



# GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

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**Newsletter**  
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## Garden Records

The Garden Design Study Group began a project several years ago to make a lasting record of significant gardens with a predominance of Australian plants. Brian Walters has uploaded the first of the garden records to the GSDG website: please visit the following websites:

<http://anpsa.org.au/design/visit.html>

<http://anpsa.org.au/design/hanson.html>

This project has been long in the making, with the latest delay caused by Brian's illness. Brian has provided some very helpful advice on preparing the photos for the website (see page 4).

The record of Diana Snape's garden is nearly complete and there are two or three others in the pipeline.

Please visit the site to see the first garden record for Bev Hanson's garden. It makes terrific reading. The record is clear, interesting and informative. The photos are pertinent to the text and enlarge easily for better viewing. I am sure that all our GDSG members will be inspired by Bev's great design and hard work over the years. We look forward to the completion of the Snape garden record and others to come in future.

Congratulations to the team, led by Margaret James, who produced this marvellous result. Ed.

## Proposal for additional garden records

**Ros and Ben Walcott Canberra**

We were very impressed by the report on Bev Hanson's garden that has been posted on the website. This has stimulated us to think about the general issue of recording gardens and their evolution over time. We have not been involved in the discussions that led to this project of recording significant gardens and certainly don't want to interfere in an ongoing process. However, we wonder if broadening the scope of the project would be useful. Perhaps we could consider two categories of garden reports, one that contains gardens that the subgroup has determined to be significant and another that is either self-generated or by individual visits by members of the GDSG. There are several native gardens in Canberra, for example, that we have visited, that are open as part of Open Gardens Australia and that we think are worthy of being documented. We are planning to visit the New England area and could do reports on some of the gardens that we see there such as Maria Hitchcock's garden and the Sheather's garden. Fiona Johnson has reported on her garden (Newsletter 80) and we think could be persuaded to do a report in the appropriate format. The advantages we see in broadening the scope are to include more people, different gardens in different stages of development and broader geographic regions in the project. By making the selection process for the second group of gardens less formal and requiring less work on the part of the members of the GDSG, we could increase the speed and number of gardens recorded. We would build up a portfolio of a large variety of Australian native gardens which could give inspiration and guidance to a broader audience including those from overseas. Given that storage of information on websites in almost unlimited these days, we wonder if more information and examples aren't better than just a select few. We already have the platform in place (thanks, Brian) with the ability to enlarge images which makes virtual garden visits more rewarding and informative. What do you all think about this idea?

## **Correspondence**

### **Additional Garden Records**

#### **Margaret James, Victoria**

My view is that a diversity of approaches to the recording of gardens is highly desirable and as there are so many wonderful gardens, I hope we can soon see more on the website.

The background to the Hanson garden record is that Diana organised a small group of Victorian GDSG members to meet to draw up a format for recording gardens (see page 3). I gathered all the suggested information for the Hanson garden, but the headings I used in the text were derived from the story I wanted to tell after my visits to the garden and interviews with the owners. The format was a useful guide, but I don't see it as a rigid set of requirements.

As the project proceeds, it will be apparent that different recorders will have different approaches to the project and individual website visitors may well prefer one or another different style of record. Nevertheless, I think it would be useful to establish some minimum requirements for the garden records, given that we are aiming at a public audience - or at least that section of the public interested in native gardens. For example, we might stipulate that the garden should be regarded as significant by the local GDSG or at least by a group of members. The text and photos should be able to give an understanding of the main features of the garden (history, size, design, plants, landscaping) for website visitors who will not be able to visit the garden in person. The information should also be sufficient to give an insight into the garden even if or when it is substantially altered by new owners. Once there are more records on the website, it could be helpful to categorise them e.g by state or by size (large/small).

#### **Jo Hambrett, Sydney**

To my mind there has always been a two tier approach to recording Australian plant gardens in the Newsletter.

I actively encouraged people to document their own gardens for the NL as that is not only a way of recording their existence for posterity, but, as well as learning from fellow members about design, planting, and the owner's thoughts and philosophies ; similarly, the reports the various branch leaders do of the gardens visited, achieve the same purpose.

To this work could easily be added the portfolio which Ros and Ben describe – it would make me ( for one!) incredibly happy if this could actually come about ; as I said in one of the NLs a little while ago – if we, as passionate converts don't value Australian plant gardens enough to record, promote and document them then why and how can anybody else? I agree that for the portfolio idea it will be important to adopt a format and use it when recording the various gardens.

The Significant Garden register is the same ( ie: records an Australian plant garden) but different in that a knowledgeable group of GDSG bods have selected appropriate gardens to be recorded in great depth due to their horticultural and historical ( age, gardener, plant , design, philosophy) merits. These gardens have an added kudos if you like of being acknowledged by its peers and history as being an admirable example of its type. Initially, the older gardens, ( from the 50s/60s- the beginning of the native plant movement in Australia) at the most risk of not surviving when their owners/creators move on have been targeted.

Also there is nothing to say that a garden discovered via an owner's or branch leader's report in the NL or a portfolio ( for want of a better name) recording can of course become a significant garden and written up according to that particular format.

Oh that we can get some SA Qld Tas. and WA members/ interested parties on board.  
Go for it guys!

#### **Chris Larkin, Victoria**

Actually Ros and Ben, Diana will be sending you a report I've done on a huge and hugely impressive garden we visited in spring last year (see Freake Garden Report, page 14). It will have pictures accompanying it and therefore is completely the kind of thing you are talking about I think.

Yes, I like the idea of getting more reports and pictures. It is really different categories of reporting. Don't know off the top of my head how this can be handled.

### **Diana Snape, Victoria**

I agree with Ben & Margaret regarding the benefits of a diversity of approaches to recording gardens. However I also agree with Margaret about establishing some minimum requirements such as those suggested for one category of garden recorded. Such gardens would be selected by a process similar to that originally outlined.

