



GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

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Dear Members,

In these times of accelerated global warming and sustainability and biodiversity issues I feel especially proud to be a member of ASGAP and the GDSG.

Catching and diverting precious water runoff, choosing the right plant for the right place, placing plants with similar water requirements together, installing rainwater tanks, less dependence on pesticides, creating habitat friendly gardens and of course growing Australian, especially indigenous, plants are all ways that gardeners can make their contribution in finding a solution to these problems. Many ASGAP and GDSG members, in their capacity as landscape architects, horticulturists, botanists, nurserymen and environmentalists, or, as equally committed amateurs, have embraced such practices for decades. Sadly, it seems as though it takes the threat of worldwide environmental disasters before the interest of the general public is roused. In attempting to understand and not intimidate our bit of *country*, that is, having the right conversation with this ancient land, ASGAP and GDSG members' gardening practices are inherently tuned to environmental responsibility. On the 15th anniversary of the GDSG and the 50th anniversary of the ASGAP, congratulations to all of you bright stars, long may you shine on our troubled landscape.

A huge thank you to Lawrie Smith for the redesign of our newsletter header, nicely marking our first fifteen years. His amazing patience with a certain deeply challenged technological Luddite, was greatly appreciated indeed. I do hope you all like it – our logo, originally designed by Diana, has been kept [only marginally modified] as an homage to the history of the Study Group and its founder. To celebrate our 15th Anniversary you will receive this NL in colour – it costs an extra \$1/NL for colour so if you would like to continue receiving colour NLs we would need to put (non email) membership costs up by \$2/year (from next financial year) to cover costs. Do let us know what you think.

You will note that an FYI section appears, before Correspondence, it contains exciting information and questions which we need you all to read, answer and provide feedback on, hopefully for the November issue. *Do get busy if you haven't renewed your membership – this will be the last NL you will receive if you continue to be unfinancial.*

Remember also to keep an eye on the website as members' photos are going up all the time.

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FYI

Our First 60 Newsletters now on CD

Some time back, we talked about the usefulness of having our first 60 newsletters available on a CD. These correspond to the first 15 years of the GDSG. I had some newsletters in digital form but most needed to be scanned from my 'hard copies'. I contacted several firms that scan material, to get quotes for the job. One firm was particularly helpful and also very clear in explaining the various possibilities and their corresponding costs. Not surprisingly, this was the firm that in the end I selected (with the approval of the treasurer!). It was agreed that GDSG funds should cover the cost of obtaining the CD. We decided on having the newsletters in PDF, both as individual newsletters and all together in one PDF document. Fortunately the scanned text was clear and did not need editing (saving cost) but unfortunately scanned pictures have not come out very clearly. Having all the 60 NLs together in one document (numbered to page 1243) means that it's possible to search throughout for any word or phrase. An index of NLs means we can click on to any NL and go to its first page. I'll get the first CDs soon and then we can get a traditional index prepared. Next the index can be incorporated into a final CD and we can get as many copies made as we want, for GDSG members (or others). It sounds quite simple now but it's taken a lot of time and checking (and mind space).

I'm sure it will be worth it.

Best wishes
Diana Snape

Spending our Money..... again!

Yes, I know we have talked about this delightful problem before but...its time again! I feel the group shouldn't have masses of money (and accumulating more due to our canny Treasurers) in the bank without a clear idea of how we will use it even it is if well into the future. Also, these things by their very nature, take an awful lot of time to put into practice, so even *if* we were to decide by November 08 – it would be *at least* a year or two before some or all of the money would be utilised. We are indeed a wealthy little SG, see the Treasurers report... Have a good look at the 4 or so suggestions and let us have your vote [email or postal] preferably by the Nov NL. Jeff and I had a 5th suggestion involving an extended stay at a resort in Rio, however we felt there would not be a lot of support for that idea!

To recap the 2006 (NLs 53 &54) suggestions were:

1. a) Establishment of a book publishing fund
- b) A second book ...possibly entitled- Gardens of the new millennium
2. A garden preservation Fund,]on the basis of their good design DS

3. a) Photographic record DS - a book to follow

b) Photographic competition The photographers would have to give us the rights to their photos for a possible book, There would have to be substantial prize money and it would be advertised widely to encourage as many excellent quality entries as possible.

4. Landscape Design with Australian Plants/ majority indigenous annual GDSG scholarship prize at a suitable educational facility in each state.

