/ know the feeling! Suggestions and ideas from members please. DS

Look at this site for great photos of Australia's main weeds. Please note that there are five pages of them. Not a good look! http://www.weeds.crc.org.au/main/image_gallery_page1.html **Jeff Howes** NSW
Many people think weeds are Australia's biggest environmental problem - and that's saying something. DS

"The Designer's Lament"

Jo Hambrett NSW

(A reply to Judy Baghurst)

To Judy, re your poem last newsletter, in May
 On your praise of cushion bush, I really have to say
 That unlike you in South Australia, who has sung its praises high
 My tale to tell is grim of *Leucophyta brownii*.

All you say is true about its beauty, "all wired in silver grey"
 but here its "yellow honeyed flowers" have yet to see the light of day.
 In South of Oz it seems to make an effort extraordinaire,
 Pity, that here in NSW, it really doesn't seem to care.

I wonder if it's the company where I make it stay?
 All in a part of the garden which is designed for silver grey.
 Flannel flowers or cassia that it finds especially rude, or
 Possibly that prostanthera or corymbia could be crude?

It seems most unlikely that it would be quick to take offence,
 After all, a bush that hangs off cliff faces possesses common sense.
 And if gale force winds are a bagatelle for this little aussie hulk
 What's there about my garden that causes him so to sulk?

In gardening, we seek reasons when best dug plans go awry
 And I think I know the answer for my lack of *L. brownii*,
 It goes without saying that its nought to do with me
 It's this changeable Sydney weather and its darned humidity.

A special request

Kevin Handreck writes that he has nearly finished writing another book, to be called *Water Matters: Good Gardens with Less Water*¹. It will be published by Landlinks Press (= CSIRO). While it will feature many Australian plants, it will not do so to the exclusion of other suitable plants that survive on minimal water.

Kevin is now searching for a photo or image that he could use for the front cover. It should be a garden scene, of drought-tolerant plants, preferably mainly Australian natives, with an exotic or two that blend in.

Is there any member of the Garden Design Study Group who has access to a suitable picture showing a garden which blends a few suitable exotics with Australian plants? If so, please let me know. DS

DESIGN

A garden to attract birds and frogs

Therese Scales Vic

The clients for this garden live in Eltham, an outer suburb of Melbourne in a relatively new housing estate. There are some areas of remnant indigenous vegetation left in the area which my clients have retained but they are saddened that their neighbours have replaced the indigenous flora with exotic species. The need to attract the native birds was a strong priority so I included correas, banksias, and grevilleas. I have also included many indigenous species such as *Acacia acinacea*, *A. implexa*, *Banksia integrifolia*, *Cassina aculeata*, *Correa glabra*, *C. reflexa*, *Goodenia ovata*, *Myroporum parvifolium* and *Poa labillardieri*. The clients were excited at the prospect of having a frog bog to listen to the sounds of croaking at night. The site is sloping, which means I could include a water fall flowing into the pond, built with huge granite rocks. The entire garden, in particular the waterfall, can be viewed from the deck which sits at the top of the block.

The design takes on a Japanese influence of curved paths, large areas of ground cover and mossed covered rocks and of course the large water feature. The other Japanese influence being the need to imitate nature. The drawing is a section of the entire design. The whole design would be too large to put on an A4 page in detail. Other areas include a vegetable garden, lots of grevilleas and a dry stone creek bed. The soil in Eltham is clay with virtually no top soil and will be broken up with the use of gypsum and compost. The construction has not started yet, but I am looking forward to the results.

North is pointing directly to the top right hand corner of the page.

"Restraint is a fundamental principle of good gardening. Simplicity brings a sense of calm, whereas too many ideas and too much variety creates a sense of restlessness." Penelope Hobhouse, *'A Gardener's Journal'*, 1997.

"Compared to designers in other fields, gardeners have a trickier time succeeding on a visual level, since our building blocks are alive, with schedules and needs that might not fit a particular decorating scheme." Adam Levine, *'Garden Design'*, 1999.

PLANTS

Survival of Australian plants

John Hoile NSW

In the past I've deliberately made mild references to plants dying prematurely in the hope that it would prompt other comment before I weighed in.

In the water-wise debate I believe it's a serious issue, particularly if we aim to promote Australian plants to the general community. Not so much in our own gardens where plants can expect the best of care but in the community as a whole where it's survival of the fittest. Yet we claim fitness as being an important attribute of Australian plants.

In my region, in public and private Australian plantings of shrubs and trees are dying like flies. While, in general, water-wise exotics are hanging on, or have better capacity to recover after a shower of rain. Note it's conspicuously planted stock that's dying, not those growing naturally along the roadside or in reserves.