I do think we want a broad variety of good gardens recorded & accessible on the website, for several reasons including inspiring the general public, but I do think there is some concern if gardens are self-selected or even selected by just a single member.

We all love our own gardens (or sometimes have quirky tastes regarding other peoples') but probably it is better if, when if the owner or a single member writes a report, it is placed in a different category as Ben suggests. Of course gardens in the Open Garden Scheme have already been selected & approved by a panel. It would be very helpful if owners of these gardens who wanted to record them checked the guidelines already worked out, to assist them in their recording (and make them more useful).

I'm also concerned about the quality of photographs taken of gardens. I'm *not* referring to any particular photos that have been submitted for the website but nowadays, with digital cameras, I think we are all a little trigger-happy and so many photos are taken. Maybe there needs to be some process for agreement on the best photos of a garden (rather than including all possible ones).

Regarding the Freake garden, Chris, I think it is so big and so significant it would need to be recorded in the most thorough manner, as we have determined. I think it deserves this. We would need the consent of the owners of course and it would require details of the history of the garden and all the other aspects in the process we deliberated over originally.

I agree with your suggested procedure, Jo.

Also some gems in NSW, ACT, Tas, WA .....?

Below is the format for recording gardens to remind everyone of its outline and scope Ed.

## **Format for recording gardens**

### **Facts about the garden**

- \* location - which State and where in the State
- \* climate
- \* rainfall
- \* area - size
- \* orientation
- \* slope
- \* soil type

### **History (& age); Aims, objectives and motivations of the garden owner(s)**

Owners should be interviewed about the history (& age) of the garden and their aims, objectives & motivations (some thoughts regarding feelings, because design is concerned with bringing about certain emotional responses!)

### **Recorder's description/assessment of the design of the garden**

The following aspects should be commented on where applicable:

- \* setting - borrowed landscape
- \* significant design challenges
- \* estimation of time spent working in the garden
- \* any professional help in the design of, or help with work in, the garden
- \* proportions of sun & shade

- \* watering details - tanks, any watering system - & water areas
- \* type(s) of mulch used
- \* areas of lawn or grass
- \* use of rocks
- \* any specific features of the garden
- \* management, pruning, rejuvenation
- \* garden furniture & decoration eg sculpture
- \* any problem areas or future challenges

### Important aspects of the garden

## Photos for Garden recording project

**Brian Walters, Sydney**

### Advice from Brian Walters 24/10/12

There's no real limit on the number of photos that can be used for each garden. However, I'd recommend that they be kept to a reasonable number to avoid repetition and to keep the viewer interested. Many people have a short attention span with these sort of things. Around 15-20 would be my recommendation but, if it's not possible to do justice to a garden with that limit then by all means use more.

As to size, there are a few things to consider.

- \* The image needs to be large enough to show clearly the features that are being illustrated.

- \* The image needs to be small enough that it loads quickly. There's nothing surer to lose viewers than having to wait for images to download.

- \* The image also needs to be small enough that it will discourage people downloading (stealing) it for use in unauthorised printed publications. If theft is a concern, then it's a factor that should be considered when sizing images.

On the main Photo Gallery of the ANPSA website, I'm now using an image size of **600 x 400 pixels** (although most are still at 450 x 300). This size is (I think) large enough to show flowers etc clearly, it downloads reasonably quickly and it won't print clearly larger than about 3 x 2 inches. On my personal website I'm using 750 x 500 pixels. I certainly wouldn't go larger than about 800 x 533 pixels

Take a look at some of the 600 x 400 photos on the ANPSA website and the 750 x 500 photos on my site.

Here are a few samples of 600 x 400

<http://anpsa.org.au/a-sop.html>

<http://anpsa.org.au/a-his.html>

<http://anpsa.org.au/c-ser.html>

## Keeping garden records

**Diana Snape, Victoria**

For about 40 years I kept a fairly complete record of planting in our garden, from our initial planting of trees before we left for England in late 1971 until some time last year. In that time I used four and a bit large exercise books, all of which I still had or else found again when we moved. So now I've a record that gives me a complete history of the evolution of our (late) garden, bed by bed and (almost) plant by plant. There were occasional gaps when I mislaid my current exercise book but they all re-appeared at the end. I also kept some record of my attempts at propagation of plants from cuttings (while Brian grew plants from seeds).

Though I drew partial plans, I didn't manage a complete one of the whole garden. After a while, it was never really static. When Margaret James began recording our garden and asked me if we had a plan of it, I knew the time had come. One of the last things we did in the garden was to take measurements including distances of key trees and other plants from hard landscape (and each other) to help me draw this long-deferred plan. However, rather than even try to name every individual plant, it can only show types of plant in the different areas, for example daisies, grasses, low shrubs, etc., giving some examples.

I've found a number of advantages in keeping records (and drawing plans). One is that I can learn from them and rely on them for accuracy, rather than my fading memory. A record tells you just how old a particular plant in your garden is, or helps you work out the conditions under which a species does best. Records can bring back vivid memories of the initial planting of a bed, or areas that have since changed substantially. They also remind me of favourite plants that died and, for one reason or another, were not replanted.

Another benefit is the interest in looking back on the history of the garden, or individual beds in it, over time. All naturalistic gardens evolve and it's easy to forget the precise course of this evolution. Species and design details change, as conditions in the garden and plant availability change. Over the years, my records have helped me develop ideas regarding design (and assisted with many articles).

Something that really stands out is the vital importance of the initial selection of the key species, the framework plants and feature plants that you want to be there for the life of the garden. (I know this is a theme of mine!) With the limited choice (and information) we had 41 years ago, we didn't always get it right (and we really didn't look this far ahead). Even now, it's impossible to predict precisely how a plant will fare in many situations but at least there is more (and more reliable) information available, as well as a greater range of species to choose from. (Maybe the latter doesn't make it any easier.)

