



GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

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Dear Members,

Jo Hambrett

As it says in the bible, To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose, and as gardeners all, we would doubtlessly agree.

Over the Christmas break I was presented with an opportunity too good (for the sake of the GDSDG) to refuse.

Our Treasurer / Membership Officer Ben Walcott will step down from his presidency of ANPS Canberra in November creating a momentary space within his busy schedule.

I seized the moment (nature abhors a vacuum) and asked Ben to consider the position of Leader of the study group.

As I mentioned in NL 78, life over the next couple of years will be a little unsettled for me and I was concerned that this may affect the overall running of the group .

Now is a good time to inject new life, new ideas and new ways into its organisation.

The study group is in very good hands with both Ros and Ben contributing their considerable expertise and experience.

I thank them very much for their generosity of spirit and, under their stewardship, look forward to the continuing success and ongoing progress of the aims and ideals of the Garden Design Study Group.

Transition

Ben Walcott

This newsletter marks a major transition for the Garden Design Study Group. Jo Hambrett, as many of you know, is in the process of selling her house and garden of 30 years and moving on, possibly even to overseas. Jo has been the Leader and Newsletter Editor of the GDSDG for the past 10 years. Given her change in circumstance, however, she has decided to pass on the Leadership and Newsletter editorship. I have been the Treasurer and Membership Secretary for several years and so have been involved in the group's activities. It was decided that I would take over the leadership of the group and Ros Walcott would become the new Newsletter Editor. I will keep my previous roles as Treasurer/Membership. This arrangement should ensure close coordination between the Leadership and the Newsletter Editorship.

Jo Hambrett took over the leadership a decade ago from Diana Snape, who founded the Study Group. Jo has done a wonderful job over the years regularly producing an impressive newsletter four times a year. She has encouraged people to talk about garden design and to communicate their thoughts and ideas to others, which is our purpose. She and others have been very active in getting a process in place where gardens are documented so that there is a record of what has been accomplished. As time passes and we get older, many of us find we can't maintain our gardens and have to move on to a different lifestyle. It is likely that new owners will have very different ideas of the garden and will make major changes. Gardens, after all, are transitory and depend entirely on the designer/gardener, being a reflection of them. It is a very valuable thing, therefore, to document important gardens before they disappear so we have some record of them from which future generations of gardeners can get inspiration. So thank you very much, Jo, for all your hard work on behalf of the Garden Design Study Group and we look forward to regular contributions to the Newsletter from you in the future.

Both Ros and I believe that pictures are worth a lot and that it is difficult to talk about garden design without them. Many of you receive your newsletter by email and so can get colour without difficulty. We have now found a commercial printer who will do the paper version of the newsletter at a very reasonable price. Therefore, we have decided to include colour pictures in each issue of the Newsletter. The last issue (Number 80) had the images at the end, but from now on pictures will be included in the text throughout the document. Therefore, please feel free to submit images with your contributions. If you can size them, we need pictures of about 500Kb. If you are unsure about manipulating pictures, just attach one per email message and send it to rwalcott@netspeed.com.au and we will take care of resizing.

9th FJC Rogers Seminar APS Victoria 10-11 November 2012

3 D GARDENING - DREAM IT, DESIGN IT, DO IT Jo Hambrett NSW

For the first time since its beginning in 1988, Garden Design with Australian Native Plants was the subject of the biannual Fred Rogers Seminar run by the Victorian APS.

It was a packed two days with excellent speakers. The organisation was superlative and the seminar ran like a well oiled machine. An immensely informative and enjoyable experience, an experience which should not be missed by APS members Australia wide.

TALK ONE

John Patrick

Landscape architect, television and radio presenter and author John Patrick opened the proceedings on Saturday, his talk bearing the rather perplexing title "**Kylie Minogue talks Garden Design.**"

His observations, accompanied by images, about designing gardens with Australian plants were:

1. He finds the act of reproducing the bush in gardens strange as gardens are about gardening. He used a photo of the Taylor Cullity "bento box garden" at the Australian

embassy in Tokyo as an example of this point; it is representational, it is not attempting to recreate the Australian landscape. He stressed that gardens are manipulated spaces with the plants within them often manipulated in unusual and unexpected ways.

2. Diversity is not important in garden design, it is better to grow fewer species and more of them, eg: the massed poas and repetition of other plant material at The Royal Mail Hotel by Paul Thompson, echo the distant landscape whilst slightly more diversity occurs nearer the buildings.
3. Trees can integrate a building into the landscape and should be used close to buildings.
4. Mulching materials are as important as the plants. Sand and pebbles are very good for drainage and he prefers them to eucalypt mulch as it can inhibit growth.
5. Plants=flowers in most people's minds, however Australian plants turn that belief on its head, with their form, fruit, foliage and bark being equally spectacular.
6. Designers use native plants for great outcomes in design not because they are native plants.
7. Gertrude Jekyll, faced with a plethora of new plant species in late Victorian England, stepped back and asked which were the best plants to use. We should do the same, only using the good ones in our design.
8. He feels that Melbourne designers are entering a new phase of sophistication in using native plants, citing Fiona Brockhoff's garden (as photographed in the GDSG's "The Australian Garden") and the Children's Garden in the Royal Melbourne Botanic Gardens.

I never did quite understand where the Kylie Minogue reference fitted in; maybe because she is Australian (and Victorian) and embodies the power of the well designed visual image - just like a well designed garden of Australian plants, especially in Melbourne?.....not sure!

AN EXERCISE IN DESIGN

Following John Patrick's talk the audience was asked to move to the large hall across the foyer, containing circular tables with signs in the middle saying: Suburban Backyard, Suburban Backyard with Pool, Courtyard Garden, Large Backyard.

The idea was for delegates to choose which one of these types of gardens they would like to design, take a pertinent sheet and sit at the appropriate table.

Luminaries and members such as Barrie Gallagher and Roger Elliot moved around the tables, answering questions and speaking from their vast knowledge and experience. A few comments which bear repeating were,

1. Think about what the job is you want the plant to do and what sort of plants you like. Make a list of those plants which suit the need and your taste
2. Plant more than one eucalypt in the hole to achieve a mallee affect.
3. Remember trees= shade and roots
4. Borrowed landscape and creating a vista are important in small spaces.

TALK TWO

“RBG Cranbourne - A Vision Shared”

Jill Burness and John Arnott

Jill is a landscape planner who has been involved in the creation of Cranbourne since its conception in 1995. One of her briefs involves monitoring the Garden's biolinks as well as the encroaching suburbia. John Arnott has headed up the Garden's team of horticulturists since 2008 and has been in charge of implementing and completing Phase 2 of the Garden's design stage.

In the late 19th C. William Guilfoyle created a plantation of Australian plants along the southern boundary of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens. By the 1940s the canopy was mature and the RMBG director at the time talked of the idea of establishing a separate space for the exhibition and research of Australian native plants. The idea and the reality of Cranbourne Garden have been supported by the Gibson Trust (established by Maud Gibson as a tribute to her father) since 1945.