I have few resources to do trials nowadays but possible cause of death may be:

1. Inadequate soil preparation. Could it be that planted stock needs better preparation than naturally sown plants to ensure well developed roots to drought-proof the plant?
2. Pot-bound to start. Australian natives, as a rule, being faster growers than exotics. Nurseries too often thinking they need to make money by hanging on to the plant until sold no matter what.
3. The idea that plants from tubes cannot get pot-bound.
4. The reluctance to tease roots out because of a fear of damaging the root hairs.
5. The idea in some quarters that plants indigenous to the local area must be better than imports. One of the stand-out survivors here are forms of *Callistemon viminalis*, not indigenous at all to this area and cutting-grown to boot.

This issue must be the biggest impediment to popularity of Australian plants today. "Grow What Where" is a fabulous resource for the community but in the globalisation race in plant selection in the wider community, our plants must potentially be up with the best. They should be well placed to meet opportunities of climate change and water scarcity. Unfortunately, despite all efforts, some good gardeners tell me "been there, done that". The bar has been raised yet again.

Plants you can trust

Diana Snape Vic

Many of us are attracted to those beautiful but hard-to-grow plants (possibly from W.A., for those of us in the east) that act as a magnet in nurseries. There's nothing wrong with this, as long as when we buy we're prepared for the possibility of a relatively short lifetime - though of course sometimes we can be lucky. However it's important to have some reliable, hardy plants we can trust, knowing they will do well in our garden situation. It's good to be able to provide a framework of plants that will survive for the life of the garden, or at least as long as we want them too. These are the sort of plants we should be recommending to people who are newcomers to using Australian plants in garden design (see John's article above).

It would be an interesting and helpful exercise for ALL members to list up to 10 plants they trust in their particular conditions (see Jo's letter p3) - any sort of plant, ranging from trees to groundcovers, with anything in between. We could then see how much these lists overlap. We'll assume climatic conditions as they have been in recent years, though we all know that the climate is not stable. **Please send us YOUR list**, noting where you live and anything particular or important about your local conditions. Mention if you find a plant on your list needs a little watering, otherwise we'll assume natural rainfall is sufficient.

GARDENS

Judging gardens - further thoughts

Chris Larkin Vic

The 'Criteria for a descriptive assessment of a garden's design', reprinted in Newsletter no. 56 but originally published in the November newsletter of 2003, was developed with reference to a set of criteria for judging gardens that had appeared many years prior in the Newsletter. The reason the Melbourne group moved away from the idea of 'judging' to 'assessing' was largely because we thought that an assessment tool would be most useful to help focus attention on what kinds of things one looks for in a well-designed garden. This tool can be used for instance by members when assessing their own gardens or guide them in taking a critical look at any garden they visit. To some extent this list of criteria should help to demystify what sorts of things we should be looking for and thinking about when talking about garden design. Diana's article on 'Planning or designing a garden - is there a difference?' (NL 57) attempts in a few paragraphs to flesh this out and give it meaning. Diana states that a well-designed garden will integrate the hard and soft landscape so that the whole garden is beautiful: a complex business she declares. If we want to know why a garden is beautiful (or how we can achieve a beautiful garden), we can analyse it and look at the components, or criteria, by which it achieves this overall feeling.

Garden design attempts to make an art form out of gardening. Isn't it the realm of all good design to affect the human spirit - our emotional, spiritual, aesthetic sensibilities? That being said we are right to bring our reason to any evaluation of what we are presented with so that, for instance, our response sits comfortably with our personal ethical framework. A reasoned evaluation may lead us to come to a different conclusion about what we think about a design from our initial response. Not to be too obtuse, what I'm thinking of here is the very real possibility of thinking a garden is beautiful only to discover it uses an unsustainable amount of water, or that it contains plants that are weedy in the area. Marketing, manipulation, propaganda and cultural prejudice all rely on successful design conveying a message, eliciting a response that is accepted without question or the kind of analysis that enables us to understand our reactions, to make sense of what we are feeling and to square it off with our ethical framework. A corollary of this is the more informed you are about anything you want to critically assess the better you will be able to appreciate and talk about its strengths and weaknesses.

Shirley Pipitone has been involved in the business of judging gardens in the ACT. In Newsletter no. 57 she has provided us with two attachments. The first attachment is a list of criteria that she used in 2006; the second is what she intends to use if asked again in 2007. The criteria she uses have understandably many overlaps with what has been put forward in the list of 'Criteria for a descriptive assessment of a garden' as she too based her first list on the criteria for judging a garden that she found in the GDSG Newsletter. Shirley has organised the information differently to the assessment tool, placing criteria under different headings and introducing some new ones. I don't know whether the way she has organised it would make it harder or easier to use if you were giving a mark in each category. I am also unsure about whether marking each category and then totalling the scores is the best way to work out which garden is the best and which is the second best and so on.