## **A Touch of Formality**                      **Barbara Buchanan, Victoria**

*Growing Australian*, v. 56(3), #222 Dec 2012 'A touch of formality' pp. 20-21

What a winter it has been. Lots of cold damp misty days with not much rain, lots of frosts, including some quite severe and damaging and lots of violent swings in temperature from unusual cold to unseasonal warmth. All in all a winter to encourage staying indoors and read about gardening rather than venture out and get the hands frozen as well as dirty. My reading is mostly in the old fashioned form, paper and ink, and there is much more about exotic gardening than using native plants available, so inevitably I read about cottage gardens and roses etc. This is not altogether a waste because there is much that is transferable to any gardening especially in the area of garden design and basic principles. The younger generation, looking for facts about their plants, go to the internet first, and generally have more up-to-date information than I acquire from my books, but my books give something more than just the facts and latest names, they give a whole garden experience.

One of the topics I was informing myself on was parterres and knot gardens- those very formal structures created by low clipped hedges of more or less intricate pattern and usually of English Box surrounding spaces filled with a variety of materials from coloured gravels to herbs to colourful annuals or tender plants from the greenhouse sunk into the ground in their pots. Some examples have very interesting and intricate patterns which used to puzzle me as they are not obvious from ground level. However in the heyday of parterres the lucky few would view them from windows on the upper floors of the mansions they adorned, the owners of the garden would not be out working amongst their plants. (What pleasure they missed). Generally the hedges were evergreen giving some colour and form in the drab English winter, although I think there were some made from deciduous plants. I also discovered the difference between knots and parterres, it is not hard and fast and just a matter of scale, a small design is a knot and larger ones parterres. Then I read that in Elizabethan times knot gardens were used to create a setting for an exciting new plant from the New World and suddenly the whole thing made sense- and suggested an application for today.

There are often areas such as near the front door or the patio where we sit a lot which we want to look good all year round and yet have a special oomph. A form of knot garden offers a way to achieve this with an interesting evergreen pattern into which our grafted treasures in their pots can be rotated during their flowering period. Or the spaces could be filled with brilliant annual daisies, perhaps ringing colour changes seasonally. Kangaroo Paws could hold court for a time, or a Boronia or whatever else one loves but finds short lived. I have long advocated using touchy favourites as annuals as the cost is not great compared to buying bunches of flowers; a knot would give them the setting they deserve and a place in the overall garden scheme. It offers a way to bring change and variety into small spaces. A weeping grafted Grevillea standard needs a special placement, what better than the low green shape of a knot in which it would be a more permanent infill.

Deciding the infill material is the easy and glamorous part. The success of the scheme depends utterly on the reliability of the framework, the hedging material. It may take many decades to develop an Australian plant that ticks as many boxes as the English Box in the list of necessary characteristics. Reliability and hardiness in a wide range of conditions, absence of pests and diseases, uniformity of growth, wide availability, cheapness, easy propagation are just the start. The response to clipping is also crucial and this will involve short internodes, i.e. leaves close together on the stem, generally small leaves which reduces damage to individual leaves and ready resprouting and the retention of leaves on the sides of the hedge, not just across the top. While it is desirable that the intended height is reached early, thence forward slow growth makes for easier maintenance. An ultimate low height may be an advantage here. We don't have a long tradition of clipping and shaping our plants but more and more Australian gardeners are experimenting.

Since I began this article I have been told that the new Stage 2 at Cranbourne includes a lot of hedges which I look forward to seeing. Quite a few years ago I was surprised by a description of a famous American garden whose name I have forgotten, but not the fact that the hedge curving around a stairway was lillypilly. Then nurserymen began offering a range of lillypillies for a range of topiary functions. Westringia hedges had a moment of fashion, are they working? I have also seen clipped and shaped Rhagodias and various Callistemons including one with flushes of red new growth have been selected and marketed for the purpose. Clipping a hedge of *Leptospermum peterseni* is a rewarding olfactory experience. I once saw a set of steps or stairs grown from several *Melaleuca* species and there must be many in the genus worth trialling. In fact the small Myrtaceae offer plenty of candidates, *Babingtonia virgata* small forms (which I think may now have their own species) have particular promise.

Topiary, knots and parterres are not for everyone but there are situations where they are very effective. The occasional clipped form can provide a useful contrast in our bush gardens and act as the focal points usually associated with urns and statues in more formal gardens. I believe we will also see weeping Grevillea standards instead of standard roses filling the spaces in knots in small front gardens, it may already be happening in our cities.

## Quotes of the Season

Please send any garden quotes that you find amusing, striking or useful to the Editor for inclusion in this section. I have not received any quotes from anyone - isn't someone reading something interesting enough to share?

**Ros Walcott, Canberra**

I often reread old design books as well as new ones. Sylvia Crowe's *Garden Design* published in 1981 is still worth a look. Even though written for English conditions and with black and white photos that now look old fashioned, there is much to learn from Dame Sylvia. She has an excellent history of garden design, including Japanese, Arabic, Italian, French and English garden traditions. Her chapter on principles of design include discussions of unity, scale, time, space division, light and shade, texture, tone and colour.

The Principal of the Oxford College of Garden Design, Duncan Heather, includes this book as one of his top ten garden books that changed his life. From his blog 'Thoughts from the Principal of the Oxford College of Garden Design'

*If Church was the father of garden design, Sylvia Crowe was the mother and if you have ever read any of John Brookes's books, read this; and you will understand where he got his design philosophy from. Now unfortunately out of print, I hope one day someone will have the intelligence to realise the significance of this book and reprint it in its entirety. Beg borrow or steal a copy, but this is a MUST READ BOOK*

For interest his other choices were *Gardens Are For People*, Thomas Church; *Planting Design*, Piet Ouldof; *From Concept to Form in Landscape Design and Landscape Graphics*, Grant Reid, *Room Outside*, and *A Place In the Country*, John Brookes; *Residential Landscape Architecture*, Norman Booth and James Hiss; and my old favourite *Education of a Gardener* by Russell Page.

