



# GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

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**Newsletter**  
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**72**

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Dear members

Jo Hambrett is overseas so it's hello from your guest editor Chris Larkin. I've had fun putting the newsletter together and think you will find plenty of interest in its pages. 'Words from Your Treasurer', Jeff Howes, includes notice that he will be stepping away from the job in May and we are therefore seeking a replacement. Jeff is asking for someone to volunteer and take on this most important job - contact him for further details. I do hope there is someone out there moved to do so as the Group can't really function without this key position being filled. Please note that the Auditor's Report is at the end of the newsletter, or in the case of people receiving the newsletter by email, it is a separate attachment.

Concerning the most worthwhile project we have now embarked on to record gardens of significance Australia-wide, the Melbourne group has standardised a set of 'Criteria for Selecting Gardens' and a 'Format for Recording Gardens'. It seems to me this part of the job is done and the different groups can now proceed to select and record gardens. I am not sure what should happen in areas where there is no group in operation although at the start of the August Newsletter Jo was suggesting the names of gardens and reasons for their inclusion could still be put forward to her. How to manage gardens identified outside of the areas covered by the active groups and how to put it together nationally is still to be decided. The results of this project will give us a data base of gardens for a range of purposes both current and historic. I imagine this project being recorded electronically and who knows, a book and CD may arise from its findings. First though we must make a start to see the variety of responses we get and whether there is sufficient consistency in approach using the aforementioned tools.

Some of you will have read in the May Newsletter I suffered a lot of damage to the garden as a result of a hail storm, March 6<sup>th</sup> from memory, and at the moment the roof is finally being replaced. Every plant was affected and trailer loads of vegetation were taken off site to the tip or moved to the boundaries. After the initial cleanup the follow-up pruning job was extensive. I can now report my optimism the garden would bounce back has not been misguided thanks to drought breaking rains over the year. In fact the growth is such that – you guessed it – I'm about to start pruning again. In the meanwhile I have rearranged, or rather re-designed, half of the hillside behind the house, but more of that when I have time to write at length. It sure has been one busy year!

Jo will be back in charge for the next Newsletter so please once again send your thoughts and articles to her. It would be good to hear from a greater number of members as the Study Group exists to enable members to participate and join in the conversation, or start a conversation, or tell us something of interest no matter how small. Season's greetings, Chris

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**GDSG Position Vacant -- Treasurer / Membership**

For many reasons I am unable to continue undertaking the duties of this position.

If you would like take over the duties of this position please contact me on 02) 9481 9346 or email me at [gdsgmembership@yahoo.com.au](mailto:gdsgmembership@yahoo.com.au) to discuss as I can provide you with a list of what duties this position requires you to do.

All you need is a few hours each week, minimum financial ability as I have a simple MS Excel spread sheet that does it all for you. You will also need some basic computer knowledge to maintain the membership data base.

**Words from the Treasurer as 15 Oct 2010**

Please consider volunteering for the rewarding treasurer/membership position as my last day will be 31 May 2011. If you would like to know what this position entails please email me for a job description OR phone me.

There are members who have paid for years in advance. I hope they remember/notate this as I will not be advising them, of their financial status as there are too many of you for me to do so. I have recorded how many years members are financial for in my membership data base

If you receive the newsletter by email, please advise me if you change your email address as this is starting to present a problem for Jo Hambrett and myself if we do not know.

Your membership fees are due on 1 July each year. Due to many requests from members, I will be providing the GDSG BSB and account number for those who would like to pay by direct transfer their 2011 fees. This will create more work for the treasurer but make it easier for some members to pay their fees. Bbay is not an option as the cost to us is excessive compared to the cost of yearly membership.

In the past the treasurer/membership person has provided a list of who has paid in each newsletter, I have decided not to continue this, as receipt of the newsletter is proof that you are financial.

**Welcome to the following new members.**

Edward Bryan and Leah Abonyi

**Auditors Report**

Please find this report at the end of the newsletter or as a separate attachment.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### WANTED

*Gordon Rowland is a GDSG member and director of Indigenous Landscape Design Australia. He is compiling a list of eco-aware designers experienced in plants indigenous to their locality/bio-region, suited to garden cultivation.*

*If you're a professional designer who meets these criteria, and would like your profile and contact details included on a referral list of designers, please contact Gordon on 02 4997 6444 or email [gordon@ilda.com.au](mailto:gordon@ilda.com.au). There is no cost, and the list is to be published on his website: [www.ilda.com.au](http://www.ilda.com.au).*

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Letter (part of ) from Ros Walcott (Canberra) to Chris Larkin

I have been reading with much interest a book from The Garden Club of America called Gardens Private & Personal which was published in 2008. It is the organization of the book that could be pertinent for the Garden Design Study Group. The chapters have headings such as, An Invitation to Come In, Enjoy the View, There are Places to Pause, Ways with Water, A World of Containers, etc. It may sound hokey, to use an appropriate Americanism, but it works very well as an organising principle. You may have seen it done before in other design books, but I was impressed at how effective it is here. There is a quite short discussion of entrances, for example, then 10-12 marvellous photos showing creative and beautiful entrances to various gardens. It is such an easy way to show how many different ways that gardeners welcome visitors to their gardens. There are design ideas galore in these pages for all gardeners.