Prostanthera Books - to give away

“Cradle of Incense” by George W Althofer 1978

A really wonderful little book, a must have for all APSers – the cradle of incense refers to the areas around Wellington NSW { a circle including Bathurst, Orange, Coonabarabran and Merriwa] where the prostanthera genus flourishes and where George Althofer { a co-founder of the Burrendong Arboretum, amongst many other distinguished achievements } was born. The book contains all the species discovered by the charismatic Mr. Althofer, across Australia twenty years before most were given their botanical names!

.....please send JH a ssae the book weighs 500g.

Back Copies of Newsletters

Diana has some spare back copies of some newsletters. Could you email her the NL numbers of the ones you would like and she can check if they are available – if so, send her a s.s.a.e to cover postage.

All About Study Groups ...an extract by John Walter, Study Group Liaison Officer, APS Vic

I am fascinated by the history of our Society and the lives of the founding members and pioneers. Understanding why the Society was established spurs me on to see it achieve more and this has led me to take on the role of SG Liaison Officer. Amongst our historical documents is the Master Plan of our founder, Arthur Swaby. This plan was not a single document but a series of snippets contained throughout various records. Even more exciting were Swaby’s letters where he detailed the reasons behind his resignation to Sister Enid Bowman. To Swaby SGAP was a failed experiment to be discarded to make way for more interesting ideas and activities.

What was the Master Plan, why did Swaby think SGAP had failed and what has this to do with Study Groups?

In Swaby's draft Constitution the aims of the Society are listed as **1.** To do all in our power to introduce Australian plants into cultivation and to improve them by breeding and selection. **2.** To advocate the establishment of National gardens in all types of soil and climate for the preservation of the flora and the enjoyment and education of the people. **3.** To obey and strengthen the laws and regulations of all bodies given authority under the Governments of the States or Commonwealth for the preservation of flora. **4.** From time to time publish any information which may forward the aims of the Society.

The original structure called for – **1.** A publishing section which shall have no powers of government **2.** A Science section made up of a scientifically minded representative from each region in close collaboration with the Publishing section, to guide and evaluate experiments. **3.** Regions, decided by conditions of soil and climate. To be administered at first by Regional Councils in the capital cities and subdivided when membership and management are available so that each natural region has its own management. **4.** Within the Regions are the local Groups of members, within visiting range and one to each locality. Informal in character and serving to share work and experience. **5.** Research sections, extending beyond the limits of groups and regions for concentrating on one line of research. Overseen by the regional Science sections and coordinated by the Federal Science section. "*Research sections, scores of them are needed, each concentrating on one limited aim.*"

When Swaby resigned in 1962 he cited the failure of the Society to bring new species into cultivation as his major disappointment and expressed concerns over the members' indifference to science and research and their failure to support the Research sections. The Research sections that survived this period were promoted by Bill Payne in Australian Plants and renamed **Study Groups**. Why am I telling you all this? Because I want members to consider joining or supporting a Study Group – your membership makes it easier for the more passionate members to carry out their research. In the end we will all benefit as a wider range of species become available for us to put in our gardens.

I thought this terrific article above, would be of interest, especially historical, to all GDSG members. Start your research now! JH

Australia's Open Garden Scheme (AOGS) Guide for 2008/09 is due in newsagents, ABC shops and book shops in August and is priced under \$20. All members should buy a copy for two very good reasons:

There is a large number of all native or predominately native gardens open around Australia. The number of gardens open are: NSW 22, Vic 20, WA 17, SA 10, QLD 5, NT and Tas unfortunately none. There are three, multiple page articles under the banner of 'Explore Nature by Design – Designers salute Australian natives' More details on these articles follows.

The first article is written by Kate Cullity and is titled 'Elemental Elegance – Poetics of the Australian Landscape' – how innovative design is uncovering the elemental elegance of the Australian landscape. Kate describes her major projects both in Australia and overseas.

The second article is by Germaine Greer and is titled 'Planting corridors of life – A New Approach to Garden Space in Urban Design.' – a very good article on why future landscapes must consider 'wilderness gardens'. The third article is written by Meredith Kirton (a presenter on ABC's Gardening Australia) and is titled 'Period Gardening – Redressing the Old with the New.' This article focuses on updating mature gardens using both natives and exotic plants.

Australian's Open Garden Scheme is a not for profit organisation founded in 1987 to promote the knowledge and pleasure of gardens and gardening across Australia. Since 1987, \$925,000 has been given to community garden projects by AOGS and garden owners have donated over \$4,000,000 to charities and local causes. This year there are over 600 gardens open under the scheme – well worth supporting.

If any member would like more information or to enquire how to open their garden under this scheme, then contact me.