It was felt that 1,000 acres, approximately 50 km from Melbourne's CBD would be ideal. In 1961 a Military Reserve became available and the first parcel was transferred in 1970. Between 1970 and 1995 there was a further acquisition of 363 hectares. 1988 saw the preparation of the Australian display garden by David Abbot and Warren Worboys and in 1994 landscape architect Bruce Eckberg prepared the brief and Taylor Cullity with Paul Thompson were appointed as lead consultants. It was an ambitious plan to appoint landscape architects rather than architects and engineers and, according to Jill, it has created quite a different garden.

To create any garden there should be a vision, a plan, and a brief combining the objectives and functions of a garden.

The brief for Cranbourne was to:

Incorporate Nature, provide Display areas showcasing Design and Horticulture & respond to Cultural and Educational needs.

The landscape masterplan took two years to complete. Paul Thompson bought a lifetime of observing native plants to the process.

The micro climate of each precinct determines the plants character and therefore the choice of plants, they need to respond to the narrative, ie; tell the required story.

The planting philosophy was to plant in drifts using low risk species (suited to the environmental conditions of the site). More difficult plants were used in smaller numbers. Material was sourced across the continent. Maximum diversity is important to the garden, it is very high in biodiversity, representing 10% of the State's flora.

Selection of plants was about trial and error - observe and learn. There were new takes on the established techniques in pleaching, rockeries and vegetable gardens, taxonomic plant presentation, and species used in lawns (*Hemarthria uncinata*). Every plant used is weed assessed in collaboration with the APS as the Gardens are located in one of the largest tracts of remnant indigenous vegetation on the Mornington Peninsula.

In one's own garden (conservation through cultivation), one needs to know the climate, the horticultural conditions and water security and match the plants accordingly. Environmental

manipulation such as raised garden beds (used with great success in the Eden Project) can be considered. Think about the wow factor! in your garden, is art important to you?

Visitors when asked to compare the Cranbourne and Royal Melbourne Gardens to an actor voted that Russell Crowe was Cranbourne and Judy Dench RMBG!

Cranbourne Gardens is about people and places, innovation and ideas, conservation, learning and discovery leading to behavioural change and community engagement and pride. It's possible for one's own garden to reflect some, or all of these ideals and aims as well.

TALK THREE

“ Lizard Lounges and Butterfly Bars”

Brian Bainbridge

Brian is President of the Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association and works as an ecological restoration planner.

He says that restoring and creating habitat is an exciting challenge. Local plants co evolved with local fauna and they are the best to support the fauna, especially the invertebrates. Growing indigenous plants reduces the gap between society and the natural world.

Brian suggests planting for insects rather than birds, laying the foundation for the web of interaction throughout the garden. Blue wrens, golden warblers, grey fantails and spotted pardalotes are all insect eating birds. Restrict nectar producing plants to one small corner of the garden as nectar feeders are very territorial. Local insects have special relationships with local plants; *Bursaria spinosa* attracts butterflies and beetles and moths as do *Acacia* species, (where the nectar appears on the base of a phyllode as well as the flowers). The sticky hop bush (you will need a male and a female plant) supports a large part of the Ground Shield bug's lifecycle. *Dianella longifolia* requires buzz pollination and the blue banded bee is a master of this. Genetic diversity of plants is important as it means the flowering periods are extended and the insects tend to stay around the garden longer.

Sunny patches (lizard lounges) in a small garden are precious. Blue tongue lizards appreciate the spots between 9am and 11am, leaf litter is both a hunting ground and lounge for skinks, and dragonflies appreciate a basking site as well.

TALK FOUR

“Urban Greening and Natural Pools”

Phillip Johnson

Phillip is inspired by the Grampians and the Kimberleys and finds the use of water in a garden to be an energising factor. He works with indigenous and locally provenanced plants.

On his own property, “Olinda” there is no mains water, the water which falls on the property is harvested to create billabongs, and these are not only aesthetic additions to the garden but home to 7 different types of frogs as well as providing a bush fire protection system. Three of his favourite domestic projects include the 170 acre property “Lubra Bend” at Yarra Glen Vic. where the billabongs saved the house in the Black Saturday fires of 2009; “Avenel” at Strathbogie, created with no available power or water and an indigenous garden in Kew.

His commercial ventures include the vertical wall at the Trio Apartments in Sydney, designed by Patrick le Blanc and documented, built and maintained by Phillip using all Australian plants; St Mary's Terrace, Geelong; Casuarina Square, Darwin and the Melbourne Central project's green wall.

Phillip's office will be competing in this year's Chelsea Flower Show in the UK. Featuring an architect designed pavilion and salvaged boab trees, the design will be heavily influenced by the Kimberley region of W.A.

TALK FIVE

“Going Potty - Growing plants in containers”

Gwen Elliot

An Australian native plant enthusiast since her early twenties, Gwen needs no introduction to fellow APS members. Gwen has owned and operated wholesale and retail nurseries (with her husband Rodger), written many books about Australian native plants and is a regular gardening radio presenter.

Containers: help gardeners who have trouble kneeling; they are mobile; allow the gardener control of the soil and microclimate.

Potting mix: for plants requiring sharp drainage use an orchid and cacti potting mix. Sand is very heavy, perlite is a better substitute as it is so light.

The pot: should be elevated so the water can freely escape. The tall galvanised iron planters prevent the need to kneel, are anti rabbit and also make good vegetable gardens.

Wetting agents: Saturaid helps the plant absorb water, whereas the plants roots have to penetrate water crystals.

Some recommended Plants:

Kangaroo paws (particular cultivars bred for container cultivation); native orchids, grevilleas, *Lechenaultia formosa*, *Boronia pilosa* “Rose Blossom”, *Hibbertia stellaris*, *Davidsonia pruriens*, *Howea forsteriana*, *Asplenium simplicifrons*, *Hardenbergia comptoniana*, *Xerochrysum bracteatum* (prune and don't allow to dry out), prostrate *Acacia cardiophylla*, *Alpinea caerulea*, *Brachyschome* ‘Mauve Delight’ & *B. segmentosa*; dwarf *Acacia cognata*; *Cissus antarctica*; *Correa pulchella*; *Ptilotus exaltatus*; *Swainsonia formosa* (in self watering pots as watering from above encourages mould); *Verticordia mitchelliana* (very good drainage and sunny position); *Syzygium australe*; *Scaevola aemula and albida*; *Philothea verrucosa*; *Telopea speciosissima* (40 l. rubbish bin container!); *Stylidium*s; *Dendrobium falcorostrum*; *Blechnum nudum* and maidenhair ferns; *Grevillea alpine* “Grampians Gold”; native violets (hanging baskets); *Leptospermum laevigatum* (bonsai); *Goodenia pusilla*; *Adenanthos sericeus* , *A. barbiger*, *A. cuneatus*, *A. obovatus*, *A. detmoldii*.

TALK SIX

“Paddock to Paradise”

Phil Hempel

Phil is active in several APS groups and study groups and is a keen grafter of rare Australian plants across the continent.

At the conclusion of his story about one man's transformation of a weed infested and degraded paddock, due to years of overstocking, into 7 acres of massed native shrubs and trees with self

made junk art and garden structures sprinkled throughout, Phil thanked the audience for coming through his secret gate and allowing him to share his private feelings with them.

