



GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

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Newsletter**February 2015****89****NEWSLETTER EDITOR**

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Happy New Year to you all and here is the first *Newsletter* of 2015. The *Newsletters* of 2014 have been indexed by Glenda Browne and the updated index is on the website. In case you haven't tried it, it is an easy and quick way of finding articles from the *Newsletter*. Notice also that we have decided to have these *Newsletters* uploaded on the website as they are published. Previously there has been a year lag between publishing and posting on the website. This year long lag was introduced some time ago to encourage people to join the Study Group and to pay the dues. However, the lag slows down our ability to disseminate the information on garden design as widely and as quickly as possible. If we see that membership drops off significantly, we can always go back to the year lag.

Please send us a picture and a few words on your own or other's gardens. What you have done or are doing will certainly be of interest to others. The point of the *Newsletter* and Study Group is to share ideas.

Correspondence**Gail Knight, Canberra**

Dear Ros

Thank you for the latest *GDSG Newsletter*. Once again it's teeming with articles and the colour photos really make the stories come alive. I thoroughly enjoyed reading every article.

Pam Yarra, Victoria

Hi Ros & Ben,

Thanks for a great newsletter & yes, as previously said, the colour photos make a difference. Also congratulations on achieving such fame. Your garden on the stamp was a wonderful achievement & I hope one day to see it in its entirety.

No doubt this summer will be a challenge for all of us, but more for those people like you with large gardens.

A response to my article by a member set me thinking. She hadn't read it, as it was not about Australian gardens!! Also in today's Age is information about a speaker, one of the world's leading landscape historians, John Dixon Hunt. His lecture at Melbourne University is called "The Lie of the Land". His talk will examine the idea, that all landscape architecture is essentially and excitingly a lie, by looking at six different designs from 16th to 20th centuries. These two issues set me thinking about garden design & garden landscaping & the universal influences on Australian gardens. Many people see Australian plant gardens as "bush type gardens", but as we know it can take the form of many types, including cottage, formal & more recently vertical gardens. With so many Australians

from different cultures(including us), I see a role for ANPSA to be flexible & embrace many ways to design or landscape using Australian plants.

I am interested in history of Australian gardening (getting Anne Latreille's book for my birthday), as well as other cultures.

Also I am curious about both of your backgrounds, having read excerpts from Canberra article??

Many thanks again & look forward to your comments,
Pam

Eleanor Hodges, Victoria

Good evening Ben,

I have just been enjoying the Newsletter and it reminded me that I probably need to renew my membership. Is it still \$10.00 and what is the best way to get it to you? (*Ed. See back page*) Congratulations on being chosen for the stamp and postcard – it certainly looks a well-deserved selection as the garden looks very beautiful in the photos. Where in Canberra do you live? I spent a year at ANU in the late '80s and have some knowledge of the city layout.

Redesigning a Native Meadow

Words Ros Walcott, Canberra
Photos Ben Walcott, Canberra

The original design for our garden, completed in 2003 by landscape architect Helen Cohen, included a large native meadow approximately 1100 square metres in area. This space was where all the heavy equipment was parked during the nine months of construction of our house and garden and by the end of that process the soil was packed down as hard as a rock. To our surprise our garden company, Able Landscaping, did not rip this area to make it more acceptable for planting, but planted directly into the rock-like soil using a drill. Their explanation was that in their experience ripping only resulted in a myriad of weeds taking the opportunity to grow in the disturbed soil.

The planting of the meadow was an amazing process involving three planters over three days planting over 20,000 viro tubes of grasses, forbs and lilies. They drilled a hole with an electric drill, dropped in a gel containing water retaining crystals and fertilizer, then planted the viro tube and moved to the next hole very efficiently. The meadow plants grew quite quickly in the first six months, especially the grasses. Particular favourites were *Themeda australis*, *Microlaena stipoides* and *Themeda australis* 'Mingo'. *Bulbine bulbosa* prospered in the meadow, as did *Chrysocephalum apiculatum* and *Wahlenbergia communis*. Some plants appeared only in the first few months then disappeared. Others never appeared at all. Some of the plants stipulated in the planting plan were not available and were substituted by other varieties, see Tables 1 and 2. In 2007, four years after the original planting, the meadow was refreshed with new plants as can be seen in Table 3. Over the 11 years we had the meadow we scattered seeds of *Xanthorrhoea australis*, *Austrostipa elegantissima* and *Austrostipa mollis*, and added many plants such as *Austrostipa scabra*, *Austrostipa verticillata*, *Bulbine glauca*, *Bulbine semibarbata*, *Chrysocephalum semipapposum*, *Joycea pallida*, and *Leucochrysum*