Jeff Howes NSW

Explore the Lost Gardens of Sydney

The lost gardens of Sydney exhibition explores Sydney's rich and diverse gardening heritage. It traces the rise and fall of a number of Sydney gardens and garden styles, from the native bush and significant early colonial gardens, to nurseries and the gardens of the rising middle class, to the small domestic gardens of the inter-war years, to corporate roof-top gardens and threatened gardens of today. The exhibition opens at the Museum of Sydney from 9 August. For more information see www.hht.net.au. There is also an accompanying publication available online at <http://shop.hht.net.au/site/Home/Catalogue.aspx?productid=7dcf216a25144310>

The Historic Houses trust is giving you the chance to win one of five free double passes to see the exhibition. Simply send your name and contact details to competition@hht.net.au with "Garden Design" in the subject line. Only winners will be contacted.

CORRESPONDENCE

One of the criteria that one can design a garden using native plants, especially those indigenous to the local area, is to attract back the native fauna -- insects, lizards, small marsupials and birds etc into a suburban gardens. However, this increase in fauna is at risk from domestic cats and dogs and perhaps foxes.

There is more to attracting and maintaining the wildlife than just growing Australian plants and providing a water feature. Should we be trying hard to create a safe haven for the wildlife as well as a garden of pretty flowers and blended texture? If we decide on the safe haven option, is it achievable in 'real life'?

Jeff Howes NSW

I'm guessing that you might know of me and my latest book on Australian succulent plants and that I give talks on the subject and would love to speak to your Australian Garden Design group sometime.

I'm an APS member and I've spent the last 6 months upgrading my website to include various aspects of cultivation trials and an extensive photographic library on Australian native succulent plants.

Australian Succulent Plants

www.australiansucculents.com

Attila Kapitany Vic.

In the Spring 2008 Issue of '**Our Gardens**' (page 16), the quarterly journal of the Garden Clubs of Australia, there is a **promotion** of our web pagespreading the word.

Got a few minutes to spare -- click on this site for some great **non toxic snail control** tips: http://www.sgaonline.org.au/info_snails.html

Jeff Howes NSW

DESIGN

WHERE EAGLES DRIFT.

Our property "Eagles Drift" is situated in the Upper Hunter Valley at the junction of the Goulburn and Krui Rivers.

When my husband and I moved to this beautiful property of 574 ha. 19 years ago, there was a four-roomed dilapidated house full of rats and spiders with a wire netting fence hugging a minute yard . The whole area was surrounded by the most beautiful natural environment imaginable, with river flats for cattle grazing. The small house yard, comprising a great vegie patch and lots of weeds, was quickly extended to about 1.5 ha with an easterly to north easterly aspect.

In my mind's eye I envisaged a large natural bush garden to complement the surrounding craggy mountains and natural vegetation which form part of our property and to provide habitat for the many wild creatures which pass from the hills to the nearby river.

I commenced planting grevilleas, wattles, melaleucas and callistemons.. That year (1989) it rained virtually non-stop for three months and all the young plants did well. Then the rain ceased and the first of our droughts set in! We knew little about the growing of Australian plants and didn't bother to care for them and gradually they died from heat stress and lack of water. The soil consisted of solid black alluvial clay and it set like cement after the rain Our frustration increased and we eyed off our neighbours' stunning roses and daffodils and very temporarily toyed with similar ideas!!!

The inspiring factor was that during bush-walks on our property we found many beautiful wildflowers and shrubs on the rocky slopes and gullies, and we studied the conditions under which they were thriving (in spite of the dry conditions). My husband has a scientific background and his expertise enables us to more easily identify local species.

We gradually started building up the garden beds with bush sand and leaf litter to a height of about half a metre. Within a couple of months everything we planted began to flourish. A design on paper has never taken place. Building up sandy garden beds became an obsession and they started meandering around the yard like a maze. I have since become more discerning about the species of plants especially in view of years of ongoing hot, dry summer weather (up to 45 degrees C.) with freezing conditions in winter (sometimes with 30 x -6 degree C. frosts at a time).

The species that are thriving with minimum care are:

Acacia decore (local species), *Banksia marginata* (local species), *Brachyscombe multifida*

Callistemon pinifolius (local species), *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* (local species), *Correa alba*

Correa Federation Star, *Dichondra repens* (self sown – excellent weed suppressant)

Einadia sp. Ruby salt bush (self-sown and a useful ground cover)

Eremophila maculata; *E. summertime blue*; *E. polyclads*

Euc. landsdownii; *Euc. Leucoxolyn.*, *Grevillea johnsonii* (grafted) – a local endangered species)

Grevillea montana (local endangered species), *Lomandra longifolia* (local species)

Melaleuca thymifolia (local species), *Myoporum debile* (local species)

Myoporum floribundum, *Myoporum montanum* (local species)

Myoporum purpureum, *Scaevola humilis*

The most amazing drought resistant plants listed above are the eremophilas (as their name implies they thrive in dry conditions) and as a bonus they seem to cope with any soil-types. Those in our garden have become widespread and dense and when flowering are a popular haven for small birds such as blue-wrens, white cheeked honey eaters, pardalotes, silver-eyes etc.