At the beginning he had spoken of the garden as being a kind of autobiography and the audience was left in no doubt as to the powerful regenerative process taking place as much within the gardener as upon the paddock.

Although he professed to have done little design work within the garden he was well aware of the various forms and colours of leaves and flowers and did think hard about positioning the various plants accordingly; he mentioned the joy of the variations within one species, especially correas and eremophilas.

“Paradise can be in the detail, flowers feed the soul - you are on your way to Paradise”.

TALK SEVEN

“It’s All about the Birds and the Bees”

Neil Marriott

Neil is co author of The Grevillea Books and has many years of experience as a nurseryman in the Grampians. He has established an extensive grevillea collection there as well.

In his talk Neil spoke about the need to landscape for conservation, that is the importance of considering biodiversity when designing a garden or landscaping an area; he is of the opinion that quite profound outcomes can be achieved if the issues of habitat provision (food, water, shelter and nesting sites) are addressed.

Birds:

Honeyeaters: are attracted to the most prominent and visible plants: banksias, grevilleas, eucalypts, ericaceae, correas and mistletoe (which attracts the Azure and Jezebel butterflies as well).

Seed eaters: finches eat the seed of *Stipa elegantissima* which will grow in dry spots. *Stipa mollis* provides a spectacular display along with wallaby grass and silky blue grass (*Dicantheum sericium*). Large seed eaters such as cockatoos love banksias and hakeas. Bronzewing and Peaceful Doves love wattles which conveniently drop their seed on the ground.

Insect eaters: button quails have moved into Neil’s garden since the vermin proof fence was erected; they need a plentiful supply of leaf litter. Neil plants grevilleas which attract insects (eg: *Grevillea annulifera*, the prickly Plume Grevillea, *G. polybotrya* (caramel scented), *Philothea angustifolia subsp. montana* and *Verticordia eriocephala*) rather than seed or nectar eaters.

Chrysocephalums, scaevolae and pimelias are good for butterflies, moths, beetles, hover flies and jewel beetles.

Kangaroos are good lawn mowers and won’t eat native plants unlike wallabies!

Reptiles and amphibians appreciate rocks, hollow logs, water and sedges.

Neil spoke also of the importance of growing critically endangered plants in the garden “Preservation by Cultivation” as the APS motto goes.

Examples of such plants are, *Grevillea scapigera*, *G. curviloba*, *G. magnifica*, *G. confertifolia*, *G. dryandroides*, *Acacia denticulosa*, *Allocasuarina grampiana*, and *Banksia rosserae*.

TALK EIGHT

Help! Where do I start?

Bev Hanson

Bev is an active member of APS and has lectured on garden design with native plants over many years and she is an active member of APS Vic. Bev's garden has been a part of the Open Garden Scheme over many years. She has been a landscape designer since 1969 and completed her apprenticeship and subsequently worked with Ellis Stones. It was a real treat to see images of the before and afters of some of her landscape design work. Bev possesses a deft eye and excellent horticultural knowledge and designs the spaces with great clarity and simplicity.

It occurred to me that it would be an interesting garden design exercise to compare the first talk of the morning by John Patrick to the design work and thoughts expressed by Bev Hanson in the last talk of the afternoon.

Some Principles of Designing an Informal Garden:

1. Paths and Driveways - curve it out of sight, hide the boundaries unless there is a good view through to the borrowed landscape.
2. Plant Placement - the closer to the house the more effort is required with plant placement. Views from windows inside the house are important and plants should be placed to further enhance the view. Low planting such as groundcovers should be at the front and then the middle storey with the tallest planting behind. Plants with the same needs should be grouped together. Remember the importance of repeat planting.

AFTER DINNER SPEAKER

Angus Stewart

Angus runs a plant breeding and consulting business and has worked and lectured in horticulture. He has written several books and is a regular gardening presenter on radio and television.

Angus' speech centred on the genius loci of a place and how the informal, natural garden or "bush garden" (which takes its cues from iconic Australian places of great natural beauty eg: Sydney sandstone, the Grampians in Victoria and the wildflowers of Western Australia) reinforces that wherever it is created. His talk was supported by many beautiful images of the plants and scenery of Australia.

DAY TWO - was held at the **Cranbourne Botanic Gardens** where Stage 2 has just been completed.

The day was divided into three sessions, each consisting of one lecture and three tours from which to choose. The lectures (all by RBGC staff) were on native lawns, key stories underpinning the Australian garden and terrestrial orchids of RBGC.

The tours, again taken by the staff, covered biolinks within the RBGC; Stage 2 of the Australian Garden; bush foods of the surrounding bushland; behind the scenes at the nursery; the research garden and lastly the Weird and Wonderful Garden, the existence of which was made possible by a generous and anonymous benefactor.

Our guide, John Arnott, made the point that the area containing the Weird and Wonderful Garden was originally at the bottom of a vast sand quarry, the sub, sub, sub soil so the question raised has been how to cope with almost a complete lack of nutrients. One answer was to mix brown coal and

organic matter with sand as well as a feeding program taking great care that none of it leached into the water flowing throughout the garden.

He also mentioned that, as a horticulturist, an initial concern of his was that the plants would be subordinated to the dramatic and arresting design of the garden; he now feels that it sits in isolation and the plants are the stars above the design. He calls it an “intense” garden, similar to the alpine gardens of the United Kingdom.

There are 5 zones within the garden which contain plants interesting for their form and their biology: ancient plants, large fruit bearing plants, plants with interesting flowers, plants with interesting adaptations and succulents (nb: desert Americas have 90% of succulents, South Africa 20% and Australia a mere 3% of succulents.) . Queensland bottle trees are stem succulents and are a repeated motif throughout this garden providing another very structural element.

The Weird and Wonderful Garden is a quirky landscape of hard edged design, (the great shards of upright stone throughout the area took nine months to place), and a plant palette responding to the above criteria. Many microclimates have been created by virtue of the design work and plants need to be sourced which respond well to each one.

I imagine there will always be lots to learn from this weird and wonderful horticultural adventure!

What can we learn from Italian garden design?

Rosalind Walcott

All photos (except one) by Ben

In May, 2012 my husband Ben and I were lucky enough to spend three weeks in Italy looking at Gardens with Angus Stewart as our leader. What did we learn from this experience that can be brought back to our own native garden design in Canberra? What can we use as inspiration for future design?

Exuberance and Abundance

Villa d'Este, as all of you know who have visited this 500 year old masterpiece near Tivoli, is the essence of exuberance in its use of water. Water spurts from every possible source, rills, fountains, pools, and unexpected statues spouting water from every orifice. The sound of water permeates the garden and gives it its character. There is a water organ which plays surprisingly well with only gravity to make an effect. So be generous and plentiful in your garden design.

The Best Site

Because the gardens we visited were mostly old, many from the 1500s, some more recent within the last century and one, Hadrian's Villa, very old, built in 117 A.D, they all had the advantage of picking a stunning site for the garden. These gardens prove the importance of picking the very best site that you can, either rich soil, water or rock features, extensive views or existing trees, can all be good reasons to choose a site.



