



GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

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Dear Members,

Welcome to the May newsletter; plenty of articles, as always, from members to exercise the mind and deepen our knowledge on Australian native plants and their use in garden design. The Meetings section provides much food for thought this edition. Correspondence has been a bit quiet, no doubt due in part to an abundance of rain, a cyclone or two and, earthquakes across the Tasman. What a summer, and one hopefully never repeated. Our hearts go out to all the people affected by so many natural disasters world wide. Hopefully autumn's gentleness will allow a regroup not only in our gardens.

Thank you to all the contributors to NLs, past and present, your generosity in providing articles is always most appreciated. I very much understand the time that goes into penning even the smallest piece. Without you there would be no thoughts and ideas, no passing on of experience hard won over many years, no newsletter, no Study Group. Also, to our volunteers (branch leaders and Treasurer/Membership officer) again without your time freely given the group could not exist.

As you may have noticed the writers of newsletter articles and the volunteers are often the same people. It is not only gratifying but necessary to hear from as many of our members as possible in order to keep the newsletter representative and varied. A three line letter in Correspondence can be informative, provocative and humorous (as in the quote below...comments next NL gratefully received!) so please, don't forget the GDSG next time the writing muse takes you by the hand.... don't forget to take the gardening gloves off first.

" Each garden is an expression of its makers' character and each one has the power to thrill and provoke people in different ways; that is what gardens are for. Heaven protect us from gardens that are merely soothing, when they can be exciting as well: soothing is only a few short steps from boring. Use an enquiring critical and imaginative eye, because no garden is immune to the imaginative process and the prospect of change". Stephen Anderton

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CORRESPONDENCE

As the current thread is about selecting and recording gardens, (which, in my opinion, is a must do for the Sydney/Newcastle and especially the Canberra regions), I have attached the Australian Open Garden Scheme checklist that Sydney selectors use.

CHECKLIST CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF AN AOGS GARDEN

General

- First Impression: outstanding/ very good/ good/ fair / poor
- Design : consistent, patchy
- Plantings : are plantings successful
- Maintenance: are suitable levels of maintenance carried out?
- Surfaces: are they appropriate to the style and form of the garden?
- Safety: is there a suitable level of safety in the garden?

Design in Detail:

- Does the layout and design suit the site
- Does the layout make the best use of natural features
- Do the features (eg: retaining walls, steps, terraces. Paving, pergolas, courtyards, bbques, garden furniture, sculpture etc.) enhance or detract from the design?

Planting:

- Are colour and texture of plants used to advantage?
- Do any feature plantings detract or dominate?
- How important is seasonal loading for the garden?

Maintenance:

- Are plants in good condition?

- Is pruning and deadheading satisfactory?
- Is soil in good condition?
- Has the garden been mulched, is the mulch suitable?

Pests and Diseases

- Is the garden relatively free of these?

Jeff Howes NSW

We had a torrential downpour last Wednesday evening, 53 mm in half an hour. The upshot of this is that I have flooding in my home.

This brought to mind the question of having a loving relationship with your home/garden. I feel as if I am being tested to see just how sincere this 'love' is. I marvel that I have a place of joy and peace to come home to, and yet, at the moment with carpets ripped out, and others waiting to be cleaned and furniture bundled into my bedroom, the house is testing this dedication.

The gum trees outside my bedroom window in our communal garden are my salvation. Therein fly the cockatoos and magpies, and sometimes also fruit bats. The possums sometimes scarp there, and occasionally kookaburras come for a visit. The butcherbird appears regularly too, not realising his song is meant for autumn as he has been quite vocal over the past 6 months.

I had one of our members pop round to give me an assessment of why the flooding occurred and how best to prevent it. With this visit came a stream of new hope and delight. One of the biggest obstacles I have is my unit is one of 12 in a traditional lawn / roses / lots of concrete setting with perimeters covered with agapanthas. Quietly I have planted out a small native garden outside my front door (what I did in my back garden was totally out of sight and acceptable to the body corporate as a whole, and my neighbour in particular); so far, I have got away with my little rebellion. On the advice on future flood mitigation (a new term for me but I think it is the right one), the main suggestion was to bring in some huge rocks and build a surrounding bank to protect my front door (the lowest point) from a further onslaught, and replace two panels of the footpath with a hump. Additionally to dig out a creek from the driveway through to where the land slopes down (heading towards the railway line). At the moment the water movement comes back on itself into my front door.