FERTILIZER AND MULCH

I rarely apply fertiliser to the garden (just occasionally Seasol on new plants) and now and then mulch with old paddock hay, with more of the garden now becoming self mulching with its own leaf-litter. To my delight the contractor who checks the power lines on farming properties had a full load of mulched eucalypt prunings when he reached our gate – he apologetically asked if he could off-load somewhere and he was hastily directed to our garden. What a bonus and what a great benefit it has been to the garden. I initially used rocks and gravel to mulch some areas, but find that while the plants are young they die from radiated heat.

PESTS AND PRUNERS

Insect pests are no problem, especially with so many birds making use of the dense foliage. We do have other creatures that enjoy digging up and demolishing some plants. A large family of white-

winged choughs regularly aerates the mulch and underlying soil on the edges of gardens, and a few hand-raised wombats and their wild nocturnal friends delight in eating struggling clumps of kangaroo grass and dianella. We welcome the wildlife in spite of their foraging. What a privilege to be sharing this space with them.

GARDEN DESIGN

I read every book I can on designing with Australian plants and drool over the snippets on ABC Gardening Australia and other TV programmes. My time is very limited for gardening and so the area has become a bit of a wilderness with meandering pathways with shrubs and groundcovers, and even more haphazard areas happily congested with wattles thriving and dying alongside eucalypts and melaleucas, intertwined with hardenbergas. I try to repeat the same plants, so that there is a sense of continuity, but encourage little surprises to be tucked under taller shrubs. I still battle with weeds, anything from Pattersons curse to thistles, and when the weather is very very hot and dry and the only green shoot is a weedy one, I look on them favourably.

One delight of our garden is the view from the kitchen window of swaying branches close to the verandah (*Callistemon citrinus Endeavour*) with contrasting foliage packed into gardens behind (*Eremophila polyclada* & *E. summertime blue*, *E. maculata*), and a glimpse of paths disappearing down the slope beckoning us outside to count the birds and our blessings. We can then gaze up into the hills with huge old eucalypts, rock overhangs and imagine we can see the original occupants of this land flitting through the shadows.

Many books have given me inspiration in developing our garden, but the following I have enjoyed immensely:

“A Bush Calendar” by Amy Mack; “A Bush Garden” by Esther Wetherill; “Back from the Brink” by Peter Andrews; “Australian Native Gardens, Putting Visions into Practice” and “The Australian Garden, Designing with Australian Plants” by Diana Snape.

I have tried to encourage others to include Australian species in their gardens, and a few years ago I was successful in persuading the local show to include a class for Australian native flowers in the floral display section.

I entered a rather haphazard arrangement of flowers from *Acacia vestita*, *Boronia ledifolia*, *Grevillia triloba*, *Euc. leucoxolyn* and *Euc. maculata* (foliage) and much to my surprise my display won grand champion that year and in the two subsequent years!

Since writing this article we have experienced flooding rains, more dry conditions, few frosts and unseasonably warm weather. We brace ourselves for the varying climatic conditions ahead, but meanwhile continue to pursue our passion.

Jenny and Ted Finnie NSW

Creating a Mosaic Landscape in the Garden?

An interesting article in a Birds Australia magazine caught my eye recently. Titled “Woody Weeds and Woodland Birds” by Gillian Hogendyk, it told of the loss of ground habitat complexity that is faced by woodland birds as vast tracts of open woodland and grassland, in arid and semi arid rangelands, are invaded by native shrub and tree species. Originally there were areas of thick grasslands, open woodlands and patches of dense scrubland – a mosaic landscape. The vital tool for maintaining this landscape was fire, both natural and those artificially lit by the aborigines. Six species are designated as Invasive Native Species, 2 species each of Emu bush, Hop bush and Cassia; other species which can act as woody weeds are Bimble Box, White Cypress pine, Mulga, Yarran and other species of emu Bush. Over time invasive native species form woodlands and shrublands of increasing density. In the case of Cypress Pine scrub particularly, large hollow bearing trees, grasses and forbs are gradually choked out.