Villa d'Este - abundance and exuberance



Villa Gamberaia - the best site

Plant Collections

One garden we visited, La Mortella, situated on the island of Ischia, was outstanding for its amazing range of plants from throughout the world, shown off with creativity and taste. Russell Page (one of my favourite garden designers, his book Education of a Gardener is still worth reading despite the changes in garden fashion) was employed by William Walton (English composer) to lay out the garden in 1948. Page used many tropical and Mediterranean plants in his design and Walton's Argentine wife, Susana, continued to collect interesting plants, particularly from South America, throughout her long life – she died in 2010. Collections of particular plants are always interesting.



La Mortella, Ischia – an extensive collection



Traditional tiling - everywhere in gardens

Restraint and Tradition

In contrast to the first point there were many gardens we visited which showed great restraint in both planting and design. One of the best is Villa Gamberaia high on a hillside near Florence, overlooking olive orchards. Many Italian gardens use a very restricted plant palette and rely on repetition for effect. They use iconic red geraniums in pots (the same red all over Italy), citrus in pots, roses (only a few varieties in each garden), some azaleas and rhododendrons, plenty of grass and the dark cypresses and stone pines as their main trees. The pots themselves are often very old and precious – some that we saw were over 300 years old. Traditional tiling is everywhere in Italian Gardens.

Disproportion

Unexpected proportion can work very well in gardens. At Villa Gamberaia there is a huge old wall, painted, peeling, buckling and quite out of proportion to its surroundings. It forms a part of the garden called the Bowling Alley – it sits in a relatively narrow grass lawn and directs the eye to the garden beyond. It reminds me of one of the garden rooms at Hidcote Manor in the Cotswolds, Lawrence Johnston's masterful creation in 1920s. This room consists of a large circular tank of green water, almost touching the surrounding hedges – against all expectations, it works. The claustrophobic feeling as you sidle around the edge of the tank is relieved by more spacious gardens on either side. In Parco dei Mostri (Monster Park) a huge figure lies on its side and fills the glade and the eye.



Villa Gamberaia – tradition and restraint



Parco dei Mostri - disproportion

Hybrid Vigour

Hybrid vigour does not only apply to plants themselves but also to garden design ideas. Everybody's favourite garden was Ninfa, a garden of 8 hectares and over one thousand plants, crossed by many irrigation streams of the Ninfa River. The garden is set in mediaeval ruins of what was once a thriving town between Rome and Naples. The town was weakened by plague and repeated sackings in the 1300s and was abandoned for six centuries before being redeveloped as the most romantic garden by English owners. All the English favourites are present; roses cascade over walls, wisteria hangs from a bridge, a tremendous variety of interesting trees from all parts of the world are well grown and clear streams of cold water full of endangered brown trout run throughout the garden.

Age

Age provides a patina for a garden which cannot be achieved in any other way. In Australia we do not have gardens that are hundreds of years old and certainly none like Hadrian's Villa with two thousand years of history behind it. However even a decade can make a tremendous difference in the fullness and shape of a garden. It is a lesson for all of us (especially me!) not to be too impatient.



Ninfa demonstrating hybrid vigour

Photo by Angus Stewart



Villa Gamberaia entry shows the effect of age

Ideas for a secret garden

Melbourne Branch of GDSG

Full report of Melbourne Branch visit to the Freake Garden in the meetings section page 19

During our visit to the amazing 21-acre garden of Malcolm and Monika Freake last October, we were shown an area that was partly screened from its surroundings and quite shady, even on a sunny day. In terms of the whole garden it was a relatively small area (estimated to be approximately 10m by 8m) and you could easily walk past it without realizing it was there. Monika called it her secret garden. One conspicuous plant towards an edge of this area was an *Acacia cognata* 'Limelight', striking because of its foliage colour. Monika asked us for suggestions for further planting, or any other ideas for this area. Following are the responses forwarded to her from the group.

For Monika's secret garden, I would suggest growing the wildflowers indigenous to the Gisborne area – these would probably include, for example, chocolate lilies, orchids, wahlenbergias, geraniums, pelargoniums, ranunculus, dianellas. They could be interspersed with kangaroo and wallaby grasses. These plants are not necessarily reliable or showy, but there is a special satisfaction in growing them and on a small scale they are very beautiful, which would make a great contrast with the large scale planting in the main areas. **Margaret James**

I recall the area was quite shady and maybe the soil was dry. I would create an intimate area by using informal hedges, maybe a combination of thomasias (preferably *T. purpurea*) and phebaliiums. If more screening was desirable, plectranthus could be used as a creeper on a framework. A small plectranthus bush with bright blue flowers is hardy in all conditions too. The small, variegated form is worth inclusion for contrast (*Plectranthus parviflorus* 'Indigo Spires'). For me this area would definitely include seating and maybe a table and a birdbath too. **Pam Yarra**

Most importantly I think Monika should have a circle of tree trunk seats about 2 feet high covering a space of 2 metres diameter. Additionally I would have a bush that forms into an umbrella (we had one of these as children with yellow flowers and used to burrow our way into the centre of it - very exciting for a littly) - possibly a Tree-fern with dead fronds left in place (or an old Grass-tree).

I thought I saw a *Backhousia citriodora* planted in the area, and would encourage that Monika plants other scented plants nearby like prostanthera and native mints. And as a separator between the secret garden and the rest of the garden have a boundary with a lot of understorey grasses and strappy plants, and maybe creepers so that it is all enclosed. The strappy plants will also be conducive to having a go at weaving. **Nicky Zanen**

To create a sense of mystery and enclosure, trees around the perimeter could be interspersed by groups of medium-large shrubs as an informal hedge. Plants happy in shade or semi-shade include prostantheras, phebaliums and pomaderris. *Prostanthera incisa*, for one, has particularly perfumed foliage, The existing pomaderris lights up its area with cream flowers and *Phebalium squamulosum* ssp *argenteum* would do the same. *Hymenosporum flavum* (Native Frangipanni) is a tall tree with cream to yellow flowers having a beautiful perfume; there is now a dwarf form too.

Different textures add interest, such as grasses (eg Kangaroo Grass), lomandras and strap-leaved plants (eg dianellas). Hardy ground-cover plants like myoporums could be included too. Creepers might be useful but often need a bit too much maintenance, though they would grow less vigorously in the shade

To appeal to children, possibly add a few whimsical sculptures and patches of vivid colour, with *Chorizema cordatum (varium)* adding orange and vivid pink in sun or semi-shade. The space needs a few rustic but comfortable seats, possibly of different heights – maybe a log for children to sit on - and a table to match. **Diana Snape**

Morton Garden

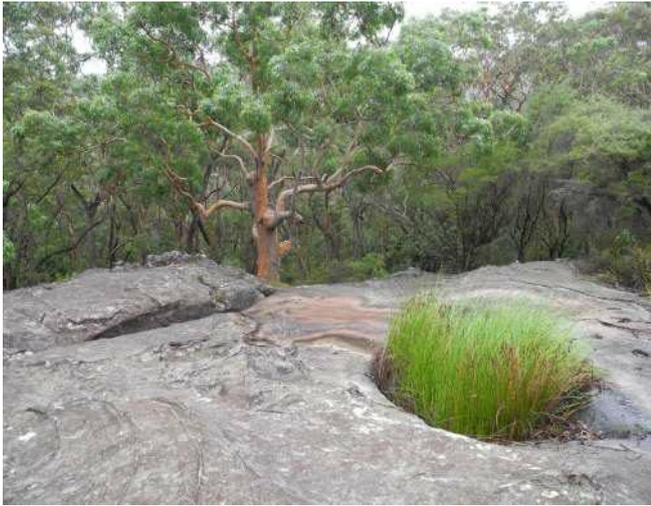
28 Forest Glen Road, Woodford, NSW

Deirdre and Ivor Morton

I feel daunted by writing up our garden for the significant garden criteria. When we first bought this 7.5 acre block as land a little over thirty years ago the bush was in a mixed condition. There were good stands of native trees and shrubs, tree ferns and understorey, with some encroachment of non-natives. Deidre decided that she wanted to have only Australian native plants on the land.