Suffice to say, the idea of extending my native plants with the backing of the body corporate excites me. Hopefully it will also be paid for, and not by me.

So the flooding experience, whilst not pleasant, does give me opportunity!

Nicky Rose Vic.

I'm not as concerned about the criteria for selection (re the recording of gardens NL 71 pages 5 &15, Ed.) as you are, Jo. I don't think it's necessary that all gardens "comply to the same standards" - in fact, I think there is so much variety in gardens that this is quite likely to be impossible. For example, it is difficult to compare a small garden with a large one. It would be ideal to record the "best" gardens first but I think it's more important to get started on the process with any of those we (a group of members or even an individual member) think very good and are able to record (or find a recorder for).

For me, the first and most important criterion - almost the only one - is DESIGN of garden (assuming, of course, that it features all or nearly all Aus plants!). Then comes AGE of garden (preferably over 10 years, though there could be exceptions to this).

I differ from your idea, Jo, in that for me who the gardener is would not be a criterion at all. Others may want to record gardens of "important" gardeners but I do not see this as a role of the GDSG, *unless* the garden is well designed, ie it comes under the first criterion.

Diana Snape Vic.

I think there is some confusion here over two separate things.

Firstly there is the act of recording a garden, any garden and secondly, recording a garden to see if it meets certain criteria which will allow it to be included in a discrete set with other similarly judged individuals (ie: the Open Garden Scheme, Significant Garden or whatever). So, in this case, the gardens do indeed have to comply to the same standards, or criteria; this is not comparing big with small (as you will see in Jeff's List from the OGS above - nowhere is size mentioned) of course all gardens are different but there has to be a way (and there clearly is) where the many, ever changing qualities of gardens can be reduced to a number and classified - otherwise bodies like the OGS and the NZIH could not function.

In the first instance it does not matter who does the recording as long as they provide an accurate record of the garden; in the second as well as recording there is a standard that has to be met, informed judgement has to be used so the recorder/judgers have to have earned the respect of their peers.

Re the inclusion of important gardeners/designers - simply because they usually have or have had exceptional gardens - and of course are often professional viz: the extraordinary Fiona Brockhoff.

DESIGN

Daniel's Paddock

When our kids were young – 30 odd years ago now - we had a donkey called Daniel, and made a small paddock on the eastern side of our garden for him. Now we plan to extend our garden eastward into most of Daniel's paddock.

At the moment it is all tall thick grass, thanks to the heavy La Nina event we have all had ~ for us it has been good but for so many on the eastern side of Australia, so challenging and tragic.

What we do have are a well developed Deodar (*Cedrus deodara*) ~ which will be our only non-native ~ and a Wilga (*Geijera parviflora*) both planted by Win many years ago, a Bottle Tree (*Brachychiton rupestris*) planted by her more recently that has started to bottle and a younger Bottle Tree still very slim. In addition there are three mature *Eucalyptus dealbata*s that have been here much, much longer than us, one of which was cut back a couple of years ago and is now coppicing vigorously.

We thought about drawing up a plan but soon decided that this was not for us. To a larger extent our garden since we came here in 1977 has just happened ~ like Topsy. So we've decided to stick with the topsy approach.

There is a large spot where it gets very wet and boggy where we will dump some red basalt soil from down the paddock, build a mound, and plant Eremophilias which like the well drained basalt, especially when some river sand is dug into it. And when established will endure through thick and thin.

Another spot is exposed rock which we plan to make a feature of. It is quite level and may be a good spot for a mud brick garden house later on.

We will mulch the trees we have and plant some Eremophilias, Hakeas and Grevilleas on hand here and there and build paths through the grass to link them up. Over the next couple of years, we hope, it will all happen.

We want Daniel's paddock to continue the theme of the rest of our lower garden ~ natives of any sort that like it here and can live without water and fertiliser, winding gravel paths, red soil mounds for desert lovers, some roomy spaces here and there and windows opening onto the beautiful countryside we live in.

The Dynamic Garden(er) - pt. 2

There was a very formal courtyard garden shown on Gardening Australia (24/04) the other evening which I imagine will look exactly the same in 5 or 10 years time so long as someone keeps dusting off the pebbles and pruning the box. The courtyard was lovely but with so much hard surface it is more of an outdoor room than a nature reserve but still with that extra something that only happy plants carefully chosen can provide. The effect created in this garden courtyard could possibly be achieved with Australian plants but I don't know anyone who has tried to.