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Letter from Gordon Roland to Jo Hambrett

I'm writing to let you know that the new Indigenous Landscape Design Australia website, [www.ilda.com.au](http://www.ilda.com.au) <<http://www.ilda.com.au>> , is (at last!) up and running.

**Our aim is to help you make informed choices and inspire you to create a garden of enduring, sustainable beauty. A union of aesthetics and ecology.**

If you have any feedback, or suggestions on how the site can be improved, I would love to hear from you.

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Letter from Jeff Howes to Brian Walter

Sorry for the late comments.

The whole web site looks great and is informative. Well done as you expect that you have put a lot of work into it.

I think the GDSG needs to promote the web site a bit more in our future NLs as members often ask me why are there no photos in the NL. Our intention is to place them on your web site -- so we need to get more of our members to look at the web site and send some of their photos to us. Any way that is an on-going issue for us. Again, a great site.

### Letter from Sharon Percy to Jo H

Hi Jo, just reading GDSG Newsletter No 71, and am very interested in the book talked about, 'Collect and Grow that Seed: Small Aust Plants'. I wonder if I could put my name down for one when they reprint? and if you can help me, or let me know who can, thanks. It sounds great. It's hard to find a book that tells you when to look for certain seeds, and there's lots of books out there. Vic plants are very similar to Tassie plants too.

I am enjoying reading as much as I can about design. My garden is leaving me at a bit of a loss at present, the front was established when we bought, mainly exotics, and as gaps form I want to replace them with natives, but it's losing any form it once had. I would really love to "bulldoze" it and start with a fresh palette. But that is expensive obviously. I do propagate a lot, so guess I need to focus on what plants I would like and search out ideas and cutting material from others. We have some wonderful native gardens of members of our northern group of APS. Anyway cheers for now, Sharon Percy.

*Help Jo, do you know how to help Sharon! Chris L*

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### Comment about the newsletter sent to Jeff Howes from Jennifer Davidson

Always stimulating and informative. I enjoy reading it and we sometimes enjoy lively discussions about articles at our NE Vic group. Thank You Jo! With more members these days receiving the N/L by email, more photos would add to its appeal.

*Thanks for the comment Jennifer. It would be wonderful if you could put pen to paper and capture some of the discussion stimulated by what you read in the newsletter. I would just love to see more conversations between members through the newsletter. Chris L*

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## **ARTICLES**

### **Reprint of 'The Australian Garden'**

**Diana Snape Vic**

'The Australian Garden' was the first book produced as a result of the work of the Garden Design Study Group. It was published in 2002 under my name as principal author, with four other authors making major contributions - Barbara Buchanan, Jo Hambrett, Chris Larkin and Danie Ondinea. Many other Study Group members helped in some way. Brian and I took the majority of the photographs but a noted professional photographer, Simon Griffiths, took the really outstanding ones.

6,000 copies were printed and these were all sold by the following year. In 2003, 6,000 more copies were printed and, of these, 1,000 were published under the name of Garden Art Press, an important garden publisher /distributor in the U.K.. (I was told this was a first for Australian garden books.)

Sales of 'The Australian Garden' gradually slowed down but earlier this year the second printing sold out. It has now been reprinted but with a different cover in glossy format for a fresh look - actually the back cover has become the front cover. Ideally a garden book *should* have a photo of

a garden on the front cover *but* it is hard for a garden photo to be as dramatic or eye-catching as a colourful close-up (like the initial cover). The back cover is now a different close-up from the book.

The Study Group has contributed \$5,000 to this reprinting, out of the royalties that all the authors have contributed to our funds. This still leaves a large amount of money for proposed future publications, one important goal of any Study Group.

## **Guidelines for Selecting Gardens                      Chris Larkin & Vic Group**

In Newsletter No 71 Jo Hambrett suggested that in embarking on the task of recording important gardens we should agree on a set of appropriate guidelines or criteria. In response to this, and what Jo suggested, Diana drew up a set of criteria for the Melb meeting to discuss.

To start with, for greater flexibility, the group agreed that there should be 'guidelines' rather than 'criteria' for selecting gardens. These guidelines would include:

### **Guidelines for Selecting Gardens**

#### 1. Age

The garden should be at least 7-10 years old as the success of the planting design in particular would not be evident for a number of years. Ideally older gardens would be recorded before younger ones because of their historical importance although there can also be an urgency to record gardens where the owners are selling up.

#### 2. Worthiness

The garden should be judged by a number of people who are members of the GDSG to be of sufficient value to warrant recording. What should guide the decision to include a garden are considerations of:

- Elements of the garden's design (overall structure & balance, harmony & unity, contrasts & textures, pleasing spaces to look at & be in etc)
- Pioneering nature of the garden e.g. artistic or horticultural experimentation
- Environmental factors such as biodiversity, sustainability, harmony with natural environment where relevant, provision of habitat and attention to weed removal.