Our initial plans to build a small house soon evaporated and we tested the mix of modern day engineering with old fashioned adobe (mud brick) construction. When our living space had been constructed we had a nearly flat area of over 300 square metres of bare concrete roof. This was a challenge!

Basically our plan was dictated by what needed to be done next. Our original plan was to have a house that felt like a cave in the Australian bush with a native garden on the concrete roof. We were very mindful to keep the lovely bush that surrounds us. The initial inspiration was a very large rock



Pool in the rock

Photos by Jill Dark



Angophora costata in the centre of the house

outcrop (with a cave underneath). The block is north facing so, of course, the house took advantage of this. We built around a beautiful *Angophora costata* to make a green room in the middle of the house, allowing the sun to enter our boys' rooms at the back of the house. The roof is in concrete, heavily engineered with a perimeter beam to retain soil for the garden. Next came waterproofing, then soil.

I had been attending native plant courses held by Jill Dark, a local plant expert, and also joined SGAP (as it was then known) and have learned heaps. I started propagating and planting our own 'grand design', which included the obligatory cost blowout, so I could not afford many plants. It was a lot of fun sorting out what worked and what did not.

When it was photographed for Diana Snape's book The Australian Garden it had mainly groundcover plants and flannel flowers that have since wandered off into the bush, but are still a joy close to the house. We have planted many native trees in our grounds and lined the road with casuarinas. Our property is a dedicated wildlife preserve.

The most successful plantings on the roof have been: *Acacia howittii*, *Ammobium alatum*, *Banksia serrata* (prostrate form), *Banksia* 'Coastal Cushion', *Banksia* 'Birthday Candles', *Bulbine bulbosa*, *Clematis aristata* (over the fence to stop the Swamp Wallby eating the garden each night), *Callistemon* 'Rocky Rambler', *Callistemon* 'Little John', *Casuarina* 'Cousin It', *Craspedia glauca*, *Epacris longifolia*, *Grevillea* 'Lady O', *Grevillea* 'Semperflorens', *Grevillea* 'Scarlet Sprite', *Isopogon anethifolius*, *Isopogon latifolius*, *Isopogon anemonifolius*, *Lambertia formosa*, *Leptospermum* 'Pink Cascade', *Leptospermum* 'Mesmer Eyes', *Lomandra longifolia* (and others), *Hakea constablei* (endemic), *Hakea sericea*, *Helichrysum scorpioides*, *Helichrysum* 'Dargans', *Helichrysum elatum*, *Macrozamia* (seeds collected south coast NSW), *Microstrobus fitzgeraldii* (endemic), *Microtis* (appears annually), *Melaleuca hypericifolia* 'Ulladulla Beacon', *Viola hederacea* (too many), *Pandorea pandorana*, *Persoonia pinifolia*, *Persoonia linearis*, *Persoonia chamaepitys* (endemic), *Poa australis*, *Tetradlea* and various species of *Xanthorrhoea*.



Roof of house with garden



House like a 'cave in the bush'

The house and gardens have been mentioned in many publications: a three-quarter page article in Sydney Morning Herald, Real Estate Section, 1985; Cheryl Maddocks has twice used roof garden photos in articles in Sydney Morning Herald; Diana Snape's The Australian Garden; Timber Living Magazine, #7, 10 page article and photos; featured in Burke's Backyard; awarded winner of Blue Mountains's Garden Award, for 'Citywide Most Creative Garden'; garden is regularly visited by Richmond TAFE students; featured in local EcoHomes visits organised by a local architect.

Our house has now been sold to a botanist with National Parks so is in good hands.

Deidre and Ivor have been so innovative in the design of their house and garden. It is wonderful to think that their achievement is in safe hands for the future.

Thubbul

Michele Pymble NSW

In February this year we visited Thubbul, the garden of architect Philip Cox. It is situated south of Bermagui on the far south coast of New South Wales, and it was open as part of the Open Gardens Scheme. Thubbul has been the coastal retreat of the Cox family since the 1960s.

Access to the property through a few kilometres of *Corymbia gummifera* (Red Bloodwood) bushland was alarming, as a huge number of visiting cars dived off into the surrounding bushland to pass each other on the narrow bush track.

The approach to the garden was past the Lake Pavilion, an entertaining area featuring a recent fresco by the artist Garry Shead. We walked past several ponds containing waterlilies and through gentle grassed mounds dotted with inspired sculptures. In this area the natural landscape has been preserved, dominated by *Corymbia maculate* (spotted gum) with an understorey of Burrawangs, punctuated by further sculptures.

The homestead area consists of a complex of low impact pavilions connected by a central walkway, forming a series of courtyards containing cultivated gardens and sculpture. These gardens are predominately English cottage garden plants, interspersed with Banksias and Anigozanthos. A brick garden wall protects the garden from wildlife and is defined by pear trees with an understory of iris, hydrangea and lavenders. The main building overlooks the Tasman Sea with stunning views seen through the twisted trunks of *Banksia integrifolia*.

A further walkway is defined on one side by *Banksia integrifolia* and pears and a courtyard formed by *Corymbia maculata* contains a black granite sculpture by Senden Blackwood, *Licorice Squish*, winner of the 2011 Cox Prize.

It was interesting to see the exotic plants integrated so successfully with the Australian native landscape.



On leaving our garden

Diana Snape

I empathise with Jo Hambrett's comments about leaving her garden. We will soon be leaving our garden of 38 years and it is difficult to come to terms with all that this will mean. We have planted every plant in this garden (recently with some help), excepting weeds and the relatively few that have self-sown. Over the years, we've seen the garden mature as trees and large shrubs have given it height and substance. They've screened areas to create separate 'rooms' and introduced interest and a touch of mystery as, with a curve in a path or through a gap, you see a new vista. Large areas are now clothed with groundcover plants that successfully suppress most weeds. Larger open areas are covered with natural mulch – chipped wood, twigs, bark and leaves, almost all from on-site.