albicans. Some plants we added never made an appearance, *Ajuga australis*, *Ammobium craspedioides*, *Bracteantha viscosa*, *Cymbonotus lawsonianus* (Austral Bear's Ear) *Disphyma clavellatum* (Native Pigface) *Hypoxis hygrometrica* (Golden Weather Grass) *Leptorhynchos squamatus* (Scaly Buttons) *Tricoryne elatior* (Yellow Rush Lily) *Vittardinia muelleri* and *Wurmbea dioica* (Early Nancy).



The meadow in January 2012 with the *Ammobium alatum* in bloom

Ammobium alatum or Tall Ammobium was a special case. There were only 6 of these plants provided in July 2003. I was very excited at the idea of this one metre high winged grey-leaved plant with white daisy flowers and checked the small patch of plants every morning to note progress. Imagine my horror when I saw six Sulphur Crested Cockatoos pulling out the plants and munching on the roots. I went crying to Ben that I would never have any ammobiums as the birds had eaten them all. I was very distraught. However, I began to notice grey winged plants popping up everywhere, not only in the meadow but also in the path and adjacent beds. Not only did I have ammobium, I had perhaps too many ammobiums. Those of you who have been to our garden will know that we still have many ammobium plants and some of them not in very appropriate places, but I continue to love the plant and just pull it out when it gets too obstreperous.

MEADOW MIX

Plant Species	%	Planting Rate	Area	Total Plants	Number of Plants available in Nov 2003
<i>Austrostipa scabra</i>	10	25/m ²	1100m ²	2,750.00	1,000.00
<i>Bulbine bulbosa</i>	10	25/m ²	1100m ²	2,750.00	1,600.00
<i>Calocephalus citreus</i>	5	36/m ²	1100m ²	1,980.00	700.00
<i>Chrysocephalum apiculatum</i>	5	36/m ²	1100m ²	1,980.00	400.00
<i>Leptorhynchos squamatus</i>	5	36/m ²	1100m ²	1,980.00	900.00
<i>Leucochrysum albicans</i>	10	36/m ²	1100m ²	3,960.00	3,960.00
<i>Microlaena stipoides</i>	12	25/m ²	1100m ²	3,300.00	3,300.00
<i>Poa sieberiana</i> 'Aranda'	10	25/m ²	1100m ²	2,750.00	3,750.00
<i>Themeda australis</i> 'Mingo'	13	25/m ²	1100m ²	3,575.00	3,575.00
<i>Vittadinia muelleri</i>	10	36/m ²	1100m ²	3,960.00	-
<i>Wahlenbergia communis</i>	5	36/m ²	1100m ²	1,980.00	1,980.00
<i>Xanthorrhoea australis</i>	5	1/m ²	1100m ²	55.00	55.00
TOTAL	100			31,020.00	21,220.00

NOTE: All above meadow plant species are to be planted in clumps or drifts with a minimum of 25 plants and a maximum of 36 plants, except for *Xanthorrhoea australis*, which is to be planted randomly across the site.

Table 2

Plants offered by Warren Ganter as substitutions and agreed at meeting on 6 November 2003

Ajuga australis
Brachyscome species
Craspedia variabilis
Cymbonotus lawsonianus
Dianella tasmanica
Hypoxis hygrometrica
Pelargonium species
Ranunculus species
Tricoryne elatior
Wurmbea dioica

Table 3

Refreshment of meadow areas

4-5 July 2007

2000 plants supplied and planted at 95 cents each

Bracteantha viscosa

Bulbine glauca

Calocephalus citreus

Chrysocephalum apiculatum

Juncus usitatus

Leucochrysum (white)

Leucochrysum (yellow)

Wahlenbergia spp.