One thing that hasn't been talked about by Shirley is the different outcomes that are possible from there being any more than one judge. I would certainly suggest that 2 or 3 judges using the same criteria might be preferable; perhaps discussion around the criteria might lead each judge to come to a final numeric score, then these scores could be averaged to get a final ranking. In this case the criteria merely enable you to

mount a reasoned argument for why you believe a particular garden is worth a particular mark. Which brings us right back to the effect any individual judge will have on what that score is. Break it down as much as you like into a list of criteria, and the second Attachment does just that in comparison to the first, at the end of the day value judgements have to be made and they are not, and never can be, wholly objective. So the reasoned position is the best we can and should hope for - another judge or set of judges may come up with a different winner but I would hope and expect they would have their reasons for doing so.

I was involved with another person in judging gardens for a competition run by the local council only once and I wouldn't want to under-estimate the difficulty of the task. In the competition 'native' and 'exotic' gardens were entered in separate categories. For a long time I thought this was because the organisers believed the exotic gardens would always out-compete the Australian plant gardens but the real reasons was the reverse. The criteria that the council set were environmentally weighted - wildlife friendly, sustainable, use of local plants - and without a separate category for exotic gardens none of them would have gained a place. In recent years the council has moved right away from the idea of a competition, in part because it became a bit stale. They have replaced it with something which is 'process' orientated rather than 'product' orientated and they have called it 'Gardens for Wildlife'. This is a program designed to encourage people to develop their gardens, or a section at least, to support wildlife. When you register your garden it is assessed by a council employed conservation officer who places it in one of 5 categories, the idea being that you move through these categories as you learn how to make your garden more wildlife friendly. But I digress - the council's competition never was about which garden was the best designed although there is no doubt that the most sustainable, wildlife friendly garden that is also well designed would win over one that is poorly designed.

Shirley has asked us for any comments on what she has included as criteria in the Attachments; I will refer only to the second Attachment as it reflects Shirley's latest thinking. I am not sure about the first criteria 'Sense of arrival' as it contains a wide range of things, some appearing to overlap with other criteria. For example the question 'Does it reflect the personality and lifestyle of owners?' is echoed further down under 'Suited to purpose', and entry to the house could be covered under 'Paths and hard surfaces'. Also I don't think it is important if a judge can 'capture the essence of a garden' and wonder whether the question could be 'Is the garden harmonious, balanced and unified?' which gets at the idea of whether the garden is working in its entirety. 'Harmony and unity' is one of the criteria that has been dropped from the first Attachment. Finally I would not like 'Sense of arrival'¹ to be connected to first impressions for the reasons I have given in paragraph two above, as we can be seduced by love at first sight but soon after we may want to beat a hasty retreat when we have time to look more critically at the garden.

In November 2006 Linda Johnston, in talking about 'Criteria for judging a garden' says that it should include a criterion like 'fitness for purpose' to assess whether the garden is successful in meeting the needs of the owners. Shirley has included this idea in her listing and I'm not so sure it has a place, or anything but an optional place, in any assessment list let alone judging criteria. The problem is I don't think whether the garden 'suits the owner's purpose' or 'reflects the personality and lifestyle of the owner' has any real bearing on the matter of whether the garden is a beautiful, unified, balanced, sustainable, well-managed, interesting etc. garden. I can well imagine a garden failing to meet the needs of its owners but being considered a well-designed garden by all other criteria! I also don't think there is a place for garden owners' personalities and desires to have any bearing on the assessment of a garden's design, although of course these things should have a bearing on which garden design the owners choose to have and how happy they are with the

result. People go on about design being about the successful and beautiful resolution of a problem so I know you could argue that if a garden doesn't meet the needs of the owners then it is a flawed design, and it is certainly a criticism of a garden which was attempting to meet these needs and failed to do so. But once the garden is finished its success or failure can be adequately described by the criteria, many of which are about how the garden functions and relates to the home. Given the power of fashion, I can imagine clients insisting on a certain garden style and then finding they have not made a wise choice given their life-styles - does it then follow that the garden's design is poor? When judging house design the criteria should cover all aspects of its liveability and sustainability for whoever lives in it without reference to the needs of any specific person and I am saying the same thing about gardens.

My last comment is that the list of criteria used by Shirley appears to have omitted any mention of a 'balance of open and closed space', which I think is one of the most important elements leading to the success or otherwise of any garden design. It could possibly fit well in the 'Structure' category.

Jan & Alan Hall's 'no-water' drought resistant garden

Brenda Moore Vic

A report written for the Daisy Study Group and first published in their newsletter but very relevant for the GDSG (with permission).

In May 2007, Jan Hall gave Daisy Study Group members an interesting presentation on drought resistant, water-wise gardens based on her recent experiences in creating a garden in an inhospitable environment in Yarrawonga. Over two years ago, Jan and husband Alan moved from a large acreage and nursery on flat clay plains, with hot dry summers and cooler moist winters, to a flat two-hectare windswept block adjoining an airport -this resulting in a happy husband and a wife with a determination to create a garden in extremely difficult conditions.