Approaching 1,000 different species or varieties of plants have grown in our garden during its lifetime, with much repetition too. (When I last counted, some years ago, there were 500 growing then). Starting with a neglected exotic garden and small orchard, we developed one area at a time until the whole garden was complete. However, we did have an overall concept of where we were heading. This changed a little over time, of course, as did our palette of plants, because conditions

in the garden changed and the choice available in nurseries broadened extensively. Designing and working in the garden has always been a joy. Most days I go for a walk in the garden to look around and note any new features.

If we were staying, at least one area in our garden would need re-thinking. This is where an old *Leptospermum polygalifolium* (originally *flavescens*) shelters a pool that is surrounded by Maiden-hair Fern, among other shade-loving plants. The leptospermum is becoming senescent and will soon need replacing. Would we choose the same species to replace it? And how would we shelter the surrounding plants in the meantime? Several big old correas (*C. baeuerlennii* and *C. reflexa*) are also finally succumbing to conditions that have changed from very dry to wet and back to dry. These correas too will need replacing soon.

Unfortunately there seems little point in replacing any plants before we sell. Jo is concerned about future changes that new owners will surely make to her garden. Our concern is different. Almost all houses in our area are now large, 2-storey mansions with little or virtually no garden. When our house is soon sold, we expect our block will be completely cleared so the same can happen here. So the difference with our garden is that it will in all probability no longer exist. I feel I should go round and offer a personal apology to each plant.

Our garden has really become part of us so it will be hard to leave it behind but we have had 38 years of great pleasure and enjoyment from it. A total of literally thousands of visitors have seen it in those years when it has been in the Open Garden Scheme (in addition to our own friends and family) and many people have told us they have been influenced by it. It also inspired my writing articles for gardening magazines and the 'Age' newspaper for over 20 years.

I'm sure my continuing interest in our own garden and its design, as well as the beauty I've seen achieved in the gardens of others, played a part in motivating me to start the Garden Design Study Group back in 1993. So, even if it is to be destroyed now, I feel the garden has not lived in vain. I think it has all been worthwhile, not just for our enjoyment alone but for the interest of others (and for the insects, birds and other wildlife it has helped support).

We are going to an apartment with no garden (going 'cold turkey', a friend said) but we'll be living next door to Maranoa Garden, which I believe to be the oldest public garden of Australian plants in Victoria. We hope to walk there every day and I think it will become our substitute back garden. (Kind friends have offered to let me help them weed their gardens.) I'm sure my interest in garden design will not end with our garden. I think it may even free me in a way so I can look at other peoples' gardens with greater impartiality and interest. However, I will miss the thrill of propagating plants for our garden and I do know that going to nurseries will never be the same again!

Quotes of the Season

Please send any garden quotes that you find amusing, striking or useful to the Editor for inclusion in this section

'To get the best out of plants, one must know them personally. This is one of the main satisfactions of gardening.' Christopher Lloyd, The Mixed Border in the Modern Garden, 1957, quoted in an entertaining read by Stephen Anderton Christopher Lloyd; his life at Great Dixter, p.107, Pimlico 2011.

'Knowing when not to do anything is as great a horticultural skill as any other. The more that I garden the more I take pleasure in making the garden look as natural and unmodified as possible.' p. 204, Monty Don, Gardening at Longmeadow, BBC Books, 2012.

Correspondence

Dear Ros,

Thank you for taking up the challenge and continuing to provide us with our much loved Newsletter which is always eagerly anticipated. I look forward to meeting you in the future..... (*As Ben and I look forward to meeting all members of GDSG*)

Both the letters from Diana Snape, *Seasonal Change* and *Plant variability (and unreliability)* in the August Newsletter No.79 struck a cord with me.

Our South East coast garden had been flourishing since early 2010 when the drought finally came to an end. However by the end of winter 2012 everything was looking a bit sad and neglected. A large area had been bulldozed to make way for a new building and a knee replacement meant the remaining plants were looking a bit neglected, woody and in need of pruning. Naturally, with the good rains had come lots of messy weeds.

Adding to my despair, many plantings, new and old did not live up to the promises on the nursery label. Trees labelled 'Nana' often grew huge or just sulked and refused to grow. Some which promised to have white flowers were pink, or vice versa. Also after fifteen years, a lot of trees and shrubs were dying of old age.

Some native pines which were important focal points had developed a fungal problem and were dying. After three months with very little rain the garden is looking exhausted. I even admit to treacherously thinking that using some exotics, including Camellias, and even Hibiscus, might have given the garden a neater and more established look.

Then I read Fiona Johnson's letter full of optimism and perseverance. Having seen the property in 2008 with the NSW Study Group it was inspirational to see what she and Alex have done. The photos show how much has been achieved while learning to work with a difficult climate and soil conditions.

So I have taken heart from Diana's words of wisdom and the successful endeavours of Fiona and Alex, and will start pruning and get back on the spade and prepare to plant again in Autumn.

Michele Pymble NSW

Meetings and Garden Visits

Report of a garden visit by Melbourne Branch on Sunday October 28

Below are some initial comments by members who visited the garden of Malcolm and Monika Freake. A fuller report will be in the next newsletter. The very large garden (21 acres) is actually built around and amongst a golf course.

Visit to the garden of Malcolm and Monika Freake

GDSG Melbourne Branch

I loved the way they used their love of golf to provide such a great structure for the garden, with wonderful vistas. It also encourages movement and exercise while enjoying the beautiful garden. I am a big believer in gardens being enjoyed and used (especially by grandchildren – which we really encourage with ours). I also like that it is sustainable and self managing with its own resources. **Rosalee Davey**

It was a privilege and a pleasure to visit a house and garden which embodies on a grand scale the ideas which led me to settle at Elliston, Rosanna more than 40 years ago. We had lived in the north of England for three years and had visited and admired the way the villages in particular were part of and responded to the landscape. Elliston was intended to do the same, in an Australian suburban setting.

The Freakes were influenced by their experiences in Europe, the houses and gardens they visited there. They took a devastated landscape with only 3 trees, but instead of recreating a European garden in the southern hemisphere, decided to create a house and garden which respects and enhances its environment, drawing on its strengths and beauties.

I admired the use of Australian timbers and stones – connecting the inside and the outside and the engineering of a series of dams and lakes to sustain the garden.

The scale of the garden allows many of the plants to grow to their natural size, instead of being constricted as they necessarily are in a suburban garden. The two hours we spent walking round the garden did not feel tiring, as there was so much to look at and admire, with a new vista constantly beckoning one on.

For the future, I hope the Australian public is allowed to share this garden – as a joyous experience in its own right and because of the principles it exemplifies. Some modification is needed to allow people with mobility problems to access at least some of it. This could be done without intruding on and marring the design. **Margaret James**

Malcom and Monika had great vision in converting their 21-acre site into a beautiful garden and golf course around the magnificent home they built. The change in levels to achieve the naturalistic contours and accommodate the many water features of lakes and running water is superb. The repeated plantings of Australian plants - groundcovers, grasses, shrubs and trees - gives a feeling of unity, with lawn areas flowing from one area to another creating a delightful vista round each corner. Everywhere their choice of the best craftsmen to do the job is evident eg. Geoff Sitch's artificial rock waterfall, placement of rocks throughout, paved area, outdoor furniture, etc. This garden is indeed a masterpiece in landscaping in the natural style on a grand scale. **Bev Hanson**

The memory of the garden visit has not faded and the first words that comes to mind are “what an amazing wow factor” .It now adds another category to landscape classification,” the golf course

garden". Apart from the wow factor, the aspects of the garden that most impressed me were the transformation from paddock to garden using Australian native plants, the use of water & the use of rocks in the undulating landscape.