I have been lucky enough to see some gardens designed by Church in California, Ouldof on Long Island, Brookes in England and the Chicago Botanic Garden, Sylvia Crowe at Oxford University and the Pepsico Garden in NY and La Mortella in Italy designed by Russell Page. None of these gardens disappoint - all of them inspire the gardener. These garden writers are not just brilliant writers but also talented practical gardeners able to turn a plan into reality. Piet Ouldof's gardens are particularly appropriate for Australian design with his use of grasses and long sweeps of repeated perennial plantings.

The first book which inspired me to an interest in garden design was Edward Hyams *The English Garden* published in 1966 and spotted by me in the early 70's on a remainder table at the local bookshop for \$3.98. I was fascinated by his descriptions of gardens I did not know at all. I started to read Vita Sackville-West, EA Bowles, Roberto Burle Marx, David Fairchild, Penelope Hobhouse, Graham Stuart Thomas, Gertrude Jekyll and Stephen Lacey. In time I began to read books on particular plants and particular gardens all over the world. One book that I read and loved was *The Gardens of Mughul India* published in 1972 by Sylvia Crowe, Sheila Haywood, Susan Jellicoe and Gordon Patterson. The idea of a paradise garden, divided into four quadrants by rills, is marvellously exemplified by The Alhambra in Granada, Spain.

Now that I am gardening in Australia I am trying to catch up on the Australian gardening literature and enjoying it immensely. Vic Crittenden's *History and Bibliography of Australian Gardening Books* published in 1986 gives interesting descriptions of early gardening books in Australia. The battle to adapt to new seasons, new soils and new plants are readily apparent. We are in the midst of creating our own garden design tradition, with our own special flora, and this is an exciting period.

## Photoessay - Details in the Garden

**Ros Walcott**  
**Photos by Ben Walcott**

We often concentrate on the larger view in the garden, sweeps of plants, large areas of contrast, the play of light and shade over the whole garden, but is also very rewarding to notice details in our gardens. Over the last month I have been watching the changes in the young banksia cones in our collection. They start out so small and are easy to miss altogether when they first appear, but grow into such a feature of the winter garden. They are definitely a favourite of mine as they last so long and are so bold. Also the fact that the birds love them commends them to me.

We grow 57 different banksias, 25 of which are from Western Australia. We grow 17 banksias in pots, particularly those from WA which do not appreciate our clay soil in Canberra, although (proudly) we do have a *Banksia prionotes* in the ground which is flowering well this year. It is perched up on a rock face so that it has excellent drainage. The frost does not seem to worry it at all.

At first the features of the small cones are almost fused together, embryonic, but then the entrancing Fibonacci spirals show up to our eye as the cones develop. The Fibonacci numbers series is one where the next number is always the sum of the previous two. This arrangement seems to be particularly apparent in nature and occurs in many seed and flower heads. 'The reason seems to be that this arrangement forms an optimal packing of the seeds so that, no matter how large the seed head, they are uniformly packed at any stage, all the seeds being the same size, no crowding in the centre and not too sparse at the edges.

The spirals are patterns that the eye sees, "curvier" spirals appearing near the centre, flatter spirals (and more of them) appearing the farther out we go. No matter how big the seed head gets, the seeds are always equally spaced. At all stages the Fibonacci spirals can be seen.' (Information gathered from several websites)

I love the way that banksias change colour as they grow. *Banksia robur* is one that goes through remarkable colour changes as it develops, starting off a metallic green and progressing through gold eventually to a rusty brown. Also the shape appears to change as the cones age. *Banksia media* is one plant which develops a very full cone as it ages. In *Banksia menziesii* dwarf that we grow in a big pot, the early cones seem quite tall and slender, but as they grow they become quite short and plump - also the colour changes from green and red to that wonderful purple-pink-red colour. *Banksia lindleyana* is another banksia which changes colour remarkably, from red and green to a glorious lemon with deep red base in maturity. All types of bees and other insects, as well as a jealous Red Wattlebird, visit this banksia daily even after two months in bloom. The cones of *Banksia pencillata* stay the same wonderful ginger colour throughout their development, but do become looser and airier with age which allows the sun to light them up and make them glow in the garden. At first I was disappointed in the *Banksia ericifolia* cultivar 'Red Rover' - the cones were a rather dull orange colour much like the parent. If you are patient, however, they develop into a really bright red which can be seen from all over the garden.

I have been growing *Banksia brownii* in a pot for four years now. I started by planting one in the ground, but it only lasted a year. The pot plant has grown well, but has not flowered until this year. The very young cones are slender and patterned as can be seen in the photo. The cone then develops this close felty texture, with tightly wound pistils. I am still waiting to see how this cone will develop in maturity. The leaves of *Banksia brownii* are a joy at all times of the year, feathery as the common name implies and silver backed so they change colour with the wind.

Close attention to details in the garden pays dividends. I have to remind myself to watch carefully, at different times of the day and season, to really appreciate the development of plants and their interactions. As our beloved Cousin Netta, Henrietta Lockwood, says 'Gardening begins with observing. I operate like that. I am one of those intensely looking people.' *With An Artist's Eye, Earth on Their Hands; the American Woman in her Garden*, p. 103, Clarkson Potter, 1998.



young



mature

***Banksia menziesii* dwarf**



***Banksia prionotes***



young



mature

***Banksia lindleyana***



***Banksia media***



young

***Banksia pencillata***



mature



***Banksia brownii***



young



mature

***Banksia* 'Golden Girl'**



***Banksia* 'Red Rover'**



***Banksia ornata***

## **Meetings and Garden Visits**

### **Next Melbourne meeting on Saturday May 18**

This meeting will be on a Saturday, May 18, not our usual Sunday. We'll meet having already had lunch at the Knox Park Primary School at 2pm. It's a school with a special garden.