The meadow was a source of conflict over the years that we maintained it. It was beautiful when in bloom, in December, with the ammobium providing the main show. Red-Browed Finches loved the ammobium seeds, as did the Crimson Rosellas. We had numerous nests of Red-Browed Finches in the Bunya Pine. These elegant grass nests provided plenty of interest while in operation both for nesting and roosting. Many species of butterflies also were attracted to the meadow, even the spectacular Orchard Swallowtails.

However, weeding of the meadow was always a problem. We had several infestations of weeds such as Couch Grass and Vetch. We were forced to abandon one section of the meadow because couch grass was impossible to eradicate without poisoning all plant material in that area. This section was redeveloped as a general garden bed several years ago after ridding ourselves of the couch.

If we watered the meadow enough to make the meadow plants thrive, this is also enough water to ensure that the exotic weeds gifted to us by the birds also thrive. I have seen successful meadows, Christopher Lloyd's at Great Dixter in Kent springs to mind, but I warn anyone thinking of establishing one that they are very hard work.



Early in 2014 we finally got permission from ACTPLA (ACT Planning and Land Authority) to remove eight large pine trees (*Pinus radiata*) from our property that were planted circa 1930. These trees were beginning to senesce after 80-85 years, drop limbs and generally become a nuisance. We wanted to remove them before we ever started our garden in 2003, but were unsuccessful in our request, even though this was Dr. Robert Boden's recommendation and he was the one who wrote the tree guide for the ACT. Removal of the trees necessitated a one hundred tonne crane being used and the only place to park such a crane was on the meadow. The consequent trashing of the meadow was an impetus to us to either decide to keep it and replant it, or get rid of it.

I was very happy to redevelop the meadow in another guise and Ben was less so. He really enjoyed the unstructured appearance of the meadow. I was tired of explaining to many visitors that we were not ignoring this space and developing it later, but had indeed already put major effort into planting and maintaining this garden area. There were really only two reactions to the meadow 'I love it' or 'when are you going to start to garden in this area?'

After the removal of the pines in April/May 2014 we then had to redesign and redevelop the meadow, an area of about 600 square metres. We poisoned the grasses, forbs and lilies that we had put in over a decade (more than 20,000 plants in all), skinned off the top soil and plant material, discarded it, then mechanically churned up the soil with a digger, added more light and friable soil then churned it up again. The soil added was the same sort that is used under turf and we had used it before when filling in a pond which did not thrive. I then walked around with sticks and mapped out new paths. I had a good idea of the general curved and hooked paths I wanted. We created swales around each new bed and filled the swales with large river pebbles for drainage. We used a gold-coloured gravel mulch in this area to contrast with the dark mulch used elsewhere in the garden and also with the narrow mulched wheelbarrow paths through the new garden. The paths are made from crushed granite and were rolled and compressed mechanically.



Clearing the old meadow in July 2014



Laying out of the paths with the subsoil of the garden beds dug

We wanted rocks in one section of the new garden. Newline Quarry, Queanbeyan, where we sourced rocks for other sections of the garden, has been closed. We managed to find suitable rocks at Bundanoon, but due to a chapter of accidents, with floods, bogged tractors, impassable roads and sickness of the owner of said rocks, we were unable to obtain them in a timely fashion. It was disappointing, but I decided to build myself a barchan dune where the rocks were supposed to be placed. A barchan dune is a crescent-shaped sand dune produced by the action of wind predominately from one direction where the crescent tips point downwind. Some of these dunes can reach heights of 30 metres and widths of 350 metres, but mine is a modest affair only a metre high and 15 metres long. It is now anchored by a specimen of *Eucalyptus caesia magna* 'Silver Princess'.

