



GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

ISSN 1039 – 9062
ABN 82 428 110 028
Newsletter
February 2011

73

STUDY GROUP LEADER / EDITOR

Jo Hambrett

7 Davey Road, Dural, NSW 2158

ph: (02) 9651 1827

email: tudortalisman@optusnet.com.au

TREASURER / MEMBERSHIP

Jeff Howes

41 Gum Blossom Drive, Westleigh 2120

ph: (02) 9481 9346

email: gdsgmembership@yahoo.com.au

Website: <http://asgap.org.au/design.html> or Google 'Australian Garden Design'

Dear Members,

I am sorry I have sad news to report to members. Those who have been members for some time will remember Peter Garnham, our first treasurer and membership officer.

Peter filled these roles most diligently and efficiently until he retired at the end of 2000. He was then replaced by Bryan Loft .

On Tuesday 8 February, after bravely fighting a very serious illness for just over two months, Peter died peacefully. Wilma, his wife, was with him when he passed away.

With others who knew him, I'll always remember Peter for his honesty and integrity, his friendly, helpful nature and his quiet sense of humour.

He and Wilma remained active members of the Garden Design Study Group and the Melbourne members, in particular, will miss him.

Diana Snape

Members may remember the \$5000 the GDSG put towards the reprinting of "The Australian Garden" by Bloomings Books, the original publishers of the first edition?

The book was duly reprinted and has already sold out! I am sure it has proved to be one of the most successful books on Australian plant gardens in history!
Keep a look out for the soft cover version which will be out soon. The more APS people buy this book through their society the more the GDSG cash flow benefits and the more money we have to put toward another book.

As from the next (May 2011) Newsletter we have a new Treasurer/Membership officer.

Ben Walcott from the ACT has kindly stepped in to relieve Jeff Howes of the position. Jef has done a wonderful job over the past 3 years. Everything is in apple pie order for the incoming Treasurer.

Thank you so much Jeff for all your help with a demanding and complex job - I am very grateful to you

&

A big welcome to Ben; I look forward to working with you and thank you very much for taking on the role.

On the subject of changes - Shirley Pipitone the leader of the Canberra branch of the GDSG finds she no longer has the time to bring all her wonderful ideas for the Canberra group to fruition. She has passed the baton onto Ros Walcott who will become the new leader of the Canberra branch from this newsletter onwards.

Shirley, many thanks for your enthusiasm and support of the GDSG over many years. Please keep insightful ideas, opinions and letters, such as the one in this NL's Correspondence section, coming in.

This newsletter focuses very much on the recording of gardens - I am thrilled that this is up and running in Victoria. As the format is honed with use, I envisage it being used across the country. I would appreciate members emailing or writing to me of gardens they feel are worthy of recording in their state or territory. Please record your own garden too and we can publish it in the newsletters - an excellent way of recording a garden and its gardener for posterity. Please read what members have to say and suggestions they make and add your ideas to the mix. WE NEED YOU ALL to make this project work. If you don't wish to be involved then at the very least send us in the names of gardens and gardeners you feel we should follow up. It really is a case of many hands and heads make light work - especially since we are doing it Australia wide. I would dearly love members to get in touch with their regional body and pick their brains for suggestions. We may not be able to preserve the gardens in aspic (see below) but we will do our best on paper. JH

Buildings are easier to conserve than gardens. Pillars and walls do not grow upwards without human intervention; tiled floors do not spread sideways into adjoining rooms; chandeliers do not produce offspring beneath the secretaires. A building is a building as Gertrude Stein might have said: but a rose is a seedling, a mature plant, ahydra headed monster and a damned prickly one at that. A garden needs a constant program of culling and new planting if it is not to decay like a human being,..... none can be preserved in aspic, not even a Japanese garden of stone and sand. Tom Garnett

INDEX

CORRESPONDENCE p. 4

DESIGN p. 5

Headings and questions for recording gardens

Jeff Howes NSW

Some thoughts and Ideas for recording gardens & a format

Ros Walcott ACT

At One in a Garden

Nicky Zanen Vic.

PLANTS p. 14

After the Hailstorm

Chris Larkin Vic.

MEETINGS p.15

TREASURER'S REPORT p. 20

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear friends and supporters of the Australian landscape,

In the recent book **More Than Luck: Ideas Australia needs now** <<http://morethanluck.cpd.org.au>> , published by the **Centre for Policy Development** <<http://www.cpd.org.au/>> , Ben Eltham argues that "Australian culture is rich, deep and diverse and our new federal cultural policy should recognise this". Many comments on the CPD website call for change in many areas of cultural policy, but none have recognised the Australian landscape as a significant and threatened element of our cultural heritage.

I'm hoping my comment (below) is published. If you would like to reinforce my comment or add to it or make a different point to contribute to the same goal, please do. If by any chance my comment is rejected, you will hear from me again and we will all protest loudly.

My comment

Globalisation is homogenisation, in culture and other things. Is Australian art intrinsically different from the art of other countries? Is Australian performance intrinsically different from performance in other countries? An Australian cultural policy must first try to identify what is Australian culture and which aspects of Australian culture need government assistance to survive.

A key aspect of Australian culture not yet mentioned on this page is our landscape, which most certainly is intrinsically different from the landscape of other countries. Our landscape inspires artists, not just to paint landscapes but to respond in varied media to the heat and isolation, the blue of the mountain ranges and the red of the inland, the stark, dirty but sparkling white of salt lakes, the brown rush of floodwaters, the cracked earth in drought.