In addition to the Melway address, Chris Larkin has provided the following instructions on getting there, as it's apparently a bit complicated. We'll have afternoon tea at the school, where we should have access to a room with a kettle or an urn. I'll look forward to seeing you there.

The school is shown on Melway 73 C3. It's best to enter via Kent St off Scoresby Rd and to turn right into Cherrytree and right into Bonview Cr and park there. I am suggesting this as the front entry to the school may not be open to go in and park whereas you can walk through from Bonview Cr. This is a tricky area with curvy roads and no go areas so please persist until you achieve the target. This school has a long history with the Australian Plants Society members taking an interest. Fred Rogers was at one time the Principal of the school and teachers Marion Dux and Olga Shaw, both now members of Foothills, started gardening there. In recent times Kerry Davis and Shirley Smith, also members of Foothills, have taken an interest and work there on a regular basis developing the gardens. Their children and in Kerry's case his grandchildren as well attended the school. Foothills has been helping out too in the last couple of years with a working bee type of day. The school has a heritage listed stand of eucalypts and it adjoins Lakewood Reserve which is a great place for frogs.

### **Melbourne meeting Sunday March 3**

**Diana Snape, Victoria**

We met at Melbourne University (in the vicinity of the Ellis Stones garden), where Peter Scales had kindly organized a comfortable venue both for lunch and for the meeting after our inspection of the garden site.

Special thanks to Therese and Peter for all their work in organizing the excellent venue and the rather tricky logistics of our all managing to meet up. Thanks also to Andrew Saniga for his time and valuable information and to Bev Hanson of course. (I mustn't forget Michael Cook and the delicious muffins and watermelon.)

I was very sorry we had to leave before the end of the meeting (we were just about to move house). I believe the Memorial Garden is a very important project, as Ellis Stones is such a key figure in the development of garden design in Victoria. I'm very grateful to Margaret James for taking detailed notes of the discussion that I missed. The following is her report, with a few additional points from myself and Bryan Loft. Thanks everyone for your input on the day.

Bev Hanson commented that the meeting back in the room with Andrew was valuable in helping us understand the workings of the University. The financing of the project with provision for the ongoing maintenance is the problem.

### **Report of meeting**

**Margaret James, Victoria**

Andrew Saniga, Senior Lecture in Landscape Architecture, joined the meeting at 3.00 pm and explained the process currently in train for conservation of the south lawn area. At present, there is no direction available for onsite staff for managing the Ellis Stones garden, hence its current neglected state. A Conservation Management report for the south lawn has been prepared by Lovett Chen, which will be available on the university website once approved by the appropriate committee. This report is needed before detailed planning can be undertaken for the Ellis Stones garden, but it will not include design considerations and the finer grade recommendations concerning planting, paths etc. This work will have to be undertaken by a professional consultant and it is possible that university funding could be made available for this task.

The role of the GDSG was discussed and there was general approval of the idea of engaging a professional consultant to prepare the plan. The Group would welcome input into the choice of consultant. Andrew expressed willingness to continue acting as a link between the group and the relevant university committees (heritage and buildings and grounds) of which he is a member. He has copies of relevant plans and photographs which would be useful to the production of the new plan.

Andrew expressed the view that the student work needs to be integrated in this project where it would be of most value. For example, they could assist with planting (good hands on experience) and also offer ideas about ways to memorialise or interpret the garden.

At the end of the meeting, Peter was thanked for his input and it was agreed that the group discuss its continued role in the project at the next meeting.

Some ideas generated in the course of the discussion

- Bev was keen to remove large branch from the elm tree so more sun can reach the site.
- Merele Webb suggested washing rocks down with high pressure hose to remove moss and dust and restore to original state (the rocks appear from the photos to be white granite, which catches the light).
- Several people favoured providing a path or broad steps up through the site so people can enjoy the garden close-up.
- To compensate for the area lost to the garden, extend the garden by a corresponding area across into the sunny slope (as far as the first eucalypts).
- Removal of the wattles and the dead eucalypt was generally approved.
- Dig up the dianellas.
- Removal of most plants on the site except those with particular aesthetic value was suggested.
- The memorial plaque needs to be cleaned and repainted to improve its legibility.
- There needs to be some form of interpretive material so that passersby can appreciate the reason and value of the garden. Andrew suggested that his students could suggest various forms of interpretative material and do the research needed.
- As the garden will remain mostly shady even with an extension northwards into the sun, we should provide a list for those conditions.
- There was some drip irrigation tubing on the lower levels but no evidence of its use; perhaps we could suggest irrigation be added to the whole garden to extend the range of applicable plants.

## **Visit to Malcolm and Monika Freake's garden in Gisborne South**

**Chris Larkin, Victoria**

**Photos by Chris Larkin**

It is difficult to know where to start a report on Malcolm and Monika Freake's garden which is extremely large and I've visited only once. Luckily I do have a mere 144 pictures to remind me of the experience. Gisborne South is north-west of Melbourne in rolling countryside. This garden is approximately 40 acres or 20 hectares. It slopes from top to bottom towards the south-east with views down the slope of Melbourne and the bay from the house and parts of the garden.

This is a garden on a grand scale with more in common with a large public garden – a very good, well maintained public garden than any private garden in Australia of my experience. The Freakes lived overseas in the UK for around 12 years. During that time they visited many gardens and formed the idea of developing an Australian plant garden of style and lasting value – an Australian equivalent of some of the grand gardens they had visited in the UK and Europe which they had enjoyed so much. In keeping with their idea the vast majority of the garden plants are Australian native plants. The most notable and conspicuous non-Australian plant is a red-brown strappy used in large areas which gives the impression of drifts of dry grasses.