Landholders around Cobar believe that the biodiversity declines in “woody weed” affected landscapes. Whilst fauna species use the dense shrublands for nesting and roosting they feed in the grasslands and croplands nearby. Bird groups that declined with increasing scrub cover were the ground feeding granivores { parrots, pigeons, quail and emus } and ground feeding insectivores. It would appear that the greatest avian diversity in Western NSW occurs where the landscape contains a variety of habitats

I thought this a pertinent article for those of us interested in designing gardens with habitat uppermost in mind - aim to create and maintain your garden as a mosaic landscape by providing patches of rain -only watered and organically- only fertilised lawn and/or indigenous grasslands, surrounded by varying sizes and thicknesses of shrub and tree thickets. Could it be that once again the bush garden comes up trumps?

Jo Hambrett

IN - DECISION

We’ve talked and written a lot over the years about the various garden design styles because we need labels to symbolize various effects, but how often do we consciously start out to create a certain style **and stick to it?** How often do we stick to any plan, come to that? We have lived here at Myrree for 20 years and started planting another 20 years before then and I have long lost count of my plans. Nothing much survived in the early days, it was all such a new set of conditions and at the mercy of the weather and rabbits, so that each year I would be free to start afresh. Well I needed to be, having largely forgotten what the last plan was or having grown a completely different set of plants back in town. When we came to live it was not much better, my plan of using mallee eucalypts to give a light canopy proved completely impossible in an area with a natural closed forest close to wet sclerophyll. I was really into planting trees and at last I had the space.....on and on I went disregarding boundary after boundary. There was some method, but not too much.

Now advancing years are forcing us to think of town living again and we have purchased a town house in Benalla but have not yet accepted the reality of a move. Meantime we try and create a more inviting atmosphere

there on what was virtually a bare block.... dead buffalo lawn and a few shrubs mostly unwanted and/or dead. This was in the year firmly imprinted in my mind as the bushfire year, very hot and very dry. Also affecting my thoughts was the state of the country garden, which when I started had been completely sun blasted but was now very shaded so that I have trouble finding places for all the colourful grevilleas, hakeas, melaleucas etc. that somehow seem to turn up in my array of pots to be planted.

So my original idea for the town garden was to have a cottagey look, soft, green yet colourful, with a line of wispy trees/shrubs across the back along the edge of the sewer easement and several strategically placed ones in the front to cast a bit of shade and add a bit of height. Otherwise the focus was to be low, so that most of the garden could be seen from inside. Taller shrubs would screen the fences to give a little privacy and blend with the borrowed landscape of the belt of gums lining the creek one row of houses away. With the generous help of APS friends I soon had a collection of Eremophilas, which simply do not like Myrree, growing up for planting as soon as we had worked on the soil. Then the group visited Glen Wilson's garden, a glorious riot of small trees and large shrubs, mainly his beloved callistemons. In a few short years he had a jungle where one could lose one's self in the lush greenery. Summer was approaching again, I had to have more shade in my new garden.

Now it is winter again and I feel the need to keep the sun. . My grandiose plans for shaping and moulding the earth and channelling water from the roof into a creek bed and ponds never got off the ground, or rather onto it. I had an exciting collection of plants begging for more root run and I just had to start planting. This after all is what gardening is all about, the plants themselves. And so I go on, swinging from one idea to the next. In the meantime plants are getting into the ground and doing surprisingly well. It is interesting that the rotary clothes line which was such an eyesore when the yard was bare has virtually vanished now as the eye focuses instead on the colourful daisies and prostrate eremophilas underneath it. As I am not familiar with eremophilas I don't really know how they will grow. There are so many wonderful colour forms of glabra and maculata that the books can't really help, so it is still trial and error and hope to fill the plot so that weeds don't get a look in. Perhaps it will sort out later as I find out what is what. It would be so much easier to plan a formal garden divided by regular paths and with plants long established in horticulture, readily available in standard forms. But where would be the excitement in that?

Barbara Buchanan Vic.

A novel approach to creating a small water feature using a recycled resource.

I have a north facing front courtyard at my house, in the northern Sydney suburb of Westleigh. In this courtyard I have a large (about 5 tonne) imported sandstone rock that has many native *Dendrobium kingianum* and *speciosum* orchids growing on it even though it receives full afternoon sun (see photo) I should be more correct and call them *Thelychiton kingianum* and *speciosum*, as they have been recently renamed.