There is no part of Australia untouched by humans, therefore the whole country is cultural landscape. First Aboriginal people shaped the land, then white people shaped the land. Our cultural landscape includes all the areas we think of as "natural" and all the places we know are influenced by humans – the roadside planting of Lombardy poplars near country towns, the windbreaks of radiata pine sheltering farmhouses, the persistence of Victorian era floral clocks and other plantings spelling out significant local events, the winding old rivers and their billabongs, the city streets rarely defined by anything distinctively Australian, similarly urban and suburban public and private spaces which could often be anywhere in the world.

Our cultural institutions which display the distinctive nature of our landscape, the more "natural" elements relatively untouched by humans, are our Botanic Gardens, specifically the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra, portions of other capital city botanic gardens, and several Regional Botanic Gardens which focus on Australian plants indigenous to their local area. The Australian National Botanic Gardens in particular has been starved of funding for many years, and subjected to decades of "efficiency dividends" as if plants are able to grow more efficiently and just as beautifully with less funding. Less funding means fewer staff, less weeding, less pruning, less replacement of old or unthrifty plants, less watering, less research, fewer publications and so forth.

The Australian National Botanic Gardens needs more government assistance to ensure that this aspect of Australian culture can survive. In particular, the Australian National Botanic Gardens should have the same status as other cultural institutions in Canberra in relation to Commonwealth funding for school visits from throughout Australia. Without this, there is a very real risk that future generations will have little or no awareness of Australia's distinctive landscape, and the current process of landscape homogenisation will escalate in the absence of knowledgeable custodians in the future.

Shirley Pipitone ACT

DESIGN

Suggested headings and questions for Recording Gardens

During the last few years there has been some ongoing discussions (and more is needed) about how we spend our accumulated funds. One suggestion, that I think is a good one, is to record (and photograph) details of our member's 'mature' gardens. By mature, I envisage gardens older than 15 to 20 years.

Suggested headings that can be used to record the garden details together with my comments on my own garden are as follows:

Garden commencement and why the use of native plants?

I was in a newsagency looking at magazines (as you do) and saw the brilliant yellow flowers of *Cassia artemisioides* on the cover of the Sept 1976 Australian Plants, Vol 8 No 66. (This plant has subsequently been renamed to *Senna artemisioides*). I purchased the magazine, joined the then SGAP - now APS (NSW), obtained seeds, grew the plants on and then planted them out. These much admired plants are still growing in my garden. That experience was the catalyst of my interest in native plants.

How have plant availability changed since you first started your garden?

During the 1970s, 80s, and early 90s the combined Sydney APS groups staged large native plant display and promotional exhibitions. I worked at them all on becoming a member and I was stunned by the variety of native plants and their flowers that were on display from all over Australia. I eagerly purchased as many as I could afford and planted them out. I soon learnt (as did the general public) that many of the native plants being sold would not grow in Sydney's climate and if they did, they would only grow for two of three years and often less. Native plants gained a negative opinion with the public as a result and that lasted well into the 1990s before more reliable native plants become available and more awareness of what plants will grow where, prevailed. I was not deterred by this lack of success (I had a lot to learn), so I did some research and realised that I need to start planting some hardy and reliable plants as my 'backbone' to my garden. After this, I could add some of the more desirable and hard to grow plants as fill-in plants. My first plantings included: *Baeckea crenatifolia* and *B. virgata*, *Banksia robur*, *Calothamnus villosus*, *Callistemon* Captain Cook,

Callistemon pinifolius, *Callistemon subulatus*, *Philotheca myoporoides*, *Grevillea Ivanhoe*, *Hakea salicifolia*, *Hakea laurina*, *Leptospermum petersonii*, *Melaleuca fulgens*, *Melaleuca lateria*, *Pimelia ferruginea*, *Prostanthera ovalifolia*, *Telopea speciosissima* and *Thryptomene* 'F.C.Payne'. Readers will quickly realise that some are now not grown or even available from nurseries but many have stood the test of time and are even more popular 30 years on.

How does my garden grow?

When I started to grow native plants I had full sun and plenty of lawn. Over the years a lot of my lawn was converted into garden beds. However, as my garden and my neighbour's gardens matured, I had a lot less sun due to now quite large trees and my garden became much drier due to root competition. This resulted in fewer flowers on the sun loving plants, poor growth of the plants that needed a bit of moisture and the necessity to plant more shade loving plants. Over time, the garden changed quite a lot and I tended to have more foliage than flowers, especially in the shadier areas. However, it also gave me the opportunity to grow some hardy orchids and ferns.

Availability of native plants.

Over the last 30 years the amount of nurseries specialising in native plants in Sydney has fallen as has the choice of 'desirable' species available to purchase -- a pity.

The biggest change in native plant availability in nurseries in the late 1990s and into the noughties was the large increase in semi and true rainforest plants as well as the availability of Western Australian plants grafted onto a hardy root stock, enabling them to grow in Sydney. Planting out of these plants has further changed my garden.

Another recent group of plants now being sold is the native grasses and other strappy leaf plants (*Lomandra* and *Dianella* spp). Use of these has enabled me to dig out my front lawn entirely and replace with *Lomandra* Tanika and *Poa* species (still deciding on how successful this is).

Lifestyle changes

As my family grew, I quickly realised that my garden will always be two or more years behind my family's life style. The addition of outdoor play and entertainment areas cause plants to come and go.