The house was built with passive solar heating and is sited east-west with big windows to the north. Water tanks were installed to harness any available water and keep it on site. With the house completed, Jan and Alan drew up a garden plan based on ten metre grids so that they could keep a record of what was planted where. The property has a slight gradient to the back of the block. This gradient was deliberately 'disturbed' by putting in mounds and an ephemeral wetland. Early in the project, twelve truckloads of clay soil collected from a previously owned property were used to form these huge mounds which now contain maybe 30-40 cubic metres of soil, sandy loam, compost and gypsum. Jan still adds gypsum and dolomite loam and compost to every planting hole. There are apparently no landscapers in Yarrawonga, so Alan valiantly took on a lot of the heavy work. (Well, he did have the pleasure of looking at the aircraft hangar in the background!)

A bulldozer was brought in to break up the clay loam which probably had been untouched for the past forty or so years. Any existing vegetation appeared to be imported, with just a few native grasses. With the prevailing winds coming from the south-west it was decided to have windbreaks all around the property. Box, iron bark, wattles and other suitable trees were planted and have been continuously added to. Planning involved thinking about sustainability, being water wise and harvesting water, careful selection of plants, checking where they originated from and what type of conditions they needed so that the garden could be zoned efficiently.

- Zone 1 covers the area around the house and includes the vegetable garden and the things that Jan 'can fuss over' and spot water as necessary.

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- Zone 2 contains plants that need to be helped through their first summer.
- Zone 3 consists of indigenous and other tougher plants and covers the area furthest from the house.

As far as possible, the garden is designed on a system of 'dished' mounds (gravel mulched) and drains to catch water and allow it to seep into the soil. Water is collected at one corner of the house and goes into a pond, with the landscape designed so that any overflow goes down a specially constructed dry creek bed to an ephemeral wetland. Jan and Alan have made a wide spoon drain along the length of the mounds to act as a seepage line for any water that collects. A large rubble drain approximately 60 x 60 cm has been filled with broken bricks and topped with gravel - with plans for more attractive river pebbles to be added as a final covering at a later stage. Smaller drains carefully dug out along either side of the paths collect any available moisture and plants which need moisture are planted near these drains. If the road gets flooded there are perforated agricultural drains to take away the water from where it collects and move it to where it can be useful. An effluent system containing 300 metres of drip line irrigates trees in part of the windbreak and these have grown well, providing some shelter for the property at last.

We learned that Jan is pretty expert at finding a use for free or inexpensive, available materials e.g. river pebbles were collected from a discarded heap by the roadside and used to line the pond. (The frogs quickly found the ponds and the birds quickly found the frogs - but Jan says there have always been some survivors to carry on the cycle). Second hand crazy paving was used in the paths. Logs for the garden are plentiful as trees are cut down at the airport at times. Some unwanted boulders have been acquired from a neighbour. Together, these have resulted in a naturalistic effect in the garden.

As well as working valiantly on practical garden tasks, Jan and Alan, together with the APS members in the region, in particular Barbara Buchanan, have produced a comprehensive little booklet entitled *"It's Only Natural - Water-wise Gardening in North-East Victoria"*. It contains lists of suitable water-wise plants for the area as well as some easy to follow garden designs and other useful information. Wangaratta APS members collaborated with the local authorities and the agencies that edited and paid for the printing of the booklet.*. Jan showed us the photographs of the development of her garden which she has used to illustrate her talks to local community groups and interested gardeners and some inspiring slides of gardens and landscapes she has learned from. Her talk was very interesting and informative and demonstrated how dedicated and hardworking gardeners can apply their skills and knowledge and, through careful planning, not only survive in difficult circumstances but also create a place of beauty.

We were most appreciative of Jan's input to our meeting and the time and energy she put into her presentation despite an already demanding schedule. Thank you Jan.

*To access the booklet *"It's Only Natural"* go to the Wangaratta council web site at www.wangaratta.vic.gov.au. Click on 'Environment and Waste' on the side menu, then click on 'Water Use', then click on 'Water wise'.

**A detailed article by Jan entitled *"No-water gardening"* can be found in the APS Vic. quarterly magazine *"Growing Australian"* for March 2007. If you haven't read it yet - you should.

If members from other States would also like to read Jan's article, please let me know. DS

In February 2005 some members of the NSW GDSG visited our garden as part of a Central Coast weekend (see Jo's report Newsletter May 2005.) In the two plus years since the visit the garden has grown considerably and is developing some character. The rain of last summer and continuing has been really a blessing. There was great growth in the autumn - which is satisfying after the slow progress during the drought.

We purchased our property of 4.87h in 2001 and commenced the garden around the house in 2002. We did not really have a clear idea when we started of exactly what we were hoping to achieve - we knew we wanted to have only Australian plants and we didn't want a 'bush garden' close to the house. A large proportion of the block is bush - tall gums, remnant rainforest and we have removed lots of lantana and privet. We were aware the bush required care and to expand our knowledge we joined Land for Wildlife and took part in the Wildlife Corridors Project. Latterly we have had the property declared a Wildlife Refuge. Paddocks previously used for horses we are allowing to revegetate and so increase the 'bush' area. To hide a potential neighbour we have planted an introduced forest of Syzgiums, Elaeocarpus and non local Eucalypts.