One of the Freake's children, a son, is a professional golfer so the original idea for developing the garden started to come together with the idea of developing a world class mini golf course. The latter is a most serious aspect of the garden, it dictates the design to a large extent but not entirely, as such a lot of thought and effort has gone into the purely pleasurable aspects of the garden, such as the many water features, aside from golfing. A garden formed around a golf course is generally largely picturesque in style, something akin to the style of Melbourne's Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. In the case of the Freake's garden, where there are normally sweeping lawns, there are fairways and greens so fine and velvety I certainly worried about walking on them with ordinary shoes! Shouldn't we have been using hover shoes? The Freakes employ 5 gardeners – 2 are turf experts to maintain the standard of fairways and holes, the other 3 care for the surrounding gardens. Some of the important infrastructure or workings of the garden that enable the golf course to be maintained to such a high standard are not visible. Malcolm said not a drop of water that falls on the property is lost. And indeed the Freakes are water harvesting even from the public road bordering their property. In the dying years of the drought they also sank a bore which provides high quality water to help future water-proof the project. Water in this garden is a serious business vital to the viability and success of the golf course and adding to the beauty of a garden which has so many different water features. If golf dictates the design in the majority of the garden then water is a linking theme. There are several large ponds or lakes, 3 that I can think of plus another large body of water sitting outside the garden proper called a dam. Additionally there are 2 conjoined contrasting ponds that you overlook from house's front terrace. One of the ponds is perfectly round with stone walls. Separated by a gravel path the second pond, stonewalled at the point where it meets the path, soon leaves this formality in shape and edging. A number of creeks, waterfalls and smaller ponds interconnect with these larger bodies of water. Beneath the surface of this golf course/garden there is the plumbing concerned with irrigation and recycling the ornamental water, which flows throughout the garden, back through the system. The water action in the garden, the ornamental water of streams and waterfalls, is only run on special occasions like our visit, I am pleased to say.

Monika and Malcolm have a fondness for old used timbers which they have used in parts of the construction of their house. Many of the elements in the garden that are delightful are

concerned with water but in one section of the garden they have recreated a somewhat nostalgic tableau of by-gone days. Connected to a lower lake by a short pier is a small



greyed timber cottage nestled beneath two dead and greyed eucalypts which are remnant indigenous trees too sculptural and beautiful to remove. Added details are two thoroughly rusted pieces of old farm machinery. The scene is largely sepia in tones; the greyed cottage and trees surrounded by plantings of grasses with a dash of colour from some low daisy type plants. The whole scene is deceptively simple because of the clear restraint in the range of elements used. It all feels most appropriate and very evocative.

It is interesting that the Freakes couldn't point to any one person being responsible for the design of their garden although different people definitely had different levels of influence. In particular Martin Ascher had a major influence in the initial design of the garden. The Freakes spoke as though the garden design had to some extent evolved over time and certainly we were asked to contribute ideas to how Monika might develop a children's garden in a particular part of the garden she had thought suitable for such a project. Malcolm showed us a large plan of the garden which suggests there was an overall direction but lots of room for different solutions in the detailing. Such well maintained gardens showcased a large variety of healthy plants growing at dimension. As we walked away from house there were beds with very large grafted darwinia shrubs and large areas covered by ground covering plants in flower like dampieras, different varieties of grevilleas and pultenaeas. I was also struck by the great beauty of some very large xanthorrhoeas. There has been an effective use of mass plantings throughout the garden which is important in matching the scale of the plantings to the scale of the garden. As a generalisation trees and even larger shrubs have been either kept to a minimum or they are located close around the boundaries or in discrete areas leaving the majority of garden beds exposed to the sun, wind and rain. Without shading and root competition garden beds of smaller shrubs and ground covering plants can put on a great show. Well mulched garden beds and the use of rocks throughout the garden help to protect and provide the cool root run and moisture so many plants need. Care has also been taken not to plant large trees to block important views beyond the garden. It took a long time to walk around the garden in just one direction. It would take much more time to become familiar with it. We were most fortunate to have fine weather and gracious hosts for a spring viewing. Lunch on the terrace too was lovely. Thank you Malcolm and Monika for a memorable day which everyone enjoyed thoroughly.



## **Joint GDSG Sydney and Canberra Tri8p to Blayney/Bathurst, NSW Saturday November 9 -Sunday November 10, 2013**

We have an opportunity to visit three fascinating gardens around Blayney and Bathurst. We plan on arriving around midday for a barbecue lunch at Fiona and Alex's garden 'Cloudy Hill' in Blayney. The trip to Blayney will take about three and one half hours from both Canberra and Sydney. Participants will make their own arrangements to stay in or around Bathurst for the night of Saturday November 9. We will get together for a meal, most likely at the Church Bar in Bathurst that night. On Sunday we will visit the two gardens near Bathurst, 'Daleba' and 'Sandy Hollow' and then head home. Fiona has kindly provided us with descriptions below of the treat that awaits us. Please come to Blayney/Bathurst with us in November.

**Contacts:** Jo Hambrett, Leader Sydney GDSG at [tudortalisman@optusnet.com.au](mailto:tudortalisman@optusnet.com.au)  
or Ros Walcott, Leader Canberra GDSG [rwalcott@netspeed.com.au](mailto:rwalcott@netspeed.com.au)

### **'Daleba' 490 Freemantle Road, Mount Rankin Donna and Terry Rath**

We arrived here in 2000 and our Australian native plant garden plan has been to create a "walk through the bush". You will find an informal three acre garden, filled with the subtlety of beautiful Australian native plants. Throughout the garden there are areas of Banksias, Hakeas and native grasses, dotted with eremophilas, grevilleas, callistemons, correas etc. The courtyard has a blend of exotic plants and native plants around the waterfall.

We have used some deciduous trees in the garden for autumn colour and winter warmth. Stainless steel sculptures by Ulric Steiner are feature pieces in the garden. Our Wollemi Pine is the envy of many. The northern view to the Mount Rankin is a spectacular backdrop for this garden.

Be delighted by the beauty of Australian native blossoms delicately shaped to survive in the heat, the dry and the cold. Enjoy the many shades of green that is the joy of our native trees, shrubs and plants. This is a water wise garden.