Summary

If GDSG members think this is a good project to document mature gardens (hope so), then perhaps they would like to add further criteria to the above, as I know there are a few more that I could have added and expanded on. Discussion on these additional headings, will make an ideal 'thread' for subsequent NLs.

Once the headings have been decided on (by a committee, I suppose!), a master template can be produced that will be used for interviewing garden owners. Using the same recording criteria will result in the final product being more readable and useful as well as an important historical document.

PS: My experiences are from a garden owner in the north western suburbs of Sydney (NSW) perspective. Comments and plants under the headings I have used will vary from state to state and that is what will make it even more important to record these details.

Jeff Howes NSW

Some Thoughts and Ideas for Recording Gardens

I was really interested in the Format for Recording Gardens in Newsletter #72 so I thought that I would have a try at doing it for our garden to see how it worked. I have attached my first attempt. I will have to send you the garden plan a bit later - I know I have a scanned copy somewhere but can't find it at the moment.

I also attached some additional questions from a book that I have been reading on visiting gardens - the citation is with the text.

I wonder if the evaluators might not need some suggestions for additional questions. I think that I would - but maybe people who have done it more often than I would not.

Of course I realise that if our garden was chosen to be recorded there would need to be a lot more information gathered and that other eyes than mine would have to look it over. I was just interested in how the format worked for me. I was also thinking about how to record the Australian National Botanic Gardens - that will be quite a project. At least we now have a great new appointment for Manager of Collections, David Taylor.

Ben and I were members of the Garden Conservancy in America for many years. They wrestled with the same problems that we are dealing with here - how do you judge what is an exceptional garden? They were also interested in preserving exceptional gardens and making them open to the public. The Open Days program was started in America by Ben's cousin, Frank Cabot. It started with just a few gardens in Connecticut being open and is now huge and nationwide.

The mission of the Garden Conservancy is to preserve exceptional American gardens for the education and enjoyment of the public.

Since 1989, the Garden Conservancy has joined with gardeners, local organizations, and other like-minded partners:

- To preserve gardens by harnessing the power of communities and the expertise of horticulturists, landscape designers, historians, and preservationists
- To share magnificent spaces and gardening ideas with the public through educational programs and the Open Days garden visiting program
- To raise public awareness of the important role gardens play in America's cultural and natural heritage

Ros Walcott ACT

FYI members, Frank Cabot, to whom Ros refers has written a marvellous book "The Great Perfection" about which Penelope Hobhouse writes:

"Frank Cabot - on one level - has created a great modern garden using all the tricks of landscape design which have evolved through centuries. On quite another level, he has shown how nature works and how a contrived garden can fit into a wider landscape. With his passionate interest in plants, plant exploration and botany, he demonstrates how a discriminating choice of plants can produce something to satisfy both aesthete and ecologist as well as stir the heart of the horticulturist. This book is not only the story of a garden but an essay on the finer points of garden appreciation!"

A book which would no doubt be of great interest to all of us interested in garden design. **JH**

A Format for Recording Gardens

Walcott Garden, Canberra

January 2011

Location: 10 Wickham Crescent, Red Hill, ACT

Climate: ACT has a relatively dry, continental climate with warm to hot summers and cool to cold winters. Overall there is an average of 99 frosts for the year with an average of 95 frosts occurring between April and October with an average of 58 of these frosts occurring during the winter.

Rainfall:

The average annual rainfall is 629 mm with an average of 108 rain days per year. Rainfall is reasonably evenly distributed throughout the year with the wettest month being October (65.3 mm) and the driest being June (39.6 mm). Rainfall varies considerably from year to year, e.g. 2009, 500mm and 2010, 1109mm.

Size:

9,300 square metres

Orientation: The house faces northeast

Slope:

The garden slopes from 610 metres to 600 metres above sea level

Soil Type:

Clays over mudstone and siltstone

Watering system:

Drip irrigation where practical, microjets for many of the plant beds, large jets for the meadow. We dug an 85m deep bore which pumps into our pond system. All drainspouts from the roof and runoff from the extensive paved area are diverted into a three pond system where rainwater is mixed with bore water to run the irrigation system.

Age and History:

This property was first developed in 1926 when a small house was built on the block and a number of *Pinus radiata* were planted around the perimeter in the early nineteen thirties. Other large conifers were planted at the front of the property, including a now magnificent Portuguese Cypress, (*Cupressus lusitanica*). The property was purchased by the French government and used as their Chancery for many years. We purchased the property in 2001 and the planting of this garden began in July 2003.

The garden is planted almost entirely with Australian natives, with a very few New Zealand natives added. Apart from the pre-existing exotic trees, we also have three lemon trees, seven pistachio trees and six cypresses. The original design of the garden was done by landscape architect Helen Cohen, who was also part of the firm creating the architectural design of the house. We wanted to integrate the design of house and garden.