The beds are irrigated with sprays about 0.5m high. We will not use drip irrigation again in our garden as we have found it much too difficult to maintain. The ants climb into the dripper and block them at every turn. The first time that you know that the dripper is blocked is when you notice the plant is dead. Sprays can be raised as plants grow so that they continue to give good coverage. We irrigate at night so evaporation is limited. We were able to save all the trees that we had put in over the years so the area still has much-needed light shade and frost protection. We attended a marvellous afternoon visit to John Weatherstone's property in Gundaroo in 2006 where the enlightened property owner had planted 100,000 trees of all kinds to mitigate the effects of drought on his property. He found that the shade from these trees encouraged grass to grow to feed his stock, quite against the common farming practice and belief of the time. We came home inspired to plant more trees, even in the meadow area, which was originally full sun. We planted *Eucalyptus camphora*, *E. gunnii*, *E. luehmanniana*, *E. polyanthmos*, *E. maidenii* and *E. stricta*, and we had previously planted *E. sideroxylon rosea* to make the new house 'sit down' in its environment.



The last of the topsoil being delivered in August 2014



The new garden in late August before planting

We then had to find enough plants to fill up the beds and are still working on that. We are concentrating on plants one metre high by one metre wide or smaller. We want to keep the original design of relatively open space in front of the house. We went to the Rogers Seminar in Bendigo, Victoria in October, so were able to access the Goldfields Revegetation Nursery and brought back 120 plants from there. We are waiting to buy some of Angus Stewart's new line of 'landscape' Kangaroo Paws to put in the new beds.

I see the doubt in some people's faces when they see the large expanse of gold pebbles where the meadow used to be. I encourage them to come back in two years time to see that the plants will have grown to cover the pebbles. We just have to wait for the plants to grow!



The garden in November 2014 after some planting has been done

UK nurseries suffer from cheap plants

[GardenDrum](#) December 15, 2014

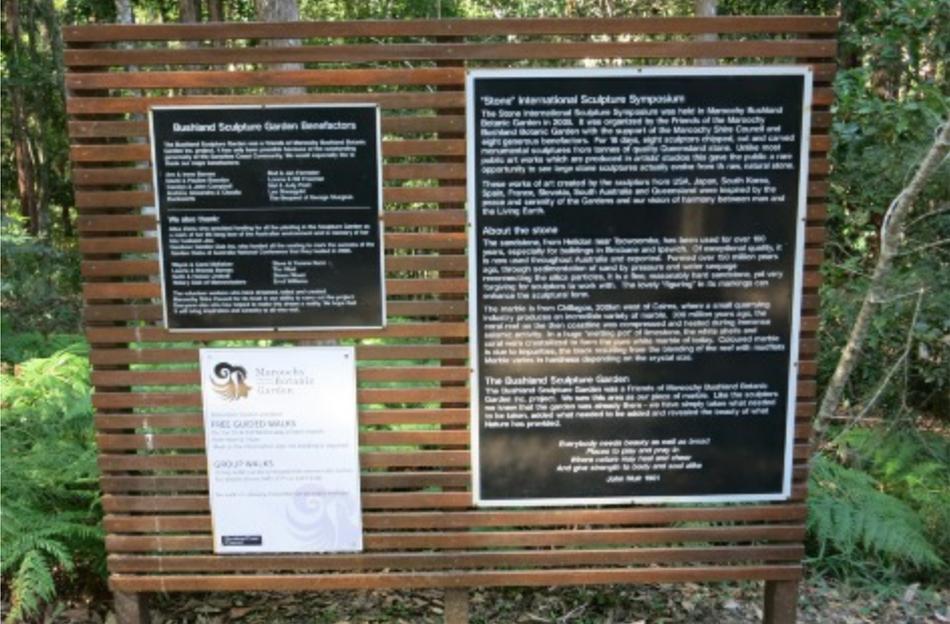
Plant prices in the UK have sunk to historic 40 year lows, with many nurseries struggling to break even.

Several nursery chains have reported large losses or, like Mahoods, have closed, partly due to plant prices slumping through over-supply and a slow sales market.

Prices as low as 90p for a *Lonicera* 'Maygreen' or even 10p for a hawthorn are about what these plants were selling for back in the 1970s. Low prices are also hurting landscapers by reducing their mark-up margins on plant reselling.