As you move away from such formal gardens, and most particularly if you use Australian plants, then you are bound to 'run into trouble'. The picture you will be trying to create will generally be more complex and the palette of plants you choose may hold both nice and nasty surprises in terms of growth/vigour and life-span. But this is where you and I, the gardener, enter the picture with more than a blower-vac and a hedge trimmer. The more complex the garden, the more dynamic it is and we must enter this dynamic if it is to remain a good garden. Every living thing in a garden is a change agent and we are part of this by choice rather than necessity but with arguably lots more clout on a day to day basis. Gardening is a deliberate activity where we are making decisions all the time about life and death and what to put where but that being said we are constrained completely by nature and must learn our lessons and try to work within nature's restraints and those imposed by climate.

We are lucky these days to be able to refer to a fine set of Encyclopaedias of Australian Plants by Elliott and Jones and other useful publications that can help with plant selection and placement so a chosen plant has the best chance of doing well. Fewer books tackle the tricky subject of landscaping with Australian plants but 'The Australian Garden' by Diana Snape, with the support of the Garden Design Study Group, is one such book and it has now been reprinted in soft cover with a new picture on the front cover. I have found Paul Thompson's 'Australian Planting Design' extremely good for explaining how, in design terms, plants should be selected for their growth habit and shape to achieve a design outcome, like for example creating a vista. In other words if you want to achieve a certain affect then the specific plant you use is less important than how it will grow and mature to help you create the look you're after. This isn't to say the plants aren't important it's just means there are many variations possible; there is no one right solution. And certainly the more you know about plants the more effectively you will be able to use a wide range of them in your garden to good effect. The choice of plants realistically available to you to fit your design purpose may be narrow or large depending on plant availability and on those other factors covered by the encyclopaedias – the

growing conditions a particular plant needs to thrive and the conditions you can provide the plant with in your garden.

For me it normally goes this way. I go to retail outlets and plant sales and I'm thankfully given plants by friends. Apart from the summer months – I do try to get all plants in the ground well before summer - I'm likely to have a store of plants to choose from and I try to use these to best effect in the garden. I try to place these plants according to their growth characteristics into the landscape design of my garden in positions where they will get the sun/shade and wet/dry conditions that will match their requirements. Let's just say it's not always easy to match the plant to the design idea I have and meet the plants growing requirements. For this reason I certainly do try to have some idea of how a plant might fit into my garden when I purchase it. But I do purchase or acquire many more plants than I clearly know what to do with. With these plants I'm exploring the possibilities and experimenting – hoping I will find them a place and they will grow happily.

I love the creative aspects of gardening. In some ways it seems like working with a living sculpture – guiding its development without being entirely in control of which direction things will go in next. But this is life – ephemeral, mutable and unpredictable. – and as things change, as they inevitably will, then there is the opportunity to move in a different direction, to try a different idea because you see things differently, or there are different plants to hand, or the micro-climate has changed with the maturing of trees and larger shrubs or because of the effects of climate change. And so the life of the garden and the gardener evolve in the dynamic.

Chris Larkin Vic.

PLANTS

The Dynamic Garden(er) - pt. 1

A couple of summers back I lost a number of correas to extreme heat – 46-47 degree days. They had too much sun exposure. I am less sure whether more than 10 years of drought also contributed to their demise because this summer several correas died due to conditions being too wet. I live on a relatively steep hillside so to be honest the correas that did die were in the wettest spots. What do these scenarios tell us about how to grow the humble correa? As a generalisation correas

like dry shade or part-shade and some and from my experience some forms of *C. alba* will grow in dust dry conditions.