We are on the top of a hill and have winds from all directions - salt sea winds and hot westerlies and we have used indigenous plants for windbreaks. We have removed all but one tree of the avenue of Liquid Amber, Oaks & Elm. Drastic - but our climate on the Central Coast does not allow for the full potential of autumn colour, the roots prevented plant growth and the fallen leaves created another job. Shade will be provided away from the garden edge with a planting of Eucalypts, White Cedars and some rainforest species.

In the five & a half years we have had many plants come and go and have found that we can have an interesting plant collection to complement the bush background and encourage a wildlife population. Many birds visit the garden, an echidna, possums, small marsupials and a swamp wallaby in the bush.

In the early days of our interest in creating the garden we met Angus Stewart who was already involved in developing various species of Kangaroo Paw. He was looking for an area to do some trials in a domestic situation and as we had a lot of empty space for a time we worked together. In February this year Angus approached us to take part in an episode of Gardening Australia to highlight the benefits of using Australian plants for creating wildlife habitat and corridors. Following assurances that the camera can lie (as far as weeds are concerned) we agreed to take part, as we do believe showing people what can be done can help encourage others to do the same.

The filming was an experience. A crew consisting of Angus (the interviewer), a Producer, a Camera man and a Sound recordist spent the equivalent of a full day with us. The result, considering our nerves (and the weeds) was quietly pleasing - the crew was very sympathetic to the camera shy, and the editors did a great job...the photography made the birds and plants look splendid. Hopefully someone was inspired.

I'm sure many would have been. DS

Melbourne garden visits in March

Diana Snape Vic

First we visited the **Knox Community Centre** to look at the extensive gardens that have been established on a difficult site, which includes extremely steep and high clay banks on two sides of the building. The landscaping which has been carried out makes very effective use of well chosen, reliable plants. Around the car parking areas, in addition to the use of eucalypts and hedges of the customary westringia, numerous hedges of a dwarf *Acacia pravissima* (possibly 'Tricolour') have been pruned at a

Hedges of dwarf *Acacia pravissima* 'Tricolour' at the Knox Community Centre

couple of different heights. This is particularly effective in a triangular garden where this plant forms a wedge of foliage trimmed to a metre or so, through which a number of eucalypt trunks emerge. Even in winter with no colourful new foliage or flowers, the acacia foliage provides a very attractive understorey to the eucalypts. In a garden area sloping up to the building, prostrate *Goodenia ovata* and the low *Myoporum insulare* have been planted to eventually cover large areas in among trees.

The steep banks had previously been stabilized with many large rocks, so more recent planting has been earned out in among them. For a public area, there was a variety of successful planting and maintenance seemed good. Hanging over a wall, a very prostrate, drooping form of *Acacia cognata* provides fine, pendent foliage at eye level. There is pleasing repetition of a number of plants, for example an excellent low form of *Grevillea lanigera* and one of the dwarf forms of *Banksia spinulosa* were both conspicuous in flower. Other grevilleas included *G.* 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' and *G.* 'Poorinda Royal Mantle'. A grand set of steps tapered inwards as it climbed higher, the perspective effect making it look even grander.

Then we moved on to **Chris Larkin's garden** where recent huge changes in her neighbourhood due to subdivision and MacMansion-building have presented both problems and opportunities. The problems include screening from view some of the new development which she overlooks, while the opportunities include a more gently sloping drive with appealing new pathways created at different levels on either side of it. These both mean a lot of work, to which Chris with her large garden is no stranger! However she is now

determined (even more carefully than in the past) to select the most appropriate plants to last permanently. I hadn't seen the garden for some time, so it was interesting to note some of the changes. Growth of trees has given the garden maturity but also has increased shade and, probably more significantly for growth of other plants, dryness of the soil. Loss of one large plant, an old banksia at a level above the house, had seemed a disaster at first but then opened out lovely vistas that could be developed further.

Among a number of mature plants flowering in winter were a magnificent *Hakea clavata* and a beautiful *Eremophila maculata*. In one area, large plants with silver-grey foliage including a semi-prostrate *Acacia baileyana* have created an attractive flowing effect which Chris plans to extend further with other plants of similar foliage colour. Her two main pools have settled into the landscape well, though she is not entirely happy with the smaller one and may move several large rocks in closer to it for a more enclosed look. This would also give more space further from the pool to change the position of the path. (This pool is also dark in colour from tannins in the water - something I don't mind at all as this is quite common in natural areas.) In another bed, close to some magnificent plants of *Lomandra hystrix*, she plans to grow different species of other strap-leaved or tufted plants as the understorey for callistemons. There are plans in mind for both major and minor developments in a number of different areas, sometimes where plant losses have occurred or plant removal decided on. This visit we concentrated on the 'front' of the garden which has lately seen more significant changes -we barely looked at the large 'back' garden. Chris is really a perfectionist, conscious of both large scale effects in her garden and design details.