The 'Format for Recording Gardens' which follows was developed from discussions on the topic at the last meeting and through subsequent revision. The group was happy with the structure and breadth of coverage of the format. It was suggested that while one person would be responsible for recording the garden 2 people where possible should visit the garden to help each other to arrive at the most comprehensive description of the garden. In addition to the information provided by following this recording instrument there would of course be a selection of accompanying pictures of the garden.

**Facts about the garden**

- location - which State and where in the State
- climate
- rainfall
- area - size
- orientation
- slope
- soil type
- tanks, watering system

**Age and History; Aims, objectives and motivations of the garden owner(s)**

Owners should be interviewed about:

- the age and history of the garden
- their aims, objectives & motivations
- their feeling about their garden

**Garden Plan (where possible)****Recorder's description/assessment of the design of the garden**

The following aspects should be commented on where applicable, with an emphasis on any specific or unusual features or design challenges of the garden.

## General

- setting - borrowed landscape
- effective screening of both external and internal areas
- relation of garden to house
- paths to lead around the garden
- vistas from the house and within the garden
- overall structure

## Plants

- dominance of Australian plants
- inclusion of local (indigenous) plants
- framework of trees – balance of sunshine and shade
- areas of lawn, grass or groundcovers
- harmony and unity with variety; contrasts and textures
- provision for wildlife

## Aesthetic

- pleasing spaces to look at and be in
- appeal to the senses – light and colour, fragrance, sounds, touch
- water use (both ornamental and conservation), water areas
- blending of hard landscape into soft, including sympathetic use of rocks

- garden furniture and decoration e.g. sculpture
- delights and surprises

#### Practical

- significant design challenges (past or future)
- estimation of time spent working in the garden
- any professional help in the design of, or help with work in, the garden
- type(s) of mulch used
- management, pruning, rejuvenation

## **Australian Natural Garden Styles**

## **Nicola Pitkanen Vic**

(Below is an email sent to Jo and subsequently forwarded to Diana Snape. This resulted in Nicky interviewing Diana as part of the research for her assignment. What follows is a copy of Nicky's conclusions to her assignment which she sent to Jo for inclusion in the GDSG newsletter)

*Dear Jo*

*I am studying a graduate certificate in garden design at Burnley Horticultural College, Melbourne, and am currently writing an assignment of the emergence and evolution of the Australian natural style gardens. I have found the Garden Design Study Group information on the website most useful – thank you. I still however have a number of questions that I would love to explore with someone who has been keeping a finger on the pulse of native plant gardens. I would really appreciate the opportunity to speak with you, although I am not sure if you are Melbourne based, or someone in the Garden Design Study Group (for example Diana Snape). Would it be possible to speak with you and maybe set up a time to have a conversation? I would really appreciate any time that you could spare me.*

*Regards*

*Nicky Pitkanen*

### **Conclusions about the Australian natural garden styles**

Nicola Pitkanen

The Australian natural garden style encompasses a range of gardens that represent 'true' and more recently 'tended' Australian landscapes, but central to all natural gardens is a strong sense of place. The relevance of the style is evidenced in its application in many public spaces. In domestic situations the true natural landscape remains popular with a minority of Australian bush and wildlife enthusiasts. More recently the more tended, coastal natural gardens of Brockhoff's have won high esteem in the design community. To some extent their appeal may lie in meeting modern-day aspirations for a 'designed' garden and thus may inspire an evolution for natural garden styles in other landscapes.

A legacy of the Australian natural garden style that may be more widely applicable than a natural garden itself is Australian naturalistic planting designs. Naturalistic plantings, a component of natural style gardens, emulate a naturally occurring plant composition. The emphasis on drought

and water conservation has resulted in greater demand for water efficient gardens. Indigenous plants are best placed to meet these requirements and often lend themselves to naturalistic plantings (Urquhart 1999:57). Designers such as Jim Fogarty, Phillip Johnson, Georgina Martyn, John Sullivan and Fiona Brockhoff are incorporating them into a range of informal garden styles, sometimes with exotics.

Glen Wilson said in 1992 that "very few people have realized, as Edna Walling realized, that if we are going to use these [Australian] plants we have to use them in a different way - in an Australian way" (Wilson in Snape D, 1992:87). Australia is still grappling with this nearly 20 years later. It is unlikely that the Australian natural garden style will become the 'Australian way' that Edna Walling and Glen Wilson may have aspired it to be, but it has contributed knowledge of cultivating Australian plants, naturalistic planting design techniques and catalysed experimentation with manipulating Australian plants that provides a lasting legacy. This contribution, along with blending Australian and exotic species, are helping carve out a new garden style that has a sense of place - one that balances our international influences with a celebration of our unique flora, lifestyle, environmental consciousness and aspiration to have a designed garden.