Over a period of two years, from 2001 to 2003, in consultation with Helen by email, phone and letter from America, we developed a plan for the garden. Our basic design principles included the following:

- the garden would contain mostly plants native to Australia
- there would be little, if any, lawn. Where we needed open space we would have a meadow of grasses, forbs and lilies
- the garden would be attractive to birds and other wildlife
- plant foliage and shape would be more important than flowers, even though flowers were needed to attract many of the birds
- we would attempt to retain all rain water on the property for use in the garden
- there should be some open water in the garden to attract wildlife
- we did not want a series of enclosed garden rooms, rather different areas that flowed into each other
- there would be more emphasis on the natural rather than the formal in the garden design, including wide paths in curved shapes
- while most native plants require trimming, they should only be trimmed to enhance their natural shape, not to create any formal shapes

We wanted to create a garden which would nurture wildlife and are pleased to report that over 75 species of birds have been seen in the garden so far. As the shrubberies become denser and the habitat more varied, we expect to add to our birdlist. Creating an Australian native garden is much more challenging in many ways than using plants which have been grown over many years and bred for garden use. Our plants have not been bred over many years for gardens, many of those that we grow have been grown from seed collected in the wild. Therefore their ideal growing conditions are not known and their life histories are not documented.

Garden Plan: See attached

Garden Design:

General:

The setting is well-established suburban, with large blocks of land, many trees and a large open area of grass and trees in the centre of Wickham Crescent. The street trees were originally Kurrajong, *Brachychiton populneus*, but trees added more recently have been Chinese Elm, *Ulmus parvifolia* and the Cork Oak, *Quercus suber*. There are many trees, particularly eucalypts, which form an extensive borrowed landscape. Other houses are now screened from view by a hedge of *Callistemon salignus*. The garden completely surrounds the house and is in view from every part of the house. The paths can be seen clearly on the Garden Plan and are navigable under all weathers, but the gravel is unfortunately too difficult for walkers and wheelchairs.

Plants:

The garden contains around 700 different species of plants and over 4,000 individual plants. More than 50 trees have been planted on the property since 2003. All plants since 2003 are Australian natives except for 3 Meyer lemon trees, *Citrus limon*, 7 Pistachio trees, *Pistacia chinensis*, for deciduous shade and 4 Forest Cabbage Trees, *Cordyline banksii*. There are 5 pre-existing cypresses and 12 Monterey Pines, *Pinus radiata*, all dating from the 1930's. There are two large 150 year old Brittle Gums, *Eucalyptus mannifera*, at the top of the property and 6 Funeral Cypress, *Cupressus sempervirens*, planted to mark the three gates, (planted for 'Peace' and 'Prosperity' in the Italian tradition, which is commonly seen in Canberra).

Some of the plants are local indigenous plants, but others come from all parts of Australia, particularly Western Australia.

Trees line the boundaries of the property and there is an 650 square metre 'meadow' of native grasses, forbs and lilies in the centre of the garden. There are two small areas of lawn, one for parking and the other at the back of the house fenced in for dogs. There is a parterre of Boobialla, *Myoporum parvifolium* 'Choppy Seas', under Pistacia trees near the house.

One of the aims of the garden design is to provide many different foliage types year round. There are over 50 different species of wattle with all their variations in texture and leaf shape, about 50 different species of banksia and 35 different species of eucalypt all contributing to a wide variety of foliage forms. *Brachyscome multifida* selections are used as edging throughout the garden as a unifying theme.

The three layers of plants needed by birds, groundcovers and small shrubs, large shrubs and trees are present throughout the garden. Many prickly and dense shrubs are provided for cover and nesting areas for smaller birds. Large trees are utilised by ravens and hawks for nesting. Last year we had a bower at the bottom of the garden with a successful male Satin Bowerbird presiding.

Water in many different forms is provided for use by birds and other wildlife, ponds with gently sloping sides, a rocky creek, birdbaths and water bowls are all popular. Nest boxes and microbat boxes have been provided with mixed success – one nest box has been taken over by bees. There are many different types of nectar bearing plants in the garden for insects and nectar feeding birds. Many different types of seed are available, especially in the wildflower meadow. Families of Red Browed Firetail finches eat the seeds in the meadow with great gusto, as do the Crimson Rosellas.

Fish (mostly uncoloured goldfish) are breeding well in the pond and provide food for kookaburras, egrets, herons, ibis and cormorants. There is a frog chorus in the ponds at varying times of the year and plenty of water beetles, dragonfly nymphs and other pond life to keep our Long Necked Turtle happy.

Aesthetic:

Views from the gazebo over the infinity edge pond are becoming more attractive as the plant growth blocks out any house or road views. Cedar table and chairs fit well into the gazebo and there are three cedar benches in the garden on which to sit. There is a curved bridge of Alaskan Cedar across the upper pond which is weathering to an attractive silver colour. There are patterned stone areas in the gazebo and at the front entrance made from the same stone seen elsewhere in the garden.

All rock work around the ponds has been done using local sandstone from Newline Quarry. The extensive paving areas are paved with bush-hammered granite sourced from China. The soft honey colour blends well with the local rocks in the rock garden. All paths are

constructed with locally sourced apricot coloured stones rolled into a bitumen base. There is some loss of stones into the garden, but very little. Green metal railings are used in the back garden to control the dogs and surround three grass trees and a wall of Hardenbergia.

The meadow, 650 square metres in area, was planted with over 20,000 grasses, lilies and forb seedlings in November 2003. The soil was not amended in this part of the garden, as ripping the ground would have encouraged more weeds. The meadow planters used a drill to make a hole, then added a gel containing both water and nutrients and planted the seedlings. The meadow is the most difficult part of the garden to maintain, but very rewarding at many times of the year.

There is a greenhouse and shadehouse for orchids, both native and exotic.