Australian plant gardens in the AOGS 07/08

Jeff Howes NSW

I have been on the Sydney Committee of the Australian Open Garden Scheme (representing APS NSW) for six years now. For the soon to be launched 2007/2008 season there is a dramatic increase in gardens described as totally or predominately native plants to what there has been in past years. The number of such gardens open by State are: NSW & ACT 22, Vic 14, Qld 6, SA 7, WA 15, Tas 4 and NT 2.

The Australian Open Garden Scheme Guidebook has just been released and is available from major newsagents and of course the ABC shop for \$16.50. It features opening details etc of 650 gardens open all round Australia, so there is no excuse for sitting home at weekends with so many great gardens to visit.

This is the 20th anniversary of the founding of the scheme and there will be many special promotions in all states - thanks Peter Olde, Shirley Pipitone and Diana Snape for waving the native plant flag. I hope all these native plant gardeners have a great opening, fine weather and many, many visitors.

The following are all the gardens predominately or all Australian plants that are opening in the 2007/08 season for the Australian Open Garden Scheme (AOGS) in the **Sydney** region. There will be other gardens featuring Australian plants opening in NSW. Details of these gardens are available in the AOGS handbook. The AOGS has grown into the premium community-based gardening organisation in Australia and the second largest not-for-profit garden scheme in the world (after the National Garden Scheme in England). The scheme has raised millions of dollars for charities.

September 15-16, 2007

Amber's Patch,
Howes garden,
Chorizanna,
Elouera,

October 2007

Peter Olde at Silky Oaks,
 Kim Rudder's Native Garden,
 Malcolm & Jenny Johnston at Boongala,

March 2008

Malcolm & Jenny Johnston at Boongala,
 Wombarra Sculpture Garden,

April 2008

Sextons at Blackstump Natives, .

In **Victoria**, the following Australian plant gardens are opening in the 2007/08 AOGS season. September is the busy month but it's good to see a spread of gardens over other months and also little overlap. Professional designers were involved in the design of some of these gardens (*). DS

September 2007

1-2 Ford & Adams g *Gordon Ford
 Research g *SamCox
 8-9 Cheryl's g
 15-16 Camg
 Vaughan's Aus. Plant G
 22-23 Snape g
 29-30 Barker g *Bev Hanson

October 2007 (both out of town)

20-21 Bush Flora
 Gardeners Plot
 Wed 24 Diana Snape 'Right Australian Plant, Right Place' morning seminar

November 2007

25 Latreille g back g of Aus plants) *Paul Thompson

January 2008

26-27 Bev Fox's g

February 2008

2-3 Neville & Ola's g *Gordon Ford, *Sam Cox
 23-24 Giraween *Paul Thompson

March 2008 (out of town)

22-24 King Parrot Valley Retreat

April 2008

26-27 Hanson g * Bev Hanson

May 2008

Sat 10 Shirley Pipitone 'Right Plant, Right Place' morning workshop

BOOKS

Isn't **ANYONE** out there reading **ANY** books about garden design and/or Australian plants?? If you are, please tell us about them - we'd really like your comments. I've just received the July Catalogue of Florilegium (the garden bookstore in Sydney) which lists over 1000 books, not all relevant to us, but the 114 on garden design or the 51 on Australian plants could be. Books can widen our horizons and give us new ideas!

SNIPPETS

Waratah colours

In her regular article in the June *'Australian Horticulture'*, Gwen Elliot wrote of the latest variety of waratah - *Telopea* 'Shady Lady Yellow'. Yes, it has yellow flowers. It has been bred from a yellow form of the Tasmanian waratah, *T. truncata*, and should now be on general release. I have mixed feelings about this, as I have about the white waratah - I like my waratahs red - though I must admit I do look forward to a range of in-between colours in future varieties. This will increase the potential for colourful landscaping on a grand scale (assuming you're able to grow waratahs). DS

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

MEETINGS

Melbourne Branch meetings

Chris Larkin

Report of Melbourne meeting March 10

We met at the **Knox Community Centre** Studpark CC, Fulham Rd, Rowville (Melway 81K1) for our first garden visit and later moved on to **Chris Larkin's garden** (see article page 13). Over afternoon tea we discussed **future directions** the Study Group might take. The importance of the website was raised and the idea of analysing design elements shown in specific photographs of gardens. The difficulty of obtaining enough really good photos of well designed gardens (or sections of gardens) is still a limiting factor. The possibility of paying a professional photographer each year to take pictures of one or two really good gardens was raised, then the thought of recording in a booklet the design history of a special garden such as Elspeth Jacob's (which originally belonged to Rodger and Gwen Elliot). Another suggestion was for booklets concentrating in turn on individual aspects of garden design, for example pools, or groundcovers to provide open space in small gardens. (The enormous houses being built around Chris's place reminded us of the very small size being allowed for most gardens nowadays.) The difficulty for many members of interpreting or 'seeing' plans was also raised.