## **References**

1. Urquhart, P, 1999, *The New Native Garden*, New Holland Publishers (Australia) Pty Ltd.
2. Snape, D, 1992, *Australian Native Gardens*, Lothian Publishing Company Pty Ltd, 11 Munro Street, Port Melbourne, Victoria 3207

## **Change and Redesign to Capture Garden Peace – Revisited**

### **Pam Yarra Vic**

*(This article follows on from one Pam wrote in the last newsletter, no. 71, with the same title. Losing a sense of tranquillity in the garden after a new neighbour moved in next door Pam was led to the belief that peace in the garden can rely on more than the environment of your own garden. With the neighbour wanting fences where there had never been fences before on the land bordering the Yarra's property Pam wondered whether after fences were erected they would ever find the peace in their garden they so much valued. With many delays over a final decision on the fencing Pam and Jim redesigned sections of their garden in readiness. Read on.)*

Finally in September our two boundary fences were erected. This was a relief after so many months of dispute with our neighbour. The paling fence across our back boundary with a return of 13.5 metres on the side boundary has enabled us to further plan the use of the block to our advantage. The back corner now houses the mulch bins, rubbish bins and compost bins as well as a worm farm and shelter for our bikes.

The space previously occupied by bins is now being developed into a potting and propagation area by my hard working, resident handyman Jim. The existing potting area will be transformed with new steps to back area of house and a deck. This deck will be an excellent area for Dendrobiums during the winter months, when they need good exposure to daylight.

The remainder of the side paling fence will eventually be well screened by fast growing Prostanthera Lasianthos and Correa Lawrenciana and the benefits of early tip pruning is evident.

The remaining three quarters of the side boundary fence is post and wire and large shrubs planted in June are growing well. A new bird bath in this area is a very visible feature which creates a focus away from the boundary.

For me this progressive documentation is a useful record as it clarifies different areas of the garden. It also identifies not only functions but feelings evoked in each section of the garden.

From the front to the back boundary, the block is roughly divided into three areas. The front area contains remnant indigenous bush as well as other native plants, a frog pond, and is the most screened area. Currently it is the most peaceful and tranquil area and I choose to spend most time there.

The middle section incorporates a well screened outdoor deck area, a fish pond, native plants including some indigenous ones, a few exotics, an herb garden and a 5000 litre water tank.

The back third of the block is the most utilitarian, bins, sheds, clothes line, propagation/potting area and raised no dig vegetable beds. It is well screened and a good space to be in too.

While I had planned to re evaluate feelings after twelve months of writing in last news letter, change is gradual and some positive feelings are emerging, so it seemed timely to record the progress. It is of value for me but is it of interest for readers?

Pam Yarra, Heathmont, Vic.

## **Grevilleas**

**Diana Snape Vic**

*(This is a slightly amended version of an article first published in "The Age" on 11/9/10.)*

Grevilleas are rated the most popular of Australian flowering shrubs, with over three hundred species now and new species still being discovered. Their distinctive, colourful flowers exhibit great variety, while the nectar attracts honey-eating birds.

Recently I attended the 8th FJC Rogers seminar at Bairnsdale to find out more about the impressive range of grevillea hybrids and cultivars now available. Including species, this gives us over a thousand different types! We also visited lovely local gardens and nurseries to admire the grevilleas growing there (and buy a few plants).

The two key speakers at the seminar were Peter Olde from NSW and Neil Marriott from Victoria, authors of the three-volume 'The Grevillea Book', first published in 1994 by Kangaroo Press. A fourth volume on hybrids and cultivars is now underway. Hybrids occur when two species cross and this can happen with chance seedlings produced from neighbours in the wild. Today it happens more frequently in gardens, between species coming from different areas, even different States. It can be accidental or quite deliberate, in an effort to create hybrids that are more beautiful, possibly hardier, or smaller, or more prostrate. This doesn't always work!

Cultivar means 'cultivated variety'. The first nationally popular grevillea was *G. 'Robyn Gordon'*, a small shrub found in 1963, by David Gordon, growing at the Myall Park Botanic Garden in Queensland. It was a chance seedling arising from a cross between *G. banksii* (from Queensland) and *G. bipinnatifida* (from Western Australia). This hybrid cultivar, named after his daughter Robyn, is still popular today. (We have one growing in our garden.)

Closely related 'tropical grevilleas' include long-flowering *G. 'Superb'* and *G. 'Coconut Ice'*. There are evocative names too, like 'Moonlight', 'Peaches and Cream' and 'Honey Gem'. Names can be helpful, for example *G. 'Long John'* (a handsome large shrub) is a cross between *G. longifolia* and *G. johnsonii*. Among 'cold climate' hybrid grevilleas from Victoria, *G. 'Poorinda Royal Mantle'* is an excellent and widely grown prostrate groundcover with deep red flowers.

Cultivars can also be natural forms of a species that differ from the common form. A recent example is *G. rhyolitica*, with brilliant red flowers, sold in nurseries as the cultivar *G. 'Deua Flame'*. Another species, Mountain Grevillea (*G. alpina*), occurs predominantly in Victoria. Extremely variable, its many cultivars include distinct forms from the Grampians, the Goldfields and the Warby Ranges. These attractive small shrubs are successfully grown in containers.