As I always wanted a small pond/water feature, I created a dry creek bed leading from the rock to a small stainless steel 47 litre laundry tub (See photos) To make it all appear 'natural' I undertook the following work:

- ❖ Sealed the drain hole and lined the tub with some black butyl rubber sheeting.
- ❖ Over lapped the edge of the pond with some bush rock that I had in my garden.
- ❖ Placed some 'lucky' type stones from the rock to the pool, to create a dry creek bed 'look'.
- ❖ Added a layer of fine 5mm gravel to the bottom of the pond and then placed a small pot of a native aquatic plant on the bottom to give the fish somewhere to hide and add some oxygen into the water.
- ❖ Installed a small electric pump and timer to run the pump from 9am to 5pm seven days a week. The sound of running water is very pleasant and relaxing and it also helped add oxygen to the water.
- ❖ Introduced four or five Pacific Blue-eye native fish to stop any mosquitos breeding. I have had no mosquitos and this is a result of the fish and the splashing water from the pump on the pool surface making life all to difficult for them. The Pacific Blue-eye fish have coped well with the fluctuating summer to winter temperature swings that one must expect in such a small volume of water. I feed the fish every second day or so in summer and only once a week in winter when the water is colder and they slow down. Pacific Blue-eye fish (*pseudomugil signifer*) are an Australian native species that occurs in coastal streams along the eastern coast of Australia from northern Queensland to southern New South Wales. They are particularly suited for garden ponds and aquariums as they are a carnivorous fish. They help control mosquitoes by feeding on the larvae and more importantly are frog friendly as they do not generally eat tadpoles. They are about 5-6cm long and fully grown in 6 months. Do not use the introduced *Gambusia affinis*, a cold-tolerant strain of mosquito fish as it is a predator that poses a devastating threat to the native frogs and fish in our waterways.
- ❖ Added some native snails that breed quite prolifically, to help clean the pond

It took only a few weeks for my first Striped Marsh Frog (*Limnodynastes peroni*) to appear and it even found a mate judging, from all the eggs contained in the foam raft floating on the water surface and resultant tadpoles.

This pool is now five years old and the only problems I had is a build up of some sort of green strandy weed in summer when the pool receives the after noon sun and the water is warmer. As for maintenance, I change the water very six weeks in summer and a bit longer in winter. When I change the water I add the required amount of chlorine and cholamine remover (available from pet shops) to ensure the fish survival.

For more information on building a native fish pond look at:
http://fnpw.org.au/enews4/pond_guidelines.htm

Overall a great success for me as it looks great, sounds great, is a watering point for local wildlife and is quite low maintenance.

Jeff Howes NSW

WEBSITE NEWS

**** Check out pictures of Jeff's ridiculously healthy plants and their water feature on our website

*****Also check out the photos [courtesy of Jeff Howes] of the NSW branch visit to **ORANGE** in March [see May NL]

.***and, photos of Jennie and Ted Finnie's garden Eagles Drift are up on the web too – many thanks as always to our *wonderful webmaster*, Brian Walters.

PLANTS

Australian Succulent Plants in Cultivation

Some experts regard most native succulent plants as unsuitable for cultivation, but an increasing number are being grown successfully. Succulent plants need less water, fertiliser and other chemicals than many commonly cultivated plants. Demand on our diminishing water supplies is also increasing along with the cost, so choosing plants with low water and chemical needs, not to mention other environmental concerns, makes good sense.

Plant lovers still have more than enough water-conserving Australian native plants from which to choose for any veranda, greenhouse or garden, but gardeners will need to seek them out and experiment a little, and isn't that half the fun?

In The Garden

The challenge is to develop creative and uniquely Australian gardens that reflect a lot less of the historic European influences with their high water demand. Succulent plants can play a small but important role here. Historically, while succulents from other parts of the world have become commonplace in gardens, until recently little attempt has been made to introduce native succulent plants into garden design.

Creative use of at least some native succulent plants can achieve a very appealing low-maintenance garden. Gardens which suit most succulent plants include those with seasonally dry areas; stony, sandy or nutrient-deficient soils; windy or coastal areas; salty soils; and areas where only bore water is available

In The Field and Farm

For larger gardens and open spaces, a range of succulent plants can play an important role.

The genera *Carpobrotus*, *Tetragonia*, *Sesuvium*, *Trianthema* and *Disphyma* are well recognised and used effectively for erosion control in and around sandy or saline soils.

Once established most of these plants can withstand a certain level of dryness (often well beyond that of most other garden plants). Halophytic chenopods, in particular *Halsosarcia*, *Sarcocornia* and *Tecticornia* have the potential to be used for reclaiming salt-degraded farm land.