More surprising than the death of *correas* has been how well a range of *eremophilas* have coped with the past year of high rainfall. *Maculata* and *glabra* forms are growing successfully in one of the wettest parts of the garden possibly due to raised beds and hillside drainage. Still I'm surprised. At this stage they get full sun but as screen plantings gain height I wonder how they will deal with much less sun particularly in winter. As soon as you introduce trees into the garden equation then you increase your chances of having to respond to changes in the micro-climate. I'm expecting in time to replace them with shade tolerant plants. With these *eremophilas* it's now a game of wait and see. *Eremophilas* currently doing less well have more shade so I'm getting the impression for most, although not *E. barbata* or *E. denticulata*, sunshine is key. I have now shifted two that are doing poorly into sunny spots and hope for the best. While on *eremophilas* I would like to say I'm trying quite a range and am intrigued how they perform. *E. lehmanniana* has interesting small foliage and lovely small pale lilac flowers which are still quite showy. I bought *E. Thunderbolt* (*alternifolia* x *maculata*) pot-bound from a finger pot tray. It is now growing strongly and has slender dark green foliage and blue flowers according to the label. I am hoping these flowers contrast well with the foliage. *E. Spitfire* is a grafted *splendens* x *maculata* with obvious woolly foliage and bright pink/red flowers. I do have other *eremophilas* but I won't go on but suggest that you start experimenting for yourself if you are in a region of Australia where they will grow and use the 2008 *Bloomings* publication 'Australia's *eremophilas*: changing gardens for a changing climate' by APS Vic members, Boschen, Goods and Wait, to help guide you with their cultivation. I have found this a most useful book.

Chris Larkin Vic.

Easy to Propagate

Yesterday Brian and I visited the Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre in Melbourne with a group from Friends of Cranbourne Botanic Gardens. Our purpose was to see the 'Healing Gardens' created there by the work of Steven Wells. These gardens provide pleasant outside areas for patients, their friends and relatives (and also staff) to spend a little time, to assist in the recovery of long-term patients.

Steven is a rehabilitation nurse employed by the hospital but, in the garden, he is a one-man band and funds are not provided for the purchase of plants. The gardens he designs and creates have been developed through the generosity of donors, the work of some patients and limited volunteer work. An ancient Golden Ash is a central point providing a shaded sitting area. An 'Inner Sanctuary' (see photo) enclosed by a

screen provides a small private area for contemplation. A rainbow wall (photo) curves through one section so there is always colour in the garden and there are numerous art works, some humorous.

Unfortunately the small 'native' area is not a good advertisement for Australian plants, with prostrate grevilleas mixed in with large poas and overgrown correas, badly in need of pruning. The predominant plants used in much of the garden were succulents, largely due I think to their ease of propagation and then low water use and simple maintenance. While we were there, a volunteer was trimming back succulents, saving the pieces for further propagation. The small nursery had mainly succulents for sale.

So I started thinking, which small to medium Australian plants could be propagated and planted as easily as these exotic plants are, by people who lack training? I could not think of many. What cuttings can we put in at more or less any time of the year knowing for sure they will strike? There are the few true Australian succulents; there are scaevolias such as *S. aemula*; plectranthus species such as *P. argentatus* and *P. graveolens*; myoporums such as *M. parvifolium*; goodenias like *G. ovata* that will even grow from leaf cuttings. (There were plants of both *P. argentatus* and *M. parvifolium* in the garden but they did not seem to have been propagated for repetition.)

Shrubs such as correas, grevilleas, prostantheras and others do propagate readily from cuttings (but not quite as easily as succulents). Then the plants may need some maintenance, for example watering if it's very dry, or sympathetic pruning.

Many plants such as daisies self-sow their seeds (or else can be grown from seed that has to be collected). *Bracteanthus bracteata* grows and flowers very readily but then plants only last two or three years and they do go through an untidy stage before they die. I have found that brachyscomes propagate readily from cuttings taken in summer but less well at other times of the year and only some forms are long-lived.

Grasses are fine on their own but they can be difficult to mix successfully in a garden bed with other plants. Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*) is one species that we have found self-sows in a moderate way. Lomandras are generally much tidier and better behaved than grasses but I must admit I've never tried to propagate them myself.

Do you have any suggestions for reasonably long-lived, easy-to-propagate, easy-care plants for a small Australian garden? ? It would be an interesting exercise to try to gather a list of them.

Diana Snape Vic

BOOK REVIEW

The New Ornamental Garden
Simon Rickard

CSIRO PUBLISHING, 2011 Paperback, 280 pp. Price \$39.95

This book is an attractive paperback with readable print and well chosen photographs. It has a useful index and lists of plants for salty soils, root zone of eucalypts and seaside gardens for example. It belongs in the series CSIRO PUBLISHING Gardening Guides.

The author, Simon Rickard, is the former head gardener of the Digger's Club where he oversaw two of Australia's best known public gardens, Heronswood and St. Erth. Stephen Ryan, host of ABC TV's Gardening Australia gives an enthusiastic endorsement for 'an experienced Australian gardener (who) produces a book that not only says it as it is but is willing to question all those old chestnuts' (Foreword).