Having seen the before photos & how the with relocation of existing soil & addition of new soil, the topography was transformed. (the title of Phil Hemphill's presentation next Saturday "From Paddock to Paradise" seems appropriate)

The creation of lakes and waterways, desalination plant to treat bore water, use of water from the children's properties highlighted not only the visual benefits of water but the sustainable use of water. The large boulders were a feature of the garden, enhancing the variety of plants, especially the groundcovers cascading over them in colourful profusion. The large rock slabs were not only practical as stepping-stones, but created a natural appearance, especially in the area at the bottom of the property. For me this area was most aligned with a natural bush type garden, as opposed to the golf course garden. Good to have the space to combine two types of garden in one. **Pam Yarra**

Report of special meeting of Melbourne Branch on Saturday December 1

Diana Snape

(the notice for the December 1 meeting at the Snapes and the above initial report of the Freake Garden visit were inadvertently omitted from the last NL – sorry, Diana)

The main purpose of this special meeting at Brian and Diana Snape's home was to give some assistance to Bev Hanson, at Bev's request, in her assessment of plans prepared by landscape architecture students for the Ellis Stones Memorial Garden at Melbourne University. We also looked at venues for next year and members said good-bye to the Snape garden, as the property will be auctioned in February next year.

Considering some members unfortunately couldn't come due to the clash with the APS Victoria AGM, the excellent attendance of 20 was surprisingly high. We welcomed six visitors including David and Carole Leech from Queensland – David is a friend of Bev's who also worked with Ellis Stones. Therese Scales' husband Peter generously came along too, because of his association with Melbourne University and project funding.

First Bev told us a little about the original Ellis Stones garden and its site. The planting plan was not in fact by Ellis – he, of course, planned and arranged the granite rocks - but by Ron Rayment. They were not all Australian plants. However both Bev and David said that Ellis did use Australian plants whenever suitable ones were available and that, if he were designing today, he would certainly use all Australian plants. The site was originally sunny but today is overgrown and in quite heavy shade. A large elm in front of the garden has to stay because of heritage status (but lower branches could possibly be pruned). However large wattles shading the site could be removed.

The importance of future maintenance was stressed and it was agreed that the ground staff should be involved in the project from the very beginning so they would have a feeling of ownership of the Memorial Garden.

At Margaret James's suggestion, GDSG members broke into groups of two or three to study in some detail individual projects and then report back on them. These reports are in a separate article. Bev Hanson thanked the whole group for their helpful comments.

After a delightful afternoon tea, GDSG members planned the tentative program for next year, as follows.

Meetings for 2013

The first meeting will be on **Sunday March 3** (not in February, our usual month). It will be held at Melbourne University so we can look at the actual Memorial Garden site. You enter via the Grattan Street entrance and park in the underground carpark, where parking is free on Sundays. The site is between this carpark and the Library.

We'll meet at the Memorial Garden site at 1pm for our picnic lunch. Bring a thermos if you want a cuppa, just in case hot water is not available. Peter Scales is investigating the best place close to the garden site for us to have lunch and then our meeting (thank you, Peter).

We'll meet at the garden site again at 2pm before the meeting. Please let me know if you are able to come (9822 6992 or dsnape3@bigpond.com) and I can then give you any further details.

Remaining meetings – months and venues scheduled but not dates. We'll decide these at the March meeting.

May – Knox Park Primary School and nearby APS member's garden (to be confirmed)

August – Maranoa Garden

November – Eleanor Hodge's garden plus two or three other small gardens in the same area (to be confirmed)

Garden Design Study Group (Canberra)

Visit to the Country Garden of Roger Farrow and Christine Kendrick at Urila in the foothills of the Tinderry Ranges on 16 October 2012

Twenty members of ANPS Canberra gathered to see Roger and Christine's garden and to enjoy their hospitality last October. Here is Roger's description of their most interesting garden and its evolution over time.

Roger Farrow's property lies in the picturesque Urila valley some 26 km by road south of Queanbeyan. The original property of Urila was sub-divided in the mid-seventies. Roger's property is situated in a steep section of the valley and is bisected by Urila Creek, a temporary watercourse, but subject to intense periodic floods. The land has been extensively cleared leaving remnant Yellow and Apple Box, Broad-leaved Peppermint and Snow Gum but the native grassland has remained largely intact with over 90 species of shrubs, forbs and grasses recorded so far.

History of the Tilembeya Garden and Gardening Activities

My 70 acre block of land was bought in the winter of 1976. In October of that year it was cut off for a month by the great Queanbeyan flood. Building of a log kit-home on a

prominent spur above Urila Creek commenced in November and finished in January 1977. The site was bare of trees except for a snow gum (now on its last legs) and a broad-leaved peppermint (defunct). Landscaping and planting started early in 1977 with the construction of rockeries along the front of the house and on the steep slope at the rear as well as a mounded round bed surrounded by a circular driveway. Nearly all these beds were planted with exotics and the Swains' golden pencil is one of the originals. All the surrounding pasture was native and dominated by kangaroo grass but I made little effort to conserve this as I was unaware of its value, however it is decidedly resilient as you will see. An area of about 1 hectare was fenced off to exclude the kangaroos and domestic stock.

Because of the lack of shelter I was anxious to get some trees in and I commenced growing Oaks, Cypresses, Eucalypts, and Acacias and others from seed collected in Canberra as well as open rooted *Pinus radiata*. These trees are what you see today down the driveway, along some of the fence lines and around the house. I was unaware of the significance of native plants in gardens and few native plants were available at the time (or at least I was unaware where to find them). I purchased some 'Canberra Gem' Grevilleas and Poorinda hybrids, some of which are still alive today although most have been removed as they proved havens for rabbits and obscured the view as they grew much larger than anticipated. Much of the garden near the house has remained exotic for over 30 years.

I also established a large orchard with fruit trees, soft fruits, perennial and annual vegetables and this was more important to me than the actual garden prior to retiring. Over the years the birds have discovered the larder and fruit will only ripen if netted.

The exotic garden has been maintained around the house and under the oaks where we have a woodland garden which Christine looks after and we have focussed on a spring bulb display, hardy perennials together with Azaleas, Camellias and miniature Rhododendrons many of which survive best in pots. This garden will always be important to us as we have an interest in world plants as well as Australian natives and have travelled to several parts of the world especially alpine and arid areas to see the plant life including Mediterranean Europe, Nepal, Iran, Ethiopia & Kenya and Tibet/Western China although our trip this year to Kyrgyzstan was unfortunately cut short by Christine's fall.