So while you may relish a cheap plants bargain, you might not have a local nursery business around to sell it to you by the end of 2015.

Sculpture in the Garden



Sculpture from the Bushland Sculpture Garden of the Maroochy Bushland Botanic Garden. Photographs taken at ANPSA Biennial Conference in August 2013

Photos by Ben Walcott

Dilemmas of a designer

Michael McCoy March 3, 2014

While I design gardens for a living, I sometimes wonder if I'm more an educator or an evangelist, as I want nothing more from my design work than to see my clients fully engaged in the nurturing, fine-tuning, guiding and managing of the garden we've created – preferably together.

The realisation of this desire, which took me at least a decade to grasp and then articulate, has led to one of my biggest dilemmas. That professional design can lead to clients being alienated from, rather than connected with, their gardens.



Sometimes they've got no idea how to achieve the design effect they know they want. **Sometimes** they've got no idea how to look after a garden, so look for professional assistance in creating a garden that matches their skills, or lack of them in this case. **Sometimes** they've no confidence in their taste, and want to buy something they can feel sure is cool – or enviable. This is my least favourite group, but happens to be where most of the money is. If you can create, and be the primary purveyor of, the next big thing, then financial success is assured.





And sometimes they're knowledgeable and accomplished gardeners who nevertheless know that they'll never be satisfied if their gardens are limited to their own abilities. My observation is that **the best gardeners are also the ones most frustrated by the limits of their ability.**

They're the ones always asking for more from their gardens, and never want to rest on their laurels. This is my favourite group by far. I love starting in a good garden and cooking up ideas with the owner about how it could be better still.

Primarily I see my job as providing empowerment. I therefore never felt more of a failure as a designer than the day when I client rang – one

who had previously considered herself a somewhat competent gardener, one that would at least give things a go – and asked where she should put some plants she'd been given. I tried to throw the decision, and even the thinking process, back at her, but she was terrified that she'd 'mess things up'.

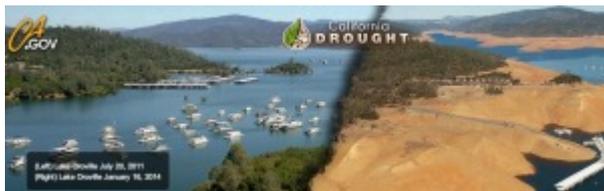
About the same time, it occurred to me that none of my favourite gardens in the world was designed by a professional designer. In every case they were personal expressions of the owner, and lovely or lovable for precisely that reason. It has made me all the more determined as a designer to simply facilitate garden owners to fulfill their own dreams. That might mean teasing out and clarifying those dreams, as well as thinking of creative ways these could be achieved, and providing the practical advice required for execution. But even then, I've discovered there's no easy way of doing this without interrupting the connection between the owner and the space they inhabit. It's a very, very fine (and time consuming, and non-lucrative) line to walk.



[Note - all photos are of work that has emerged from a collaborative process with Michael McCoy, and the consequent gardens are implemented, maintained and guided to maturity by the client]

Californian drought worsens

GardenDrum July 18, 2014



California : **“We are facing the worst drought impact that we or our grandparents have ever seen and, more important, we have no idea when it will end.”**

California's State Water Board Chair Felicia Marcus has issued a blunt warning to water users throughout the state that mandatory water restrictions are on the way.

"This drought's impacts are being felt by communities all over California. Fields are fallowed; communities are running out of water, fish and wildlife will be devastated. The least that urban Californians can do is to not waste water on outdoor uses. It is in their self-interest to conserve more, now, to avoid far more harsh restrictions, if the drought lasts into the future. These regulations are meant to spark awareness of the seriousness of the situation, and could be expanded if the drought wears on and people do not act."

Although Governor Brown called on all Californians to reduce their water consumption by 20% back in April, new figures show that water use has gone up 1%, not down.

The State Water Board decision directs water authorities throughout the state to implement their Water Shortage Contingency Plans which will impose restrictions on outdoor water use and fines of up to \$500/day for non-compliance.