I must declare my bias here. I garden at present with Australian natives and am writing for an audience of Australian native plant enthusiasts. I am disappointed with the 'old chestnuts' repeated in pages titled 'The native myth', pp. 68-70. Rickard damns those Australian gardeners who choose to garden exclusively with Australian natives as 'politically correct', suffering from 'earnest motivation' and 'wrong assumptions'. I doubt that most Australian native gardeners think that all exotics are weeds and that indigenous plants can never become weeds. In fact, our society is very careful to note 'tendency to weediness' on our plant labels. That said, I agree with every sensible word of Rickard's general section on weeds, pp.77-79.

Most Australian bird lovers are also aware that our native birds are happy to feast on exotic plants. Rickard says 'Perhaps some gardeners feel deep down if they fill their inner suburban block with fence-to-fence grevilleas then we will somehow be able to turn back the clock to 1770 and thereby absolve the guilt we feel about the social and environmental damage done since European settlement.'

Rickard says that native gardeners feel that all Australian plants are 'drought tolerant, maintenance free and indestructible and therefore highly garden-worthy' (p.69). I would argue just the opposite. Those who garden with Australian natives are very well aware that these plants need care, just as exotics do. Australian natives need adequate soil preparation, positioning, pruning, fertilising and watering as do exotics. Many gardeners seem willing to fuss endlessly over their roses and rhododendrons, but not over their callistemons and grevilleas. I have had experience with both types of gardens and find that all plants need care. The only real difference between 'exotic' and 'native' garden plants is that native plants in general are not so long lived.

We have a wonderfully varied palette of plants available to us to use in our modern Australian gardens as demonstrated by this book. These plants are available to us because collectors have found them all over the world and brought them back for people to try in their own gardens. Many of the plants chosen in this book have been cultivated for many years, in some cases the best forms chosen and propagated over centuries. Australian natives have only been cultivated in gardens very recently. Many of the plants I grow in my garden are grown from seeds collected (by licence!) in the wild. Unless Australians are willing to grow Australian plants and choose the best cultivars to propagate, our magnificent flora will be underrepresented in future Australian and world gardens.

Rickard has not ignored Australian natives in this book – far from it. Nearly 30 different genera are listed in the index and his chosen plants are reviewed enthusiastically. The descriptions are very complete with hints on how to use the plant in the garden, season of interest, drought rating and the eventual size of the plant which can be expected under garden conditions. However very few Australian natives have made it to his lists of best perennials, top trees, top shrubs, etc. *Plectranthus argentatus* is listed under plants for dry shade, *Alyogyne* and *Westringia* are listed under plants for seaside gardens, *Correa*, *Cordyline*, *Pittosporum* and *Plectranthus* under plants for the root zone of gum trees, and *Brachychiton populneus* under plants for salty soils. In the Plant Index section which forms the largest part of the book, pp. 81-247, there are no acacias, no banksias, no callistemons, no eremophilas, no eucalypts, no grevilleas, no hakeas, and no melaleucas. Not even our iconic grass trees or tree ferns are listed. Are there no species or cultivars in these genera that are ‘garden-worthy’? I understand that Rickard is choosing only very few plants from the hundreds of thousands available for his new ornamental garden in Australia, but surely a few more Australian natives could have made the list.

The most innovative part of this book is the introductory chapter on climate. Rickard describes very well those many characteristics of climate which are important to gardeners. He points out that it is not useful for a gardener in Broken Hill or Brisbane to know that a particular plant is hardy to -1deg.C if it also needs 1000mm of rain annually, or cannot withstand summer humidity. Rickard divides Australia into five gardening climate zones. Canberra is included in an enlarged Mediterranean climate zone, covering most of southern Australia including Geraldton, Perth, Adelaide, all of Victoria, the eastern half of Tasmania and up the Great Dividing Range as far north as Toowoomba.

This book is recommended for its useful section on the Australian climate and for gardeners primarily interested in exotic garden plants.

Rosalind Walcott ACT

MEETINGS

NORTH EAST VIC.

Saturday April 2

Sunnymeade 213 Boundary Rd. Kithbrook, in the Strathbogies.