Prostrate or low-spreading grevilleas such as Grape Grevillea (*G. bipinnatifida*) can be used as standards by grafting them on to a hardy stock plant, often Silky Oak (*G. robusta*). This dramatically displays the cascading foliage and beautiful flowers. We saw standard grevilleas used effectively in the design of some gardens we visited.

Grevillea foliage is variable too, from normal to highly divided leaves. Hardy plants with prickly foliage make excellent habitat for small birds. As a bonus, *G. levis* also produces a mass of pink and white from mid-winter to mid-spring. Grevilleas generally thrive in a sunny position where drainage is good. Once established, they do not need pampering and, for many months of the year, will lift your spirits with an abundance of colourful blooms.

## **Grevilleas in garden design**

**Diana Snape Vic**

Grevilleas can be shrubs of all sizes, groundcover plants, or even trees. It's worth considering them in regard to the different roles plants can play in garden design, as framework, feature, ornamental and infill. I think grevilleas can fill most of these roles, at least to some extent.

Framework plants in a garden should be hardy and long-lived. A lot of grevilleas are both of these and could well be framework plants, though the bright flowers of many might be too eye-catching for this role. Generally, larger shrubs are likely to be suitable for this category though, in a small garden, medium or even smaller might be more appropriate. Among large shrubs, we have used *G. endlicheriana*, with its fine, grey-green foliage and soft white flowers, as an informal hedge along one fence. I like them as background plants and they respond well to pruning - I have seen them pruned as a formal hedge. We have two *G. 'Evelyn's Coronet'* growing and, with its subtle greyish pink flowers, it also would be ideal for a fence screen or hedge. Another possible example is Blue Grevillea (*G. shiressii*), which has blue-green flowers, is happy in semi-shade and very attractive to honey-eaters.

Many grevilleas have attractive form and foliage so these could be feature plants, with a single specimen planted as a focal plant to draw attention throughout the year, not just when in flower. I picture, for example, the three grevilleas *longistyla*, *johnsoni* and 'Long John', with their elegant forms and finely divided, dark green foliage. The red flowers are a bonus. There are numerous other possibilities too. Some grevilleas, especially some hybrids, do flower all year, so this would add to their attraction as feature plants. Standard grevilleas obviously make very striking feature plants, chosen for their attractive foliage which cascades down more or less at eye level. Always interesting, when in flower they look stunning.

Grevilleas are generally most noted for their beautiful flowers, so they best fit in the category of ornamental plants. They're the sort of plant it's easy to fall for when you see one flowering in a nursery and there are literally hundreds of choices. A single species can be repeated to great effect, or you can have repetition with variation using similar species or hybrids. There is such variety in form, foliage and flower colour that you can picture a whole garden of grevilleas *but* most do need a sunny position, not always easy to find in a mature garden. Over the years, the number of grevilleas growing in our garden has gradually declined as our garden has become more shady. Hardy 'old' grevilleas like *G. rosmarinifolia* and *G. juniperina* tolerate some shade. Their flowers are modest but their prickly foliage justifies their use in gardens to provide safe habitat for small birds.

The last category, infill plants, includes plants like daisies and isotomas, not always long-lived but easy to propagate so easily replaced. A few acacias too are useful for growing quickly but then may not last long. The only grevilleas I would put in this category are the sort that need grafting to be sure of surviving in a garden. I could decide to grow a special one ungrafted, maybe in a pot, even though it might only live for a few years - it would still be worthwhile.

Framework and feature plants should ideally be permanent, ornamental plants might need replacing occasionally but you just don't count on infill plants to live for a long time.



## **Our 'Garden' at 17 Vores Road Whiteside Lawrence Smith**

Almost forty years ago we acquired section of an old dairy farm at Whiteside, twenty five kilometres north of Brisbane along the banks of the North Pine River, straddling the remains of the first road north of Brisbane last used in the mid 1800's. The property extends three hundred metres down the side of the valley from the ridgeline road to the river, in a diverse series of undulating slopes, ridges, level areas, gullies and terraces, falling in elevation some thirty metres in the process. The soils are variable in type and quality - shallow stony soils on the upper dry rocky ridge; sloping down through the clays and clay loams of the mid levels (which are either very hard, dry & impermeable or wet & soggy depending on season); to the deep moist alluvial sandy loams of the river terraces.

### **Original Vegetation**

Originally the lower levels and waterway corridors of the property would have been covered in rainforest with open Eucalyptus forest on the upper areas and drier ridges. Except for the riparian forest retained along the river, the surrounding area had been largely cleared principally leaving a scattering of Blue Gums *Eucalyptus tereticornis* (up to 30 metres high)

LANDPLAN

LANDSCAPE

LANDSCAPE

DESIGN

over the site. The original site use as part of the early road corridor introduced a number of exotic species (most now removed). The subsequent dairying use resulted in a profusion of the tenacious weeds Groundsel, Lantana and Chinese Elm. Like many city fringe areas the eradication and control of invading weed species is a continuing problem with unwanted exotic trees, shrubs, herbs and grasses germinating from seeds dispersed by wind and deposited by birds.