Since I retired in 1996 and joined ANPS the native garden area has received much more emphasis somewhat to the detriment of the orchard and vegetable garden. The native garden has spread out under the eucalypt canopy towards the boundary fence enclosing about a hectare and is divided by a series of interconnecting gravel paths into a number of different "beds" with an unplanned collection of plants in each bed. Some native areas near the house are maintained under a mulch of eucalypt leaves and bark (since the native grassland had disappeared under heavy shade and cultivation). whereas other areas further out retain the native grassland and the plantings of shrubs are just mulched around the base. These areas of native grass are mown twice a year in autumn and early spring to allow flowering and seeding of the native grasses and forbs and I try to avoid the volunteer shrubs. Management of native grassland is a complex issue and many species require "de-thatching" every few years by intensive grazing, slashing or burning. The shrubs are

regularly trimmed and some, such as the Snowy River Wattle, *Acacia boormanii*, are cut to the ground every few years as they tend to get very “leggy”, while the trees have their lower branches pruned as a fire prevention measure. A grass fire here would probably be preventable but not a crown fire.

The native plants come from a variety of sources, from seed and cuttings grown in the nursery area, from my numerous volunteer plants, from ANPS sales, from other nurseries and from friends such as Jo Walker who has been very generous with donations, one has the enigmatic label ‘collected along the Putty Road’. When it flowers we may be able to identify it. Also not forgetting plants from Merren Sloane and Ros Cornish. There are also a number of naturally occurring shrubs in the grassland in the garden area including species of, *Bossiaea*, *Brachyloma*, *Bursaria*, *Dianella*, *Dilwynnia*, *Lomandra*, *Melichrus*, and *Pultenaea*, among others, which are semi-managed in terms of making them more visible and reducing grass competition. It is worth noting that I have so far recorded over 100 plant species on the whole block and I am still making new discoveries. Many of the Grevilleas and Acacias on the back slope and outside the garden fence are self-propagated volunteer species and natural hybrids some of which are as good as any produced by professional propagators. Some volunteer plants (especially those germinating in paths) have been removed when small and grown on in pots and planted in more appropriate spots. Species such as Ovens Wattle, *A. pravissima*, are big colonisers and I would now consider them undesirable for any garden backing onto bushland.

I also have a small cactus and succulent collection with a special focus on caduciform species which are maintained in glasshouses and a temporary ‘winter’ plastic tunnel.

Growing conditions

There is a very shallow topsoil over a clay base (duplex soil). The latter has almost no moisture retaining capacity and easily waterlogs but drying to a concrete-like consistency in dry conditions. There are exposures of metamorphic shales with vertical bedding plus granite intrusions which add to the scenic value of the garden. Planting means digging a large hole, removing the clay and rock and replacing it with a sandy loam (I make a lot of compost using deciduous leaves and other plant material). The regularly mulched areas now have a substantial depth of top soil. My biggest problem is the tendency for the soil surface to become non-wettable once dry conditions occur in summer. One solution to this has been to place a tube of holey ‘agpipe’ in the planting hole which directs water straight to the roots of the plant.

The mean rainfall is much less than that of Canberra because we are situated in the Brindabella rain shadow and amounts to an average of 550 a year and the median is even lower because the long runs of dry years are interspersed with a few years of heavy falls.

The minimum temperatures are lower than those of the Canberra suburbs because we are 200 metres higher (at 800-850m) and we are in a frost hollow subject to cold air drainage which prevents us from growing species such as *Hardenbergia* although as the tree canopy has spread, temperatures are now not as extreme as in the past. However the downsize of

this is the competition for water from the trees. The growing season is equivalent to 2 months less than that of Canberra. Late and early frosts have a major impact on plant development and survival.

I have 2 dams supplying water for the gardens by gravity and a third by a pump. I have found that it is essential to water natives for their survival and for a good flower display and to mitigate the competition from trees whose roots spread everywhere. I started with drippers on 12 mm pipe but these become blocked in the litter and I am changing to a combination of drippers on risers and mini-sprays which cover most beds except the back slope which only gets water in droughts by hand hosing.

All my young and newly established plants are fertilised with slow-release pellets to get them started. The large eucalypts and acacias and most others get liberal amounts of superphosphate and potash. I originally gave many plants slow-release low P but I could not detect any difference between the effects of high and low so I will use up my bag of low P pellets on the Proteaceae, the rest get the normal slow release.

“Weed” competition is a big problem as most areas want to revert to grassland. So glyphosate is widely used as I don’t have time for hand weeding. Small herbaceous plants such as the daisies are very difficult to establish because of grass invasion largely of native *Austrostipa* and *Poa* although the annual Bromes are also a problem..

As already stated since retiring in 1996 there has been much more focus on the natives with removal of tired plants and their replacement with a wider range of more interesting species. Species which may not survive the winter are now being grown in pots which can be moved into a shade house over winter. My collection of Pomaderris has greatly expanded since going on Wednesday Walks although seedling production has proved quite erratic.

It has been difficult to predict what will survive here and what will not. I have a very old *Acacia longifolia*, a coastal species which has thrown a few offspring and these I have transplanted to different spots and some *Ziera adenophora* but as mentioned before no success with *Hardenbergia* or *Eutaxia* and some *Correas* among others. Unfortunately my venerable spreading *A. longifolia* which shaded the garden seat near the front door was cut back to allow the safe felling of a huge dead eucalypt so I have to decide what to do here although the Wollemi pine is doing well in a large pot.

Sudden dieback is a problem with some species such as the Prostantheras, although occasional specimens of many species have decided to curl up their toes for no apparent reason. This winter it was an *Olearia lirata*, an *Olearia phlogopappa*, a *Hakea dactyloides*, 2 *Correa glabra* and a *Westringia eremicola* among others. However their spaces were easy to fill with *Pomaderris* and other species which I had potted up in the shadehouse. A few years ago 2 large eucalypts also died and have been recently felled by professionals. You will notice some dead eucalypts on the NW side of the house: these have been killed by lethal injection prior to felling as this makes them much lighter to drop after drying out. These trees were considered too much of a fire risk on this aspect. In hindsight I wished I

had planted deciduous oaks and the like around the house to provide summer shade and winter light. It is a fact that it is much cooler beneath deciduous trees in summer than under eucalypts.

I don't expect to expand the garden area much further as pruning and replacement is a full time activity, and water supply could be limiting in a dry year but there are always replacements to do plus some interplanting around the dams and along the driveway as well as more trees and shrubs on the rest of the block especially along the Creek. I still have to complete the herb garden which remains unfinished after 30 years!

As you have probably concluded there has been no real plan for the development of this garden or of the plants that are chosen: just filling spaces with whatever is available. Last year I had a lot of success propagating *Pomaderris* so in they went. Another year it was, for example, *Croweas* which had self-seeded. I tried a lot of seed this year but the cold winter and overwatering has decimated the seedlings. My favourite plants in this garden are *Micromyrtus ciliata* and *Acacia cardiophylla* which put on a great show in spring.

Garden Vignettes

Please send in your photos of a particularly pleasing moment in your garden for others to share. Here the beautiful colour of *Lechenaultia biloba* 'Big Blue' contrasts well with the gold wall of our house.



Photo by Ben Walcott

Treasurer's Report:

Cheque account: \$ 10,388.91
Term Deposit: \$ 22,900.11
Total: \$ 33,289.02

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