Followed by lunch and discussion at Olwyn and Ben Brooks home, 1443 Bonnie Doone Rd. Boho South. ph.5790 8636

I suggest you use Google maps to locate Sunnymeade and your best approach. If you have any problems, let me know.

Sunnymeade is a largely exotic garden which has been opened regularly for some years, but owner Craig Irving is cutting down this year and April 2 is the first day with no more settled on yet. There is an entrance fee of \$12 and opening time is 10am. I suggest we meet as close to 10 as we can make it as there is a lot to see. The garden has won awards and been written up for its design in several publications. There is plenty of descriptive matter on the net as it also houses a B&B business, this should whet your appetite.

Correction, the garden is also open on Apr.3. If the weather is unsuitable on the Saturday we might consider holding the meeting over till the Sun. if prospects are better then. If you have any doubts ring me (5729 7536). Craig will also open for groups of 20 people by appointment, same cost. On these days one would get a personal guided tour, but I query our ability to guarantee 20 on our own. Olwyn could rattle up five or so locals who always take up the chance to check on developments. They sound as if they would make a welcome addition to our strength on other occasions.

Olwyn allowed herself to be volunteered for our lunch and talk fest. She is starting a campaign of deconstructing a lot of her garden which has got out of hand, like most of us she started a bit more than she can now cope with. I am confident there will still be much of interest to see, and maybe we can throw up a few new ideas. It should be a great day, weather co-operating.

Barbara Buchanan Vic.

CANBERRA

We have two meetings planned for the Canberra GDSG.

One is Wednesday 27 April, 10am - noon, when we are meeting at the Visitors Information Centre at the Australian National Botanic Gardens with David Taylor (Curator of Living Collections) and his two garden design colleagues to discuss garden design ideas for the future of the ANBG.

The other is a visit to Diana Bennett's garden 72 Fidge Street Calwell Tuesday 17 May, 10 am - a combined outing with our Daytime Activity Group. The blurb reads 'this is a garden designed by Landscape Architect and ANPS Canberra member, Leon Horsnell.

The garden was open last year as part of the Open Garden Scheme. It is a native garden with a skilful mix of local and commercial native plants and with innovative landscaping hardware such as a water course that flows through the back garden down to a pool with water plants in floating 'rocks'.

The garden also has a native 'lawn'. The designer and the owner have pooled their skills and desires to build and develop a native plant oasis within a suburb of increasingly exotic plants'.

Ros Walcott ACT

The Canberra Branch of the GDSG met at the Australian National Botanic Gardens, (ANBG), 10am-12 noon Wednesday 27 April to discuss garden design ideas for the future at ANBG.

David Taylor, (Curator of Living Collections), and Kaiya Browning, (Designer / Project Manager- Development Unit), discussed both the implementation of a new grasslands garden which has already been planted and the development of a 'red centre' garden on the old potting shed site.

The grasslands garden is the first garden a visitor sees as they enter ANBG. It represents the endangered grassy box woodland habitat found in the Canberra area, but does not try to reproduce it as the previous garden did.

There are plantings of endangered plants, such as *Button Wrinklewort*, *Rutidosis leptorrhynchoides*, which are massed for colour and impact. The grass trees, *Xanthorrhoea glauca*, which were previously somewhat hidden by acacias have been re-emphasized in the garden. A boardwalk invites the visitor to wander through this garden and pots of smaller plants lift up these plants for closer examination and

enjoyment. Drainage has been better managed in a rocky waterway running through the garden, instead of having mulch swept onto the entrance road every rain storm. New signage has been added which tells the stories of these grasslands and their plants.

The old potting shed site is a 3400 square metre flat site in full sun which is now being developed as a 'red centre' garden. Areas within the garden will include, desert rivers, rocky escarpment and dunes. Iconic 'red centre' plants such as saltbushes will be included in the garden, which will be planted in an open fashion without too many dense plantings. Red dirt and red boulders will be imported to the site and paths will be a red cement mix for maximum effect and utility. There will be an interpretation area and a meeting place with aboriginal art works.

At present the site has just been cleared and an old potting shed and office block are in the process of being demolished and removed. ANBG hopes to have this garden open in time for Canberra's centenary in 2013.

Our Canberra Branch members will be following these developments with great interest over the next few years.