Next Melbourne meeting - Sunday September 9th - Glaxo gardens

Please meet at Bev Fox's home at 1.30pm so that we can assess numbers and carpool for our visit to nearby Glaxo gardens. For security reasons we need to have the names of people who intend coming along so could you **please let Chris know by ringing her**

Glaxo gardens are now a few decades old. Several people have been involved in designing different sections of the gardens over the years. Paul Thompson, most particularly, and Roger Stone, to a much lesser extent, were involved earlier in the garden's development. Several other designers, with varying degrees of success, have been used in recent times to design discrete area of the gardens. Additionally, individuals in charge of garden maintenance like Monika Hermann and Colin Turner have also had a hand in things beyond just garden management. For more information on the history of these gardens and a walk around one of (arguably) Australia's largest and oldest corporate Australian plant gardens, do join us for this (Spring time tour.

Melbourne End of Year Meeting - Sunday Nov 25th - Karwarra Gardens

We propose to have a picnic lunch at the gardens which we have not visited for a number of years. Earlier

this year Marilyn Gray was seconded to compile a flora listing for the shire and so the garden has been under new management. How have these gardens been affected by having a different person at the helm? Come and see for yourself. BYO everything to enjoy a picnic lunch; meet at 12 at the front gate.

Sydney Branch meetings

Jo Hambrett NSW

Please RSVP: **Jo Hambrett**

Next meeting Because the ASGAP Conference is being held in Newcastle in September/October and all APS members are encouraged to attend, there will not be another meeting of the Sydney Branch this year. I am away at that time for 6 weeks.

2008. Next year we are looking at **March 08** in Orange - kindly organised by **Carolyn Gunter** and **Oct- Nov 08** at **Gordon Rowland's** property on the North Coast - both weekend trips.

North East Vic Branch meetings

Barbara Buchanan Vic

Next meeting will be at Freida Andrews and John Lloyd's home on **Sunday August 12th at 10.30am.** Directions are available (from 3 different starting points) from Barbara. John is finishing building their home and it is time to think more closely about their garden. Early on they had some professional advice about the overall layout especially in the drive area and he has already planted many indigenous plants. Freida is thinking of small pretties close to the house and seeking ideas on the best way to achieve her aims. It promises to be an interesting day.

PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE TO A SUNDAY

Report of Meeting Saturday 16th June

The last meeting was poorly attended, this was both a pity and a blessing. We began at van Riet's which is looking fantastic, so different from the flat block we saw not so long ago. It is hard to believe the pool hasn't always been there, it sits so well on the site. The vigour and health of almost all plants (Helen has trouble with banksias) is an important ingredient, as are the several 'sculptures', the repetition with variation, the sheer variety of plants with well contrasted foliage and form, the self-sowing daisies filling any gaps all add up to a most satisfying garden.

Helen called for ideas for planting the latest strip of a boundary bed to be reworked. It is an important part of the screen from the road and so needs a solid backdrop and she thought of using grey-leaved plants. Although usually the lighter foliage goes to the rear to increase the feeling of distance, the team convinced Helen in this case to have a dark background as a setting for the greys and silvers she plans.

Over lunch the main topic was our new Benalla garden. The outlines for the front are much as I envisaged them, there isn't much flexibility in the small space. I have since been talking to a young man with a 'dingo' about doing the earthworks. The collection of plants growing on in pots has been raided for Myrrhee replacements, but is still a good start, I hope. It is amazing how an empty bed can just swallow plants. There are a few of my non-eucalypt, non-acacia small trees, a *Jacksonia scoparia*, a *Pittosporum angustifolium* (*phylliraecoides*) a *Hymenosporum flavum*, a *Melaleuca alternifolia*, a few Hakeas and (keep it quiet) a couple of varnish wattles, Avenel form, snuck in because Alan's family came from there. I learned that taking the top out of the Hymenosporum should lead to an umbrella shaped tree, here most of them have had their tops blown out in gales. I have a *Persoonia linearis* on order, other melaleucas have gone in here.

At 1.30 we arrived at Park Lane nursery to look at their proposed extensions but unfortunately no-

one from their staff turned up. The wind had become rather chilly, so we did not linger except to make some purchases which their volunteers were able to handle and Thea and I headed for the quilt show, while the others headed home.

Do you want a mental exercise for the next meeting? We saw a wine barrel sealed and used as a water feature in a garden in Beechworth that the Wang group visited. About the same time Gardening Australia showed a large ceramic pot being sealed and used to grow aquatic plants. A plastic pot would be cheaper. I would like something similar to look at from my kitchen window in Benalla. I don't want at this stage to indulge in fountains etc., but you might. What suggestions do you have?