Enjoy the majestic canopy of huge *Eucalyptus melliodora* and *blakelyi*, the Yellow Box and the Red Box. Many thousands of native plants have been planted over the years. Most plants have name tags for identification. Around the 25 acre property there are many varieties of different species, for example there are fifty different eucalypts and fifty different wattles.

### **'Sandy Hollow' 125 Whalan's Lane, Duramana Val and Colin Fenn**

The Fenn's garden is the most naturalistic of the three gardens. It is best described as an informal bush garden, filled with the dappled shade of indigenous eucalypts with an acacia understorey. However, that is only half the story, and there are also many other varieties of plants included in the garden and the surrounding area. Colin Fenn is a talented artist who can work with bronze, metal or stone. His works are fascinating (and usually big) and add interest to the garden: for example, a pergola made of recycled bridge timbers standing over a massive slate-topped table, plus a number of engraved rock sculptures or metal works - and the biggest outdoor pizza oven you've probably seen.

### **'Cloudy Hill' 170 Kellys Road, Fitzgeralds Mount Fiona Johnson and Alex Kruczaj**

Cloudy Hill is a primarily a native shrubbery, partly designed to provide habitat to encourage the smaller bird species and partly just for the enjoyment of the garden and gardening. It is quite structured in style with wandering paths, a paved pergola area and plenty of seating. It is also definitely a plants person's garden, with a changing kaleidoscope of plants as the environment and

elements dictate what will or will not grow – with the gardener mostly being one step behind. The oldest sections of the garden are now five years old, and the trees are starting to gain some height. The shrub level is intended to stay quite low in front of the house so distant views are not obscured. The ‘formal’ garden is just over an acre in size.

A second area close by the house is bush naturally regenerated following ‘pick and shovel’ gold mining a century ago. This area is slowly being developed by eradicating some exotic grasses and introducing sympathetic understorey plants, some locally indigenous. A small dam has been landscaped with a stone and recycled sleeper boardwalk built around one section of it.



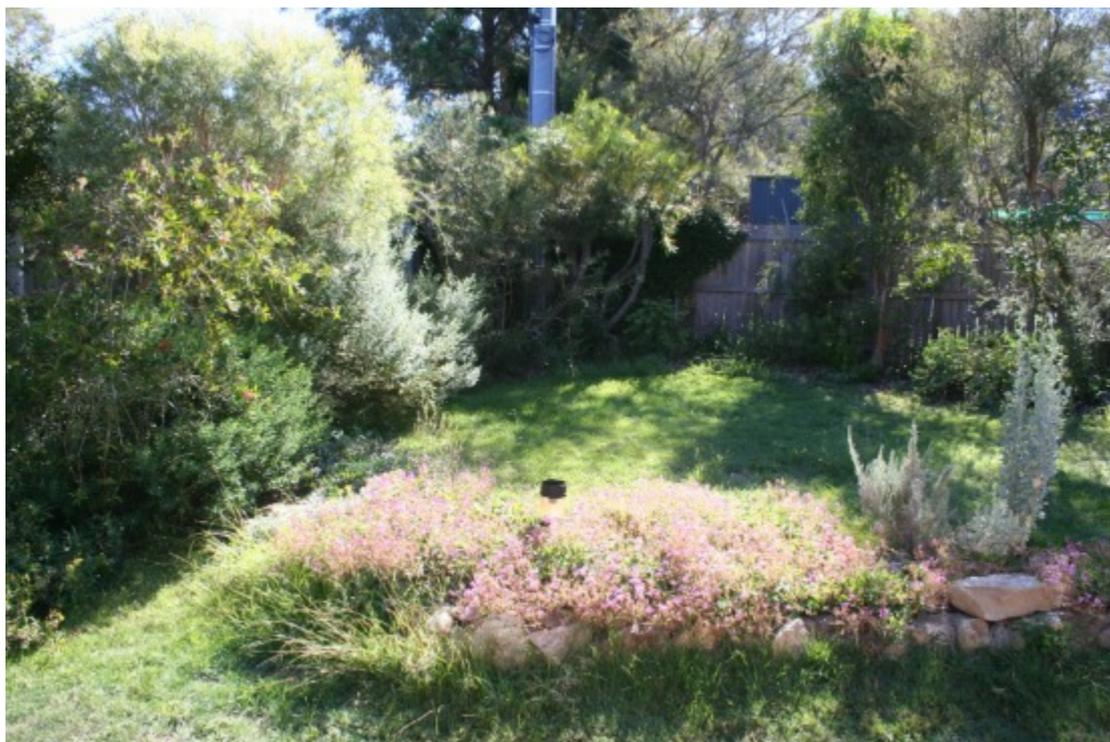
Two views of Cloudy Hill Photos by Fiona Johnson

**Garden of Rosemary Blemings, Flynn, 19 March 2013**

The garden's developed since 1979 on a rectangular, 748 square metre suburban block in mid-Flynn. The house was built facing west to capture views of the ranges some 50km in the distance though the block itself is north-south. The first owners chose free-issue plants which included Photinia, Chinese Elm, Japonica, a scented Viburnum, Tea tree, Escallonia, Rosemary and a "weeping eucalypt" which morphed into *Agonis flexuosa* when I became more observant and knowledgeable.

The land slopes about one metre, being on the southern slope of Mt Rogers, 704m. It's a nature reserve on previously grazed grassy-woodland and has been a second-(Landcare) garden for twenty years. Run-off from Mt Rogers flows through stormwater drains and underground to Ginninderra creek (into the Murrumbidgee some 8-10km away). The Photinia has thrived on this subterranean water for 40 years and shades the house. It has required severe pruning several times and acts as a shade-house for the ACT's twice-yearly Weed Swap. Drip-line watering under the most recent re-mulching of forest-litter seems to be adequate.