Ros Walcott ACT

MELBOURNE

Report of meeting held on **November 28 2010**

We met at Helen and Max Kennedy's place for our last meeting of the year on a rather grey and threatening day. There was a good attendance and we ate lunch in the comfort of the Kennedy living room, with cups of tea and coffee kindly provided. It had been raining or at least drizzling in the morning but fortunately stayed reasonably fine during the afternoon, so we were able to spend more than an hour outside in the garden, without umbrellas, looking at both the old and new areas. We then retreated inside again, for a delicious afternoon tea and the actual 'meeting'.

Before we went outside, Helen explained why the area that Bev Hanson designed for them almost a year ago had needed change. This large area had been a lawn that had suffered during the drought, leaving bare areas subject to erosion when it rained, because of the existing slope. Helen said that she and Max felt they needed help from someone with experience and so they contacted Bev. Hoses were used to assist in laying out the shapes of new beds and positions of new pathways. Helen

described choosing the rocks as directed - 10 large and 10 small (plus a few extra) - and how Bev with her reliable helper, Tom, carefully placed the rocks and created mounds and swales to direct water-flow and drainage. This enables the capture of rain and storm water to keep it all on site, important in dryer times.

Some soil was brought in and mixed with existing soil before shaping of the ground level was carried out, in very hot, dry conditions last summer. After recent heavy rain, we could see that water ponded just as it was supposed to before gradually soaking in. A small, fairly central, grassed 'lawn' remains, where Helen hopes *Microlaena stipoides* (Weeping Grass) and a Wallaby Grass (*Austrodanthonia*) will eventually out-compete any weed grasses that appear. This smaller area of green is attractive among the garden beds.

Those of us who had visited the garden before were impressed with how the new section links the whole garden together. The garden area is now continuous around the house and you feel "in the garden" the whole time, rather than just "observing" some separate parts of it. In addition to the new section, some old beds have been widened to improve their shapes. We admired the ability of the garden to control water flow and collect water. We also marvelled at the range of plants and liked the groupings, for example, according to foliage type or foliage colour. Of course it's hard to visualize how the planting design will develop as it matures but lovely older sections give an indication of how well this is likely to happen.

The garden as a whole has a wonderful variety of plants, from large trees to tiny *Stylidium adnatum*, with a large number of special plants in pots as well as in the ground. It is a plant-person's delight! Helen now disciplines herself to repeat certain plant species more in planting schemes, to pleasing effect. Max and Helen have both worked extremely hard in the garden this year, first to get all the planting in the new area done and then to eliminate every single weed from the garden (or so it seems). We thanked them both for letting us see their beautiful garden and for their generous hospitality. We also thanked Bev for coming to the meeting to tell us a little about her work and for all she has done to spread enthusiasm for Australian plants with her design work over many years.

The **March 6, 2011** meeting was held at our place and started at 2pm, after lunch outside in the garden at 1pm for those who could make it. (The weather was beautiful!) As this is a long report, I've put in sub-headings to make it easier to read.

After the meeting proper, there was a little garden wandering. (I still like the term 'walkabout garden', in place of the Japanese 'stroll garden').

* Recording gardens

I gave out copies of the report of the last meeting and also copies of the recently revised record sheet for recording gardens. I thought members might like to try recording their own gardens, or any garden featuring Australian plants that they visit, for example in the AOGS, and think particularly interesting or beautiful. These records may be only partial but even such partial records may be useful in future and it is good to get practice. We hope the sheets will also help us focus on important aspects of garden design.

Chris Larkin raised the question whether records were better in point form or descriptive. At this early stage I think whichever suits the recorder is best, as records can be standardized later if necessary.

For significant gardens, Chris has suggested a section in the GDSG website titled 'Visit a garden' as the first place for garden records to go, with photos, once they are complete.

* Flooding

Nicky Zanen reported that Helen and Max Kennedy, whose garden we visited last November, had suffered from extensive flooding from the recent heavy downpours. I rang Helen after the meeting to give them the commiserations and very best wishes of Study Group members. Helen said they would be getting a new roof and also having major drainage works carried out in the garden. Nicky's own garden also experienced flooding and she is hoping to improve the drainage significantly to avoid this in future.

* Changed weather patterns

There was much discussion about the changed weather patterns of the last year, from drought conditions back to what used to be 'normal' 12 years ago. Most of us have had plant losses due to this change (we certainly have), often of plants that tolerated the dry conditions well. This makes it difficult to plan for the future – should we plant for wet or dry conditions? I have heard conflicting climate predictions, so at this stage it may be best to steer a middle course and try to select tough plants that will tolerate a range of conditions. For most plants, good drainage is always important.