### **Wildlife**

We are located within one of south east Queensland's most densely populated Koala habitat areas and most days (and nights) we enjoy the antics of three or four Koalas as they forage high up in the *Eucalyptus tereticornis* along the river corridor and around the house. In the river Platypus and even Lung Fish are seen in the late afternoon. We enjoy a wide diversity of bird life attracted to the established landscape. Although we could do without the family of bush turkeys who create havoc throughout the gardens by continually relocating mulch to where they want it.

### **Design Concept**

Over the years the differing spatial characteristics of the site and the diverse microenvironments have naturally dictated the location and form of the introduced planting. The result is not really a 'garden' in the true sense but rather an expression of specific relationships of plants to natural processes and influences such as season, breezes, sunshine and water flows. In fact it was only in the last few years that I have developed a 'master plan' placing on paper the landscape endeavours of many years, for which planning had previously resided only in my mind!! This is a severe case of the pot calling the kettle black when you think of all of the clients for whom I have developed garden plans. However now in retirement it has been possible to stand back and analyse the garden (particularly for the sunshine and shadow effects throughout the year), do some selective removal and pruning as well as identifying new opportunities presented through the related analysis and planning process.

I always think of our place as being somewhat like a botanic garden where over the years many species of native plants have been trialled in varying site locations to ensure that when used in client projects they will succeed in achieving the design intention. If a particular plant does not come up to expectation then it is unceremoniously removed. Over the years I have trialled many species and all of these have been recorded in a database to provide an excellent reference for their response to cultivation and any potential uses or misuses.

## ***Come inside the outside***

### **Arrival Experience**

The arrival experience is important - the lengthy driveway follows down the slope to the house traversing a series of environments and plant communities providing structured views and glimpses into the various areas of the garden as an introduction and enticement to explore further once out of the car.

### **Luehmannii Entry Court**

The entrance courtyard is a close visual integration between the architectural and the landscape elements, inspired by the principal plant - a grove of *Leptospermum luehmannii* Hillside Wild May, endemic to the nearby Glasshouse Mountains. This decorative small tree has characteristic twisted branching supporting an open canopy of emerald green leaves casting a light shadow over the courtyard; small white flowers dust the courtyard surfaces in spring. The trunks and bark is the main feature providing a year round symphony of colour. Throughout the cooler months the bark is a 'must touch' magnificent satin burgundy. In spring it splits randomly from top to bottom and curls back decoratively with an ochre reverse to reveal the brilliant new apple green bark under. Throughout summer the twisted old bark festoons the irregular branches as the green trunk ages through many hues of green then brown to burgundy, sometimes with a touch of indigo. A selection of smaller covers and tufting plants as an understory compliment the *Leptospermums*.

### **Rainforest Gully**

The house and my office is set on the rim of a steep rainforest gully containing an intermittent waterway and small lagoon. When we first moved here 40 years ago the water was permanent but during the past ten years climate change has severely reduced the time water is present. The few original rainforest specimens have been progressively augmented with a range of locally endemic species and selected species from other bioregions.

The upper section of the gully has been neglected over the years but we have recently commenced the rehabilitation process by removing weed species and encouraging the hundreds of seedling rainforest species uncovered to establish. The success and rate of growth has been remarkable primarily due to this years 'standard wet season' not experienced for more than ten years.

### **Undulating Slopes**

Below the driveway, a large area of attractive naturally undulating landform slopes north down to the Rainforest Gully. A central ridgeline divides the area into two broad gently sloping amphitheatres, one with a north aspect the other east with consequent differing microclimatic conditions. These slopes are being progressively developed as a 'walkabout' garden between a range of irregular groups of specific plant communities, including: Sterculiaceae, Myrtaceae, Proteaceae, Gymnosperm, as well as plants collected from specific locations. The original historic northern road traverses diagonally across the top of the slopes and is preserved as a view corridor. In addition the slopes and terraces are designated as play areas for grandchildren with varied spaces large and small.

### **River Terrace**

From the house, views to the river flat are filtered through a screen of Blue Gums and other selected tree specimens such as a *Brachychiton acerifolius*, *Toona ciliata*, *Barklya syringifolia*, *Melicope elleryana* and palms *Ptychosperma elegans* & *P. macarthurii*.

Two groups of *Doryanthes excelsa* & *D. palmeri* are used as focal points to define the transition between the pool terrace and the wider landscape. A grove of *Costus potierae* with its unique corkscrew canes and fleshy leaves provides an interesting visual filter adjacent the

outdoor living areas. The Cape York Gardenia *Gardenia psidioides*, a *Grevillea heliosperma* from Kakadu and *Tecomanthe 'Roaring Meg'* a vine from the Daintree climbing over a steel pergola, collectively provide distinctive foliage and flower diversity. Overall the wonderful and uniquely Australian bush aroma of *Mallotus claoxyloides* so typical of the local waterways permeates the surrounds, particularly in the still humid air of a late afternoon in summer.