They have adapted to tolerate many environmental extremes, besides salinity, notably aridity, and yet very little is known about most of the Australian species.

Various species of *Maireana* are highly regarded for use in saline-damaged soils.

They quickly colonize cultivated or disturbed soils in their range and are therefore also worthwhile plants for soil stabilisation in rehabilitation work.

Some *Maireana* are known to have fire-retardant properties, probably due to the very succulent leaves that do not burn readily.

Most species are also very drought-tolerant and provide both food and water to a range of animals during these dry periods.

The bottle tree *Brachychiton rupestris* is possibly Australia's most valuable tree. In recent years some farmers have been planting this species in fields (as pictured below) to sell to the nursery and landscaping trade, where demand is sky-rocketing. Advanced plants, or any with a trunk exceeding 20 cm in diameter, are considered a prize in any landscape or courtyard, increasing in value and making a great investment. Trees at any size can be moved and larger mature ones are regularly sold for \$10,000-\$20,000.

Pot Culture

Numerous Australian succulent plants are suitable for pot culture.

A few can even be grown indoors, e.g. species of *Peperomia*, *Hoya* and *Doryanthes*.

Beyond the plants mentioned here, there are many others that have not yet been trialled in pots.

Species of *Adansonia*, *Brachychiton*, *Bombax*, *Myrmecodia*, *Hydnophytum*, *Stephania* and *Cissus* have a natural tendency to develop stout stems or tubers.

This feature, coupled with their general ability to remain short, makes them ideal to bonsai.

The genera *Adansonia*, *Brachychiton* and *Bombax* grow back well even after drastic pruning, another good feature for bonsai or other pot culture.

Little is known about *Cissus* and *Stephania* species and their use in ornamental horticulture in Australia, especially for bonsai, however internationally there is considerable demand for them for this purpose.

Species of *Hydnophytum*, *Myrmecodia* and *Dischidia major*, can make great conversation pieces in any pot plant collection, especially if some resident ants can also be accommodated. For hanging baskets there are *Hoya*, *Dischidia* and *Sarcostemma* species and you could even try *Bulbine vagans*.

Some plants covered in my latest book, 'Australian Succulent Plants' are now uncommon, rare or non-existent in much of their former habitat, so raising them from seed and maintaining them in potted collections is one way to contribute to their conservation, especially if good records of provenance and horticultural history are kept and surplus plant material is distributed to other growers.

Attila Kapitany Vic.

BOOK Reviews

'The Flower Chain -- The early Discovery of Australian Plants' By Jill, Duchess of Hamilton and Julia Bruce. Published by Kangaroo Press.

A story that covers 200 remarkable years of discovery and settlement from the first sighting of the Australian coast by the Dutch until 1804

Jeff Howes NSW

Book reviews cont.

“*BACKYARD: nature and culture in suburban Australia.*” Lesley Head and Pat Muir

University of Wollongong Press

It seems it doesn't get more Australian than one's backyard, and like most backyards, an exercise in aesthetics it is not! The photos are workmanlike and illustrative at best and the backyards covered are largely design free zones.

Of course, design is not the purpose of this book, it is rather a study of middle class attitudes to the suburban backyard. As the authors say, “*Backyards are an important part of the domestic environment of middle Australia; we use suburban backyards and gardens to take a fresh look at the ways Australians interact with the environment; that many backyards have lively, interesting and different mixtures of culture and nature will not surprise readers who have looked over their own back fence.*”

The book is the result of a survey conducted by the authors, from the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of Wollongong. The survey covered gardens in Sydney, Wollongong and Alice Springs and over 300 occupants were surveyed to explore their thoughts on some of the big environmental issues of our time. Participants were divided into four groups; committed native gardeners { purists}, general native gardeners { pragmatists who have blended gardens}, non – native gardeners { prefer exotic plants} and non gardeners.

I found chapters **4** *Gardens and Gardeners*, **8** *Boundaries and Belonging* and the last, chapter **9**, *Nature and urban Australia*, the most pertinent to my interests. Probably a must read to bring us GDSG members down to earth (often with a bump, although a few gardens provide soft landings), on how the majority of Australians view their backyard as an interaction with the environment...or not.

Jo Hambrett

MEETINGS & FYI

Next Melbourne Meeting

Where: Nicky's new home

When: 2.00 pm - Sunday 10th August, 2008.