The Desert Water Agency, which covers Palm Springs and Cathedral City, has announced its plan will take effect from August 1. Restrictions include: a ban on washing down of all outdoor hard surfaces, including driveways and buildings, prohibiting landscape irrigation between 10am and 5pm, and no running water to be used during car washing, except for rinsing. Restaurant customers can be only be served water if they request it.

Although these restrictions will no doubt concern many Californians, **they still seem surprisingly lenient compared to the water restrictions that are frequently imposed in Australia** and also the UK, where complete hosepipe bans have become increasingly frequent during dry summers.

Many Australian cities had strict water saving measures for several years until 2012, including: complete bans on hard surface and car washing (except with a bucket); that all fixed irrigation had to be by drip-emitters only; an allowance of only 4 short periods of hand watering per week; and the requirement that all hose nozzles must have a shut-off trigger. In some towns, the only water that was allowed outside was grey water collected in a bucket from the shower or bath and you could be fined for even having a hose connected to a tap.

2013 set a new record in California for the lowest rainfall ever. There are grave concerns that without water saving measures upstream, water in the Delta, which provides fresh drinking water to most of the San Francisco Bay area, will become too saline for either human consumption or to sustain marine life.

Kenrokuen Garden, Kanazawa, Japan

Jeff Howes, Sydney

While on a 3 week holiday to Japan, In Nov 2014, I visited the impeccably maintained Kenrokuen Garden in Kanazawa, one of Japan's top three gardens .The pamphlet that came with my entry described this wonderful garden".....as combining the six attributes of a perfect landscaped garden:spaciousness, seclusion, artifice, antiquity, water courses and panoramas.". These six attributes were originally stated in a gardening book by Li Gefei, a famous 16th century Chinese poet, and are one of the criteria that Japanese gardens are assessed.



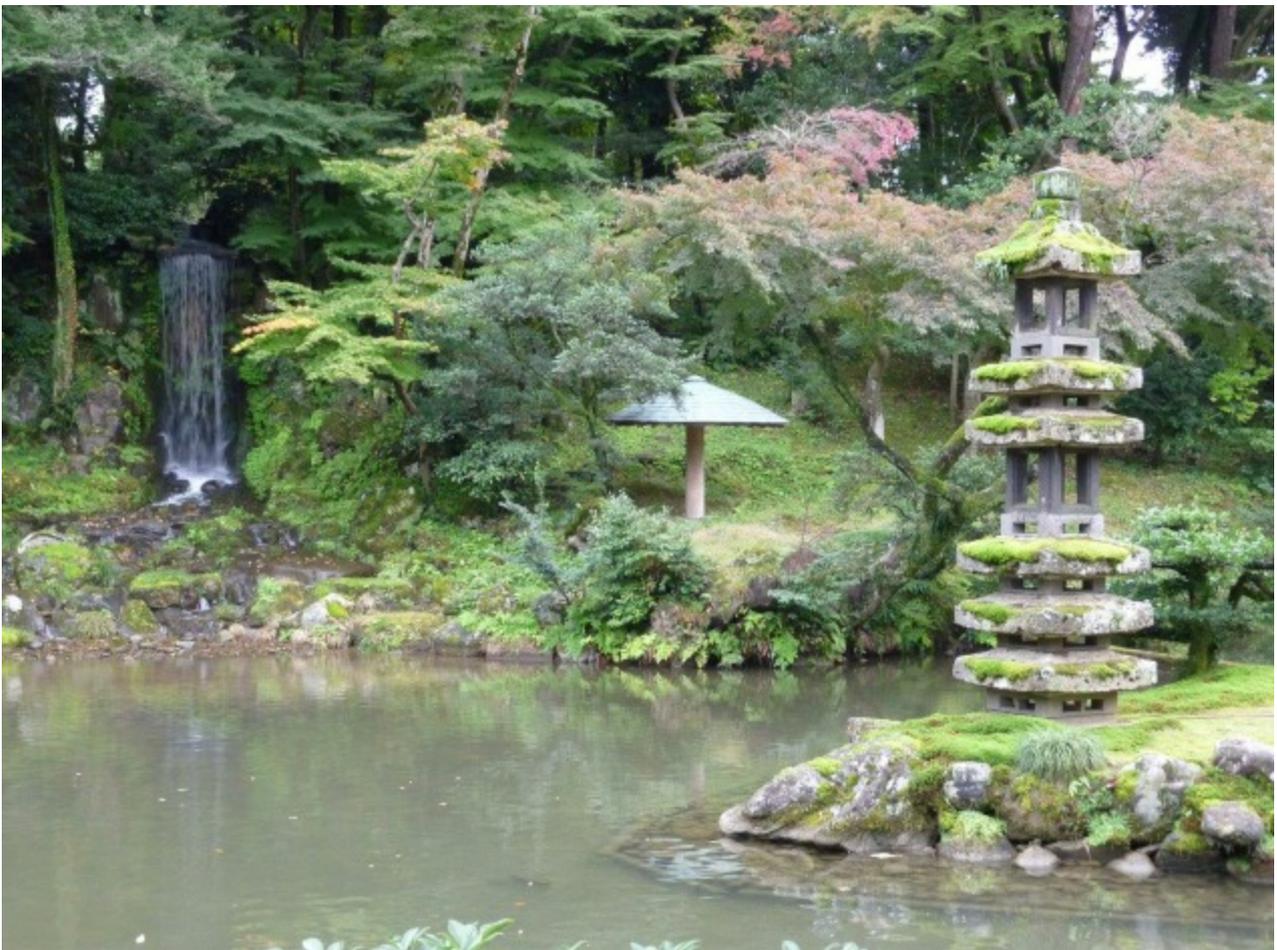
Another pamphlet went on to explain that it is a park of contradictions. Each of these points represent features that are usually impossible to find together. The depth and subtlety have it ranked in the top three most beautiful in Japan. There is a phrase in Japanese, "ichigo ichie" that translates to "this time only" or "over again." It is philosophy of living in the moment and cherishing the present you will never be able to relive this exact moment again. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Kenrokuen. Every season brings something new. Every section of the park is constantly changing but staying true to the idea of contrasting ideas, some things have not changed for hundreds of years.