### **River Corridor**

The North Pine River is subject to periodic flooding and major floods in 1974 and 1989 saw the river flats covered by more than 10 metres of swiftly flowing water. Consequently landscape treatment here is limited to robust species endemic to the river corridor. Central on the terrace is *Brachychiton discolor* which carpets the lawn with thousands of pink bells in summer. Although there are also several fruit trees – citrus, avocado, mango, lychee - these were severely damaged by flood flows. It is intended to progressively extend the existing riparian vegetation and increase the Koala forest habitat of the corridor.

There are a several interesting species established on the riverbank: *Elaeocarpus grandis* with buttressed roots in excess of one metre high after 40 years; *Legnephora moorei* a naturally endemic vine climbing high in the canopy of *Waterhousia floribunda* its presence known due to the large dinner plate size leaves with white reverse scattered over the ground surface; these are regularly raked up, together with all of the other leaf litter, by the Bush Turkeys to make an enormous mounded nest, leaving the river banks wide open to erosion.

Two robust vines or lianas *Cissus antarctica* Native Gape and *Maclura coochinchinensis* Cockspur Thorn are expanding rapidly and smothering the canopy of the riverine forest. A decision to preserve or not is necessary to avoid destruction of the existing canopy tree specimens, particularly as we intend to substantially extend the rainforest along the river flats.

### **A Work in Progress**

After so many years developing slowly to a timetable dictated by my personal availability it is good to see progress begin in implementing some of the many initiatives that have been gestating. The established specimens in the various sections of the property now provide a mature framework defining the microclimatic and visual aspects which dictate the location, extent and form of the additional collections of bioregional species, as well as influencing the detail design of the related landscape components.

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## BOOK NOTES

### Forest Bountiful: settlers' use of Australian plants

Written by Penny Watsford and published by Nullum Publications. It is just amazing how useful plants can be even today and in the early days of settlement plants were an essential resource for the self-sufficient household and smallholding. This book explores the uses settlers had for the non-timbers plants growing in abundance in the forests around them from the 1860s to the 1950s in northern NSW and southern Queensland. Primarily aimed at land-carers, gardeners, bushwalkers and those interested in natural or colonial history. Much of the research has been based on interviews with long-term residents who recall the days of timber clearing, as well as published and unpublished documents, including old cookery books and recipes. It shows how much initiative had to be used to create much of what we take for granted these days. Native plants provided fodder, shelter, furnishings and implements for the home, as well as providing home remedies and supplementing the larder with wild fruit, herbs and other plants to vary the diet. Harvesting plants on a wide scale eventually led to the passing of NSW legislation in 1927 and the protection of Australian plants from further exploitation. This charming book is illustrated with photographs as well as line drawings by Margaret Elliott and will appeal to many (ISBN9780975682333. Available from Nullum Publications, PO Box 1152 Murwillumbah, NSW 2484)

Taken from "History" September 2010

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## MEETINGS

### MELBOURNE

#### Next Melbourne Branch Meeting

On Sunday November 28, the last meeting of the year for the Melbourne Branch will be held at Helen Kennedy's place at 13 Fairview Ave, Wheelers Hill. It's on the corner of Pleasant View Crescent & you enter from Pleasant View Crescent, Melway 71G6. Helen will kindly let us have our picnic lunch in her garden at 1pm and then the meeting will start at 2pm.

This was the first weekend day in November that suited Helen and Bev Hanson, who will be there too. She and Helen will tell us about the design and creation of a new section of Helen's garden, replacing a large area of lawn. This has mostly been planted out over the past year. I hope as many members as possible will be able to come to the meeting. There will be some garden seats but bring a seat if you easily can (as well as your lunch), plus your last newsletter for discussion.

Please let me know by email or phone (9822 6992) if you can come so I can give Helen an idea of numbers.

Diana Snape

## **Report of Melbourne meeting held at Karwarra Gardens on 28/08/10**

Members met at these well known gardens to get an overview of proposed changes to the gardens from Lindy Harris who was appointed as caretaker a little over 12 months ago. It was kind of Lindy to give up her time to talk to us and tour us around the grounds. We started off in the warmth of the house where Lindy had laid out plans for the gardens the most recent being one drawn up by John Patrick. This plan informs the direction in which the gardens are moving. Some of Patrick's plans were realised several years back with the construction of the new entry, gatehouse and plant sales areas. The plan for a significantly wide circular path-cum-road has also been realised only not quite in the position on the drawing. While moving in the direction of the Patrick plan, which seems to be a slight modification and simplification of Kath Deery's original plan, I think it would be fair to say Lindy is very respectful of Kath's vision which seems to guide her most strongly in carrying out her planting plans. I think it would also be fair to say that Lindy is responding to what she sees in the garden making decisions about paths, the shape of beds and plantings for practical reasons.

Karwarra has some rare and unusual forms of plants so Lindy has been careful to try to propagate these plants before their imminent demise. Quite a lot of vegetation has been removed from the gardens – truckloads I imagine - as plants have been removed or cut back in very radical ways. Examples of the latter were the banksias cut down to stumps. While Lindy is a keen pruner she is also trying to balance radical change with the need to maintain some mature aspects of this garden which is still open to the public.