Grass around shrubs was replaced by native plants twenty years ago. Mulching with thick newspaper layers and then Eucamulch worked well. At the rear sections of grass remain, providing openness and ball-kicking space for a family home. In summer many grass species brown-off leaving green fringes at the edges where *Microlaena stipoides* has thrived on additional moisture and shaded roots. Austrodanthonia seeds have also been walked-in on shoes. Seeds from the native grasses are harvested and can be used in Landcare areas.



*Cymbonotus lawsonianus*, Vittadinia spp. and Wahlenbergia have also been walked-in. They thrive in drier summers, flowering and spreading, especially in any bare areas. *Arthropodium milleflorum*, *Linum marginale*, *Microseris lanceolata* and *Bulbine bulbosa* have been imported with the aim of creating a miniature native grassland. Success will depend on each season and whether the plants can cope with the clayey soil and its numerous rocks. It's fascinating observing new arrivals in the grass area and the effects of the seasons. *Crassula siebriana* (Australian Stonecrop) and *Portulaca oleracea* germinate in bare places towards the end of dry, hot summers.

Some of the larger rocks have been used as edging for beds between the grass and the fences. *Microlaena* and the introduced grasses ignore the boundaries negating the originally-desired English neatness. These beds are planted with natives with the aim of screening the wooden palings. They provide seasonal colour and feed native birds by providing nectar, seeds, capsules or

insects, spiders and caterpillars. Having a garden view from the kitchen and living area is very important to us and there are numerous anecdotes about bird-behaviour.

There are nearly 100 different Australian species living out their life-cycles in the garden including several varieties of correa and callistemon. Before I knew otherwise five *Acacia baileyana* (a declared weed in the ACT) were planted and their stumps and the mulch nurture amazing fungi. Sawn logs from a self-sown *A. mearnsii* provided edging for a vegetable garden extension and nutrients as they broke down. Vegetables suffer from my inconsistent habits but cherry tomatoes are 10-11th generation from a friend's seed. I am growing *Bidens pilosa/alternans* in one corner and a planter for a few more days to double-check identity when they flower. I believe it's currently new to the Canberra region. I check the location of the parent plant, in a minimally-visited nature reserve, for my seeds' siblings. Other weed species' seed-viability is also tested in a modest way in my garden.

Opposite our house is a 2-300year old *Eucalyptus melliodora* which is rarely without perching birds. It is a vital staging or observation-post for a range of ACT region birds and close to forty species have been observed in the garden. More are heard at night through open windows. There have been many small garden skinks and a few Marbled Geckoes seen during the last two seasons. Occasionally a Blue-tongue lizard is seen. We all have paling fences which allow reptile migration but perhaps the seven local cats keep reptile numbers down.



## Visit to STEP (Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park)

**April 16, 2013**

On a cloudy cool day 20 ANPS members gathered to see the progress of STEP at the National Arboretum Canberra. With just a small group of volunteers STEP has made remarkable strides in the last few years. Ed.

## **Southern Tablelands Ecosystems Park (STEP) – an ambitious project seeking a home Janet Russell , Canberra**

This is an introduction to STEP, its genesis and the journey to its eventual home on Forest 20 of the National Arboretum Canberra.

STEP was the brainchild of a group of members from the Australian Native Plants Society Canberra (ANPS) and Friends of Grasslands (FOG). The *southern tablelands* is a geographic region and a NSW botanical subdivision used by NSW FloraOnline as well as by the Bureau of Meteorology as a forecasting district. The population centres Crookwell, Yass, Tumut, Tumbarumba, Delegate and Braidwood all fall within the boundaries of the area.

STEP was launched on 22 May 2003 at the Crosbie Morrison Building at the Australian National Botanical Gardens (ANBG) with Cathy Robertson as inaugural president. Cathy articulated STEP's aims which amongst others was to provide a significant conservation corridor linked with Conservation Management Networks in the region. Education was also an important aspect of STEP's aspirations as well as a focus on biodiversity research. After many discussions and a few false starts in August 2006 STEP entered into discussions with Chief Minister's Department to locate STEP in the northern part of the Arboretum. In 2007 John Nightingale developed several landscape sketches for the STEP project which were presented to Canberra International Arboretum & Gardens Project Group.

### **STEP at the National Arboretum Canberra (NAC)**

In 2004, [Taylor Cullity Lethlean](#) (landscape architects) and [Tonkin Zulaikha Greer](#) (architects) won the ACT Government's design competition for the arboretum. The winning design was called 100 Forests and 100 Gardens. The forests feature trees which are threatened, rare and/or symbolic, and which can survive on this site.

[http://www.arboretumcanberra.org.au/national\\_arboretum\\_canberra.aspx](http://www.arboretumcanberra.org.au/national_arboretum_canberra.aspx)

Taylor, Cullity Lethlean was part of the winning design team for the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne. The same focus on the geometric can be found in both gardens which provide a stunning modern design without any of the more naturalistic look that is often associated with native gardens. The site allocated to STEP was originally known as Block 100 and had been part of the pine forests burned during the 2003 bush fires as was the entire Arboretum. After some reconciliation of the design elements it is now known as Forest 20 of the National Arboretum Canberra.

The planting has been chiefly done by STEP members (who number about 80) with assistance from Conservation Volunteers, Greening Australia volunteers, visiting dignitaries and members of the public. STEP members volunteer every Thursday morning to continue the garden's development

### **Wide Brown Land sculpture**

Wide Brown Land was created by Tasmanian-based artist team Marcus Tatton, Futago and Chris Viney (2010). The three words used in the artwork come from the second verse of Dorothea Mackellar's poem My Country written about Australia when she was just 19 years old. Inspired by Mackellar's own handwriting, it is made from corten steel and steel rod and is 3 metres high and 35 metres long.

inside brown land



Forest 20 STEP site



## Garden Vignettes

Please send in your photos of a particularly pleasing moment in your garden for others to share.



Freake garden waterfall with banksias - Photo by Chris Larkin

### Treasurer's Report

Cheque account: \$ 9,750.58

Term deposit: \$ 22,900.11

**Total:** \$ 32,650.69

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