Practical:

The slope of the block is both a blessing (providing good drainage) and a curse in that the design of the pond system and waterfall had to accommodate the slope. We would have preferred to have a meandering creek rather than a waterfall and creek, but the slope of the land dictated a 2 metre high waterfall. The waterfall makes a very pleasant sound, but also uses a lot of power to keep it running. We run it for only about three hours a day, just enough to aerate the water and mix rain water, pond water and bore water together for irrigation.

The soil on the block has needed much amendment since we began the garden. Initially we added considerable Dynamic Lifter to help with the clay soils and also 30 truckloads of 15 cubic metres each of composted wood chips. Since then we have added about 10 truckloads of composted leaf litter and wood chips (so-called Coarse Forest Litter from nearby Corkhill Brothers) to the garden each year. We recycle all our garden waste to this local composting centre, then buy it back as compost.

We have a gardener, John Hewitt, who comes for one morning a week, who does all the 'machine' work in the garden, mowing, trimming and edging. He also carts away all garden litter to the local composting area. He has also done considerable planting for us and will no doubt do more in the future as we age. When we need to spread compost our gardener assembles up to five other helpers and they distribute a load of compost in about two hours. We try to trim all those plants which respond well to pruning each year or every other year. The front hedge of *Callistemon salignus* has responded particularly well to regular pruning.

Rosalind Walcott ACT

'At one' in a Garden.

I am still trying to get to the crux of what it is that makes me feel 'at one' in some gardens and strained in others. Does it include the involvement of several senses like sound, vision and smell, and therefore provide interaction and action. I guess sound and action encompasses bird movements like the aerial acrobatics of the wattlebird; the calls of various birds and seeing the flighty movement of butterflies and native bees, or even the actions of caterpillars. Maybe it is the element of surprise you get – not just with colour and texture, but also the suddenness of movement, or sound.

I can clearly remember sitting in a wildly overgrown area abutting the garden early one morning in an attempt at an outdoor meditation in London and hearing a strange noise.

When I investigated I saw a couple of snails chomping their way on foliage forming part of a pile of weeds which was going to be burnt. I was amazed at this. The surroundings were quiet enough to hear this noise, and my hearing acute enough. I might add that on another occasion a raptor landed on the fence, which made me jump out of my skin, and this too was a big surprise. I loved this unkempt haven – originally set aside for tennis courts.

On the subject of using the garden as a place of rest and recreation, I found an interesting line in a publication I came across in Castlemaine recently. It was called the 'Slow Magazine' and originates from that area (the Goldfields of Victoria).

The following was penned by Michael McCoy :

My neighbour's yard is entirely concreted and is furnished with two recliner rockers. Every evening the elderly couple residing there sit outside, drinking their home brew.

If quality in garden design can be measured by its lifestyle match to the owners, then that is near perfect design.

These people then don't need the sound, smell or visual stimulation of nature. I felt it a poignant reminder that each person's requirements is different.

And therein lies the differences we have in individuals. Chris Larkin has quoted her neighbour saying that he can't understand why she spends so much time 'working' in her garden. He uses the word 'working' in a negative connotation – for Chris the time in her garden is not work at all.

Likewise at the Gym one morning a couple of ladies couldn't imagine spending any time gardening – for them it is onerous and for me, a great source of delight, particularly as I watch how plants progress, how plantings blend in and bring with them success or failure.

The Book Show on Radio National last week (29 October 2010) had a discussion about gardening and designing featuring Stephen Ryan from ABC TV's Gardening Australia, Terry Smyth from Melbourne's Botanic Gardens and writer Michael McCoy. One of the factors they explored was the difference between 'Plantsmen' and 'Gardeners'. It was interesting to get the head around the definitions of both plantsmen who primarily love different plants and gardeners who work with them. I wonder where the typical ANPSA member stands between these two categories.

I am not sure where all this contemplating is leading but hope you enjoy the ideas and look forward to any responses.

6 February 2011

Part of a contribution to the Victorian newsletter I have written this month surprised me somewhat and I want to take this opportunity of exploring this a little further.

In the past two years we have steadily been losing many of our magnificent 'show' gardens. Several Maroondah members have sold up and Katandra Gardens in Wandin North (Bob and Dot O'Neill) now has new owners. Am I the only one who feels a sense of ownership of a garden because I get to know it by visiting it regularly? I wonder. I do feel a great loss although at the same time an intrigue to see where our next wave of good Aussie gardens

will spring up, as well as having an immense thankfulness that we still have so many great gardeners in our midst.

It was the line about feeling 'an ownership of a garden I visit regularly'. In the same way I imagine that anyone who advises or assists in planning or working in a garden, shares that one too. And tickling this further, why a designer or landscaper who is particular about his design doesn't necessarily want to revisit his work down the track to see the 'destruction' the owners render to his design.

In January I visited Royce Raleigh in Wartook, near the Grampians in Victoria. The growth of so many of his plants was stunning, but also so, the losses. I was amused though, to pass an arch created by an *Eremophila polyclada*. This plant was huge, you could walk underneath it, and it has stunning flowers. At the bottom of it a *Verticordia monadelpha* was flowering, which Royce was thrilled to point out to me, in his enthusiasm appearing totally oblivious of said *Eremophila*. All in the eye of the beholder!

Recently I was sitting next to my pond, having dinner. It surprises me how quickly the water level goes down on a windy day. I top it up at a trickle from my water tank to get the benefit of the water gently cascading over surrounding rocks, primarily to keep the pond from getting too disturbed and brackish.