ACT Branch meetings

Shirley Pipitone ACT

Next meeting - Monday 27 August 10am, Maureen Mutton's garden,

Special event - Sunday 23 September 10 am , Orana School Open Garden, Unwin Place Weston

FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2006-07

Brian Loft Treasurer

INCOME

2005/06 membership subscriptions	\$ 20.00
2006/07 membership subscriptions	\$ 529.00
2007/08 membership subscriptions	\$ 721.00
2008/09 membership subscriptions	\$ 126.00
Unsolicited donations	\$ 25.00
Royalties from book	\$ 2779.00
Bank Interest-cheque account	\$ 51.37
Bank Interest - term deposit	<u>\$ 1248.71</u>
Total	<u>\$ 5500.08</u>

EXPENDITURE

Newsletter expenses:		
printing & copying	\$1034.73	
postage	\$ 350.00	\$1384.73
Membership sub Friends of RBG Cranbourne		<u>\$ 25.00</u>
Total		<u>\$1409.73</u>

Operating surplus for year **\$ 4090.35**

Members funds 30 June 2007

Balance 30/6/06	\$29,637.11
Plus operating surplus for 2006/07	\$ 4,090.35
Balance 30/6/07	\$ 33,727.46
Represented by:	
Balance Westpac Community Solutions cheque account	\$ 10,844.16
Westpac term deposit maturing Nov 2007	\$22,883.30
Total	\$ 33,727.46

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.

Sally Gomes-Trent

Trish & Brian Harris

Chris Walker-Cook

Renewals

Philip & Julia Rose (2 years),

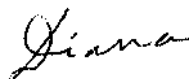
Ingrid Adler, Ros Andrews, Ian Anderson, APS Blue Mountains Group, Library Aust National Botanic Gardens, APS South Australia, APS Victoria, APS Maroondah, ANPS Canberra, Joan Barrett, Carol Bentley, Sue Bendel, Dora Berenyi, Sue Booker, Leeanne Brockway, Nicholas Bryant, Barbara Buchanan, Dale Butler, Margaret Clarke, June Copeland, Ian & Tamara Cox, Ruth Crosson, Christine Cullen, Heather Daley, Glenda & Bernie Datson, Jennifer Davidson, Dominic Dela-Libera, Kay Dempsey, Betty Denton, Judith Dykes, Rodger & Gwen Elliot, Wendy & David Evans, Jennifer Farrer, Pamela Finger, Ted & Jenny Finnie, Linda Floyd, Christine & Angelo Gaiardo, Barrie Gallacher, Peter & Wilma Garnham, Sally Gomes-Trent, Ron Gornall, Jan Gough-Watson, Caroline Gunter, Jan Hall, Beverley Hanson, Suellen & Brian Harris, Trish & Brian Harris, Romaine Hamor, Heather Haughton, Monika Herrmann, John Hoile, Annette & John Houseman, Jeffery Howes, Fiona Johnson, Julie Jones, Linda Johnston, Bev Kapernick, Paul & Barbara Kennedy, Chris Larkin, Margaret Lee, Bryan Loft, Geoffrey & Ann Long, Faleiry Koczkar, Thea McCarthy, Win Main, Maureen Mallard, Neil & Wendy Marriott, Ann & Ray Mills, Brenda & Tony Moore, Gillian Morris, Helen Morrow, Leigh Murray, Leeorne Neal, Anne Neild, Barry Nilsson, Neil Palframan, Georgina & Jonathan Perse, Thelma & Don Peterson, Michele Pymble, Ann Raine, Lynette & Peter Reilly, Philip & Julia Rose, Gordon Rowland, Paula Rumble, Karen & Geoff Russell, Gwen Sanders, Therese Scales, Ros St Clair, Kris Schapper, Dr Janet Schapper, SGAP Queensland Region, Peter Shannon, Shiela Simpson-Lee, Diana & Brian Snape, Carmel Statham, Hazel Sullivan, Gloria Thomlinson, John & Helen Van Reit, Rosemary Verbeeten, Rosalind & Benjamin Walcott, Chris Walker-Cooke, Merele Webb, Maureen & Norman Webb, Aileen Westbrook, Wildflower Society of WA, Tim Wilson, Pam Yarra,

Thank you very much to Bryan Loft for all the work he puts into acting as Treasurer, in addition to Membership Secretary, for the Study Group. We are very grateful for his time and efforts. Thanks also to all other contributors to this NL - their articles, plans and ideas represent the true work of the Study Group.

Please think about the ideas raised in this Newsletter (and recent ones) regarding future projects for the Group. I think it's helpful if we can set ourselves specific goals to aim for, giving us some guidelines as to what we should focus on now. Meanwhile don't forget to send us your list of 10 plants you trust.

It's a great time of the year, with Spring just about to start (in fact, it seems to be starting already in Melbourne). Is mild August weather encouraging plants to begin flowering earlier than usual? I'm a bit concerned because I want those in our garden to wait for our Open Garden weekend in late September. Good luck to all members who are having their gardens open in the Scheme; I have always found it a very rewarding experience (as long as it doesn't rain) and it is a good way to show members of the general public how our Australian plant gardens look.

Best wishes



Diana Snape