As sections of the garden are renewed soils are not worked but weeds are killed and beds are mulched before planting. Weeds however remain a huge problem throughout the garden despite some use of sprays.

With the changes the gardens are more open and inviting. Lindy has enormous knowledge and enthusiasm so it is 'watch this space' in future of the gardens.

After looking at the gardens the group talkd about 'Criteria for garden selection' and 'Format for recording gardens' – 2 documents that Diana had supplied to the meeting for our consideration. The results of these discussions are recorded in this Newsletter. Chris Larkin

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## **NORTH-EAST VICTORIA**

### **North-East Victoria Branch Report Nov.2010**

We have had a very quiet year meaning there is little to report. The major activity recently was the opening of the Hall's garden where our involvement sort of got mixed with Wangaratta APS as so many of us have double membership. Despite all the counter attractions on that first weekend in October a reasonable number of very interested gardeners came to learn and went away informed. The weather at least was in our favour and the garden really looked enchanting. Beyond the physical beauty there was opportunity to understand the planning and preparation that had preceded planting, the household waste water system, the drainage pattern in the garden to use every drop of rain, the raised beds, the ripping and the gypsum, the right plant for the spot- or is it the right spot for the plant, the match of needs and conditions.....local gardeners found much to try and follow. We can be very proud of Jan and Alan's presentation to their community.

We have not found the man-power to produce a simple guide to design for beginners and have come to query whether a book is the correct format for disseminating such guidance. Younger people seem to look for and find whatever they are seeking on the net and it seems help is already there, judging by comments in the August NL. There could be value in formalising the information but that is for the computer literate, not us oldies. Abandoning the book project has left us inactive this year, the plan for next year is to organize trips to interesting gardens. We have seen all that we know of within easy range and envisage day trips to Melbourne. This could mean organizing a bus which could lead to inviting local groups to join us. We would use the Open Garden book as a starting point and also call on our friends in Melbourne for helpful suggestions. I hope to start talking to Wang group and be able to start the ball rolling in the early autumn.

**Next North East Vic Branch Meeting** -The next meeting will be in 2011 and notice for this meeting will be found in the next newsletter.

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## **SYDNEY**

### **Report of Sydney Meeting AUG 21/22**

Our sincere thanks go to Newcastle member, Maree McCarthy, for organising this weekend. It was a not to be missed opportunity to study what works horticulturally and creatively in numerous coastal gardens, with different needs, through the eyes of one designer.

Saturday morning saw all of us, eventually, make our way to Maree's house, well tested ( read confused!) both geographically and directionally by the rolling hills and sparkling waterways of the Newcastle environs.

Whilst waiting for our group to muster we sat on the deck overlooking Maree's luxuriously growing garden and enjoyed her homemade/grown pumpkin soup. She told us numerous, poignantly funny tales of her resident water dragons, my favourite was that of the young male seeking refuge from the dominant and very large male by hiding under the living room sofa!.....not to mention him enjoying an occasional nurse on Maree's lap!

I urge you to read Maree's blog "Dragon Diaries" for updates on these reptilean charmers.

However, to plants and gardening.

### **MAREE'S GARDEN:**

Maree was faced with the ubiquitous suburban Australian combination of kikuyu lawn, the hills hoist, madeira vine, morning glory and little else when she purchased her house some years ago. Her initial response was to plant a she-oak (*Allocasuarina torulosa*) barrier along the creek line to hold off, as much as possible, the weed infestation in the adjoining reserve. She then covered the surrounding area with newspaper and planted fast growing rainforest species through it.

The soil is a heavy clay and the area gets lots of rain ( apologies for the unscientific description). The block is flat at the front of the house and falls away towards a small creek at the back, allowing a deep patio a good overall view of the back garden. At the front of the house, the beds are slightly raised and plants kept well clipped and ordered with blossom colour, texture and form being well front of mind. As with so many of the native plant gardens we visit, it is the best

front garden in the street by a country mile and an outstanding advocate for Australian plants. The garden is very near the coast and relatively high so the front plantings also provide a windbreak.

Placed amongst the shrubs and trees are ceramic bowls and pots filled with water, providing ponds and “spas” for the aforementioned residents.

Plants singled out by Maree and members for discussion were, *Dianella* ‘King Alfred’, an excellent bank binder and much appreciated by one of the native bee species, *Acacia* ‘Lime Magic’, the Rose Myrtle, *Archirhodomertus becklari*, *Melaleuca viridiflora*, the Broad leaved Paperbark and *Grevillea* ‘Billy Bonkers’, as never being without flowers.

Maree calls the back area a garden of the heart; less romantically, but along the same lines, I saw it as the engine room, providing for her numerous practical activities and philosophical objectives among them, plant trialing for the garden design business, herb and vegetable growing along permaculture lines, fresh water harvesting and collection and the all important wildlife habitat.

**Jo Hambrett NSW**

**Next Sydney Meeting** - *Please find details in the next newsletter.*