I had a lot of enjoyment watching all the activity around the pond. A water boatman emerges every so often and swiftly comes to the top and disappears into the mud. An interesting wasp like insect with two vibrant orange bars on a black abdomen hovers around, occasionally skims on the surface, hovers and flies off (possibly a paper wasp). A honey bee got himself (or herself) too deep in the water and looked close to drowning. I lifted her out with a strainer and she has since dried out and flown away. An interesting insect which runs and flies (does that make any sense) comes down to the water's edge. It is black with orange antennae (possibly a cream spotted Ichneumon). A couple of narrow spiders are playing? in foliage above the water – doing various aerobic maneuvers. There is a lot happening.

In my garden there have been a couple of losses and a lot of plants are popping up, especially grasses. My idea of having a footpath of native grasses outside my bedroom window has me perplexed. I bought three grass varieties from the Knox Environment Society and they seeded last year so this year I have several new plants growing. My problem is that I can't tell whether these are indigenous grasses or feral ones. Additionally they are affecting the general look and I think I might be reconsidering whether to remove them altogether and go for a more natural garden which revegetates itself, like Maureen Schaumann's or Peg McAllister's.

Nicky Zanen, Vic.

PLANTS

After the Hailstorm

The hailstorm of early 2010 seems a distant memory. I look out at a lush healthy garden booming with new growth and I ask 'what hailstorm?' The rain that fell in 2010 started out as a good thing – a wonderful relief after all those years of drought. In my situation it has remained a positive enabling my garden to repair and large shrubs – and most importantly large trees – to drink up big. In truth the rainfall around me was little more than what used to pass for normal 14 years ago, but it was around a 50% increase on the previous year.

I redesigned a large part of the garden up the hill behind the house in late May. Tom moved around soil, placed rocks and distributed piles of mulch with his bob-cat on the last day it was possible to safely operate a machine on the slope. With all the rain that fell in 2010 I'm not sure that we had another window for working all year. In fact there was a light drizzle on the day Tom was here which gave us an anxious moment or two as it made the clay soil greasy and slippery, but serious rain held off until the following day. The chance to redesign came as a result of a large tree blowing out the previous year. I created the garden beds up the hill. I created them over time, bit by bit, in an ad hoc manner and some of the resulting pathways between the beds were steep, uneven and sometimes sloping in 2 directions. The fussier I became about the design of the garden the more these unsafe paths bugged me. Over the years the paths had become an irritant and I was constantly toying with what changes I could make to improve the situation, but removing a large tree was not one of the options I considered. Even after the tree came down I didn't immediately see the possibilities – I could only focus on the size of the cleanup job ahead of me. But Colin, who sometimes works with me in the garden, pointed out that this might be a good opportunity to change where the pathways were. And then I did see the possibilities and I was mighty excited. There is nothing like tackling a new project in the garden to get the heart racing and the mind in over-drive!

It was then only a matter of time before vision would become reality but it's never as simple as a tree falls down and then you get someone in to shift around the soil etc. Plants had to be cut back because they were straggly or had grown too large or I had to make room for the machine to operate. Plants had to be removed because they were in the way, or in the case of *Aphanopetalum resinosum*, described in the 'Encyclopaedia of Australian Plants' as either 'shrub-like and compact or 'a straggly climber', because they had become an invasive, uncontrollable menace. I was on a roll after pruning from the hailstorm and I just kept up the momentum. Tom took away a truck load of vegetation.

A bob-cat does a lot of work quickly. I don't want to take anything away from the work the bob-cat does, but it also creates a lot of work. Garden beds and pathways must be shaped and the soil contoured, smaller rocks need to be positioned, beds and paths must be mulched. Last, but by no means least plants had to be selected and positioned giving due consideration to linking with existing plantings and creating vistas and through-views and blocking out unwanted views. The success of these ideas will be tested over time when there is sufficient growth to see if the picture I had in mind is what I get in reality. Let me just say though at this point I'm really pleased with all the changes. The pathways are safe and

interesting and the sweep and fall of garden beds retained by large rocks and small is lovely. Last year was a great growing year and many plants have already doubled in size. And this summer has been kind too with plenty of moisture and few really hot days. So far it has been the most favourable time in around 14 years for trying to establish a lot of new plants on the high and dry side of the house. If anything I have had the odd worry that plants might die because of too much moisture – but then again there is a fair slope for drainage.

For many parts of Australia the rains which initially gave so much promise have cruelly dealt a horrible blow with crop and livestock loss and heartbreaking property damage and in some cases loss of life. A vast area of Australia, including the inland, has lurched from one extreme to another – and those affected must roll with the punches. What else can they do? As I write hurricane Yasi is just off the coast of Q'l'd and the people of that state are once again bracing themselves for the worst.

People need to be resilient and plants do too to cope with drought, fire and flood and gale force winds. It is 2 years since Black Saturday fires in Victoria transformed landscapes and lives with devastating ferocity. Recently I visited Lake Mountain with friends. It is an alpine wonderland just out of Marysville - a town all but raised to the ground on that Saturday. Around Marysville and beyond, the landscape is full of stark contrasts and promise. Burned trees line up like match-sticks and give distant hillsides a Mohawk hairdo. We puzzled that the tree trunks in this area are brown not black. Were the trees killed by radiant heat? Near ground level things are happening. Not all trees will regenerate on old wood but some are sprouting from lignotubers and others undoubtedly are regenerating from seed, but will all of the diversity return? Even within this altered landscape there was plenty to marvel at and inspire the gardener. There was a small alpine pond, a small stream cascading over rocks and an abundance of plants like brightly coloured clumps of pink flowering *Stylidium graminifolia* and large patches of a ground hugging scaevola with washed out pale pink flowers. It seems that nature gives us some of the worst and best of what we can possibly experience. And at its best it is inspirational.