Nicky has just moved into a unit with a tiny garden. Members are invited to join her in re-designing the garden. Currently there is a patio area, a lawn, garden bed and mowing strips. There are a couple of things she would like to keep, namely a lemon tree and a rhubarb bush, and many things she would like to add - a frog pond, a water tank and a compost bin (and plants, of course; bird attracting ones). The garden is L shaped with the longer piece stretching north / south in a mostly sunny position. Two melaleucas on the fenceline dry out the centre of the garden terribly, but provide shade in the afternoon, esp during the height of summer.

The shorter piece of the L is north of the house and provides privacy from neighbours so is better suited for entertaining except that there is no cover.

SYDNEY Branch Meetings and Garden Visits

Our **Next Meeting** will be at Marie and Gordon Rowland's property {see NL 62} on **Sunday 5th October 2008**, from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. If you wish to attend, please confirm with the Rowlands by email, info@ilda.com.au or (The 4th happens to be the Feast of Francesco Bernardone, better known as Francis of Assisi, Patron Saint of Ecology.) Also please let Jo Hambrett know as well. Directions: from Sydney, follow the Pacific Highway to Bulahdelah. 4 K beyond Bulahdelah, turn right to The Lakes Way for about 25 K. Continue for 3 K beyond the Sugar Creek Road turnoff [Sugar Creek Toymakers sign is on the corner].

www.takeabreak.com.au includes a good selection of accommodation near here. Select "NSW North Coast", plus Blueys Beach, Boomerang Beach, Elizabeth Beach, Pacific Palms, Seal Rocks or Smiths Lake, for the nearest. Let Jo know if you need a lift too – check out the photos of the property on the website to whet your appetite.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Listed below are all those who have paid up to 11 July 2008 (the dead line for the August NL) and they will continue to receive the newsletters. If you have a plus sign (+) after your name then you have also paid for the 2009/2010 financial year as well, so next year you only need to complete a membership form – no membership fee is required.

To all the members who have not yet paid and have received a reminder notice with your NL. Please note that this will be your **final newsletter** as no more reminders will be sent. To continue as a member, please pay your membership fee by the end of September 2008 at the very latest. If you have any questions about your membership, please either phone or e-mail me.

To help Jo Hambrett send out NLs by email, could you please add her email address to your list of contacts as this should prevent the NL being recognised as SPAM and being rejected, as many did last NL mail out. Alternatively, depending on your SPAM filter, you can instruct it to accept her e-mails. If you receive the NL by email and you change your e-mail address during the year (as many of you have) **please let me know**.

I will make every effort to bank your cheques promptly, hopefully within a week of receiving them.

The membership form for 2009/2010 has been revised and simplified and the electronic file has been made much, much smaller in size for our dial up, non ADSL members.

The accounts have not been audited for a while so I am organising this and a financial statement will appear in the November NL. We have \$30,386.17 in a term deposit (mainly due to Diana Snape donating her book royalties to our Study group} and approx \$7000.00 in our working account.

FINANCIAL MEMBERS as at 11 July 2008

Angelo and Christine Gaiardo	Gwen Sanders +	Merle Webb
Anne and Raymond Mills +	Jan Gough-Watson	Michael Bates
Anne Neild +	Jan Tibbotts	Monika Herrmann +
Annette and John Houseman +	Janet Schapper	Phillip and Julia Rose
Barbara Buchanan	Jannet and Andy Russell +	Romaine Hamor
Barrie Gallacher	Jeff Howes	Ros Andrews
Barry Wilson	Jennifer and Ted Finnie	Ruth Crosson
Brian and Suellen Harris	Jennifer Farrer +	Sharon Percy (new member)
Cheree Hall	Jo Hambrett +	Sheila Simpson-Lee
Chris Walker-Cook	Joan Barrett	Sue Bendel
Colleen Keena	Julie Jones	Sue Mc Coll +
Dale Butler	June Copeland	Therese Scales
Deirote Morton	Kay Dempsey	Tim Wilson
Dianne Clark	Lynette and Peter Reilly	Caroline Gunter +
Doug and Margaret McIver	Maree McCarthy	Trish and Brian Harris
Gillian Morris +	Margaret Lee	Win Main
Gordon Rowlands	Mary Graham	Jim and Pat Watson
	John Hoile +	Faleiry Koczkar
Leigh Murray	Tony and Joy Roberts	Kris Schaffer
Ros Smtyh-Kirk	Pamela Finger	Ron Gornall
	Joy Stacey	Anne and Graham Smith

*The following receive a complementary
NL*

Bob O'Neil

Diana and Brian Snape

Brian Walters ASGAP
Webmaster - by e-mail

Philip Robinson ASGAP Study Group
Co-ordinator (2 paper copies)

Eurobodaila Botanic Gardens

Australian Botanic Gardens

Jeff Howes NSW