* Garden design for fire-affected people

Via Nicky, I've received an email from Samantha Strong, Community Engagement officer – Fire Recovery, from Parks Victoria, Alexandra. She has asked for me, or another member of the GDSG, to take part in a presentation about garden design to people who have lost gardens and sometimes houses in the Black Saturday fires. Originally this was going to be in April but now it has been moved to a date in September. Both Chris and I have said we'd be willing to participate but I've written to Samantha seeking clarification of what is actually involved.

Therese Scales, a GDSG member who is a professional garden designer, said that she has been doing design work for a number of people affected by the fires. Some refuse to have ANY Australian plants included in their gardens and Therese feels that in the circumstances she cannot try to persuade them otherwise. Therese has also offered to help if she is able to.

* Plantsman or gardener?

Nicky raised the question of whether we each consider ourselves to be a plantsman (or woman) and/or a gardener. Nicky (and others) say both. Can one be a true gardener without a knowledge of plants? If one is really keen on plants, is it possible NOT to have a garden (even if it's just on a balcony)?

*Espaliered plants

Wilma Garnham mentioned that she had seen an interesting espaliered garden at Heidi, near the cafeteria. This raised the topic of plants suitable for espaliering and a few were mentioned, eg. *Acacia howittii* and *Coprosma quadrifida*. We found *Acacia iteaphylla* excellent for a while but it has recently suffered from what looks like a viral disease, possibly due to the humid conditions. Many plants used for hedges would probably be worth trying. What plants have other members tried to espalier?

Wilma also mentioned that there were two small gardens designed by Phillip Johnson just off Riversdale Road in Camberwell.

Future Meetings 2011

The next meeting will be held on **Sunday May 29**, at **Robert and Val Henry's**, 3 Eugenia Court, Boronia, near the corner of Mountain Highway and Miller Road. Robert and Val have a small garden with a strong sense of design. We'll meet there at 2pm. First we'll see their garden, which will be open in next year's AOGS. Then

Robert has kindly agreed to tell us a little about his work in wetland design, involving engineering and using plants for biofiltration. It should be a fascinating meeting. Please bring a cup and something for afternoon tea.

The following meeting will be on **Sunday August 28**, at **Merele Webb's**, 83 Edinburgh Road, Lilydale, Melway. Bring a picnic lunch at 1pm if you can, before the meeting at 2pm. Merele goes to hospital on March 23 for a heart operation, so we wish her a speedy recovery.

Dates and venues for 2012

We decided that we should continue to have our meetings next year in February, May, August and November as we have done in recent years. We thought we might try to have meetings on the 4th Sunday of these months, unless APS Vic meetings or other major events make that date unsuitable. So the proposed dates for 2012 would be:

February 27, May 22, August 28, November 27.

We had one Saturday meeting this year. Are there any members for whom Saturday is better?

Merele Webb, Bev Hanson and Chris Larkin suggested gardens we might visit next year, so I'll get to work and follow up possibilities. Then there are some of our members' gardens, including Merele's, Chris's and Pam Yarra's. Chris's, for example, suffered a severe pruning by the terrible hailstorm this year, so it will be interesting to see how it has recovered (maybe even benefited) from this.

SYDNEY

26th JUNE : a meeting to discuss, among other things, the recording of gardens, ideas for the Group's next book and anything else relating to gardens and design that has piqued your interest. Probably at my place unless someone else would love to have it at theirs! That can be decided closer to time. RSVP 21/6/11

Jo Hambrett

TREASURERS REPORT

I would like to thank Jeff Howes for handing over all the Treasurer's materials in first class order. It has made the transition smooth and easy. I hope to maintain his high standard.

Our fiscal year ends on the 30 June, so membership renewals are due before that time. You will receive a membership form with this issue of the Newsletter.

You will note that we now accept EFT payment for dues **BUT** please include your name on the payment so I can credit it to the correct person. There is a box to fill in which says "*will appear on receiver's statement*" which is where you put your name.

Also note that I will have attached a red dot to your Membership Form if your renewal is due and you receive a paper version of the Newsletter.

I will send a separate reminder to those who receive the Newsletter by email.

As before, renewals can only be made for two years otherwise keeping track of the membership becomes complicated.

Please feel free to contact me about any membership matters.

Ben Walcott ACT