Chris Larkin Vic

MEETINGS

NORTH EAST VICTORIA

It seems we all want to see gardens, preferably native, preferably in the company of like minded gardeners. I am offering a list of suggestions and would welcome feedback if you are interested in seeing any of them. Some combine plant sales, some are open garden and some APS members I could ask for permission to visit at a mutually suitable time. Some I

hope to get to with Alison regardless, for others Alison is not likely to be able to drive me and I will hope someone else will take pity on me.

From the Open Gardens

March 5-6 Bolobek at Mt. Macedon famous but only lately natives used. Combined with a Plant Fair at which about 3 respected native nurseries will be present

Mar. 26-27 Two gardens at Redesdale, one of which sounds good for natives

April 2-3 2 gardens in Shepparton ? their interest for us, but it is close.

April 23-24-25 Easter Strath Creek garden, sound very good. native.

2 which have passed but we possibly could enjoy if available for private view

Yankalilla at Taggerty

Girrawheen at Diamond Creek

Cranbourne Growing Friends have sales to members every 3rd. Wed and every 1st, 2nd, and 4th. Thurs. of the month. There is a big sale to the public, Mar.26-27, preceded by members and staff

Wed 16th and Sat 19th. There is also a Spring sale in October.

It only costs \$20 p.a. to join Friends of Cranbourne and read about all the wonderful activities one would just love to get to. If enough of us belong we might make a few, like a workshop on the Peas at the end of August and guided tours of the ongoing development of the 2nd.

Barbara Buchanan Vic.

MELBOURNE

Our first meeting for the year will be held on Sunday March 6 at our place at 3 Bluff Street, Hawthorn East, Melway 59G4. If you possibly can, come at 1pm with a picnic lunch, or else come for the meeting at 2pm.

I'm sorry that the anticipated date for the meeting, February Sunday 27, wasn't suitable for me as a big family get-together had been organized in Sydney for that day. So I hope that the change of date does not mean that anyone has to miss the meeting. We'll be planning our activities for the year and checking meeting dates as well as discussing garden design issues, for example those arising from the changing weather conditions being experienced nowadays.

Please bring along your thoughts and ideas about garden design in general. I'll look forward to seeing you here.

Diana Snape Vic.

SYDNEY

Could all NSW members put on their thinking caps for some ideas about where we can go this year to see more good native plant gardens?

A day long visit or a weekend's worth - whatever you are able to come up with will be very much appreciated. There are two gardens in the OGS scheme which are Native plant gardens in the Sydney area and I shall attempt to track them and their owners down. I know

also that there are more fabulous gardens around Newcastle which time did not permit us to visit last August.

On the subject of the Newcastle visit - the IT gremlins were at work and Chris did not receive the full report of the Sydney Group's Newcastle visit for publication in the Nov. NL. Following, are the other gardens Maree showed us - all of which she has designed.

The REDHEAD GARDEN occupies a very steep block, high on a headland, with amazing views to the beach.

The owner wanted to get rid of her lawn and assorted exotic plants at the back of the house, well down the block on a wide terrace with the views south to the beach.

She responded enthusiastically to Maree's suggestion of a dry pebble and stone watercourse and native planting.

Newspaper and mulch got rid of the lawn effectively spraying was not resorted to nor soil imported.

The dry river bed was made from rocks that the owner had collected over the years plus crushed rhyolite. Maree added a sundial and a birdbath.

The effect, when viewed from the house above or in the garden is that of a much more natural as well as a far more interesting foreground over which to view the ocean.

Species:

Dietes robinsonia (Lord Howe island lily), *Lomandra nyalla* (Maree warns against its use as the tissue culture seems to be breaking down), Dwarf *Banksia spinulosa*, *Oznothamnus diasmodifolia* Radinace though it is not long lived Grevillea 'Honey Eater Heaven', Dwarf Pimelia, Westringia 'Zena', Dianella Utopia likes it dry so don't mulch. *Grev. Aranaria*, silver form took our collective eye as did *Hibiscus insulata* (which is meant to be front line but MM thinks its not so happy here)

Old endemic remnant banksias and the design and planting now make this garden a part of the landscape - restoring the genius loci.

The CAVES' BEACH garden we saw next is only one year old and is doing very well. Set just behind the dunes of the beach it was certainly the most coastal of all the gardens we visited that weekend. The owner told us that he always has enjoyed gardening but he was not doing very well in the sandy conditions and asked Maree for help. Maree not only provided the planting solutions but managed to design a very suitable theme for the size and shape of the garden and taking the owner's interests into account.

The garden now is planted essentially on a strip of varying widths which surrounds the house, car port and driveway boundaries; a rhyolite or decomposed granite path snakes around the entire length of the garden, allowing access for viewing and maintenance.

The carport houses a large boat and car, which are seen from the most parts of the garden.

I called this "the blokes garden"- boat and car were pride of place and alluded to the keen fishing and boating interests of the owner, the ocean just a short walk away.

Maree embraced this by adding fishing nets, huge chains from old fishing boats, silvered driftwood and other such pieces, patina-ed with age. These provided a successful counterpoint and compliment to the modern mechanical machines in the carport and the proximity of the sea.

Maree had even managed to get a veggie garden in - room and sandy soil notwithstanding! Her practice is to half bury the plastic compost bin, foiling rodents and ensuring the nutrients are channeled deep down into the soil where the roots should be encouraged to go. An excellent idea!

A WALK ON THE NEARBY HEADLAND was simply awesome. The entire headland brimful of indigenous plants with not a space between them . The true garden indeed - untouched, and there for ever.

The sandy path had worn down with use and we walked through the vegetation shoulder height - it was much thicker than any coastal heath I have experienced .We thought it looked like the most beautiful garden which someone was caring for, entirely in balance and harmonious, no human could ever make, design or grow a better garden than this.

The peace was palpable, just birdsong and the ocean; we wondered out loud just how magnificent our country must have looked before white settlement.....

Dinner at the Colliery restaurant at the Bowling Club atop a cliff looking out to sea. The standard of the menu and, of course, the company was exactly that for which these weekends have become famous!

Sunday saw an impromptu visit to the house across the road from the one we were booked to see. The owner is a volunteer at the **Trees in Newcastle Nursery** which Rehabilitates, Rescues and Restores plants (what a wonderful idea) and he is busy making a native garden in the area where the swimming pool once was! The front of the house is brimful of native plants as well.

The house across the road is again one of Maree's designs. It is on a steep terraced block which is very deep as well. Views across to the sweep of the beach are a given in this part of the world! The front garden is terraced up to the house. Initially these terraces consisted of the usual suspects of agapanthus, azaleas and liriopie under the canopy of a huge *Euc. sclerophylla*. Maree replaced these with Grev.Honey Gem, Fire Sprite, Scarlet King, Candlebra and the short lived shade dweller *Grev. Venusta*. As well, the dwarf *Hakea laurina* (bronze new growth) and *Callistemon pinafolius* (local). *Ozothamnus* does very well here including the more spectacular pink form

Along the top terrace Maree has included a meditative space, a seat enclosed by low shrubs (including Christmas Bells *Blandfordia cunninghamia*) allowing a view across the terraced front garden, through the massive eucalyptus, to the ocean. Nearby is a fairy garden for the two little girls to play and garden in. Maree's mum made a castle from a piece of wood - added two windows, a front door and two cone shaped roofs on each "tower" and voila! a castle. Interestingly the owner said her first response was that it wouldn't be used - she says now, she uses the space almost daily.

Along the side of the house, on the way to the back area and the viewing deck high above the house, the vegetable garden is edged with curry plants. Maree wanted her clients to be able to smell the vegetable garden before actually seeing it!

Here, bananas and lemon grass thrive in the benign coastal conditions, the former are wide and high enough to afford privacy from the neighbours.

A concrete besser block retaining wall behind the pool in the backyard presented a design challenge. It is planted with prostrate *Acacia howittii*, *saligna* and *pavissima* Little Nugget. The idea is that soon an ugly wall will become a beautiful vertical garden.

The outstanding *Grev. synaphae* (grafted, rare, endangered and related to *Grev. flexuosa*) tumbles down another terrace wall in soft clouds of pale lemon.

Grev. Apricot Glow and its effective grey- green foliage and the bright gold and ferny foliage of *Acacia terminalis* are standout plantings near the viewing platform.

PUTTING GREEN GARDEN

The house and its land are on quite a steep site, adjacent to a nature Reserve and not as coastal as the other gardens visited the day before.

The somewhat unusual brief was for the front garden to be native in order to blend in with the adjoining forest on one side and, as well, to incorporate a putting green!

Allocasuarina torulosa and Blueberry ash were used to soften the demarcation line between garden, driveway and reserve bushland and screening plants along the neighbouring fence line are Blueberry ash again and *Banksia plagiocarpa*, which the cockatoos adore.

The putting green is situated at the top of the site near the front gates and a pathway starts here and meanders down between mounded thickly planted beds. It leads to a small bridge over chain of ponds, beneath which is a dry creek bed with a most successful planting of *Melaleuca viridiflora*. Their beautiful bark, and foliage and lovely twisting form made viewing them a pleasure whether from above, in the garden or on the driveway below. A planting of the almost equally as spectacular dwarf peppermints, *Euc. elata* 'Dry White' further up the site provided an excellent balance. Other plants noted were, *Brachychiton bidwillii*, Lomandara 'Bunyip' (form of Longifolia), *Grev. 'Strawberry Sundae'* and *Micromyrtus* sp.

NEWCASTLE NATIVE NURSERY

A *great* native plant nursery- very well worth the drive up north.

Owner and APS member and huge font of knowledge, Leearne, very kindly put on afternoon tea for us.

A wonderful end to a great weekend - summed up by member, Norm Webb, rushing around the nursery with an armful of plants and whose response, when I urged him to have some afternoon tea -

“not just now thanks Jo,I am in a state of excitement!

NEXT MEETING: TO BE ADVISED in 2011 -suggestions always very welcome.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Change-over of the Treasurer/Membership position.

After nearly 3 years filling the position of the Garden Design Study Group membership / treasurer, I have resigned and over the next month or so, I will be handing it over to Benjamin Walcott (an ACT member) who has kindly volunteered to act in this position.

Undertaking the duties of this position has been a real learning curve for me. While not difficult it is quite broad in the scope of things one has to do
The GDSG email address: gdsgmembership@yahoo.com.au will continue as before.

Jeff Howes NSW