Does this idea of "ichigo ichie"(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ichi-go_ichi-e) apply or can it

apply to all gardens including Australian native gardens? Australian gardens change so much between seasons due to the extremes of ever changing climate, should we be thinking more like the Japanese and cherish the present moment when viewing our gardens and doing less long term planning except for items like hard landscaping and major backbone plantings of trees?

..... and in Australia how old would a garden need to be to tick the antiquity box?

The photograph of the tree above that has its trunk wrapped in hessian to stop new growth was new to me. This is done after they prune the trees to train/maintain the common Japanese style of trees and shrubs having horizontal branches. Would it work on native plants and has anyone tried it?



New UK National Pollinator Strategy

GardenDrum November 9, 2014



Photo Christine Westerback

Highway verges, forests and railway embankments are set to become bee havens under a new UK **National Pollinator Strategy.**

Between the National Trust, Network Rail and Highways Agency there are 800,000 hectares of land where new bee-friendly wildflower plantings and changed landscape management practices, such

as allowing grass to grow longer, will encourage a broad range of pollinating insects through increased food and habitat.

The Department of Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) says there are 1500 species of pollinators that are important to British agriculture, especially bees, which pollinate one third of all food crops.

Supermarket chains are also distributing wildflowers seeds to encourage private landholders to get involved as well.

Report of Melbourne garden visit and meeting, Sunday November 16

Diana Snape, Vic

We met at Bev and John Hanson's place for our last meeting of the year. For a detailed account of the Hansons' wonderful garden, please refer to Margaret James' record on the GDSG website. However, of course, a garden does keep changing.

Garden visit

First Bev showed us an area of eucalypt woodland (on the edge of their cultivated garden) that had a cool burn in April this year. Over 30 fire-fighters (CFA and DEPPI), with the backing of Manningham Council, carried out the burn - a major undertaking that she and John certainly would not have tackled on their own. The fire did not burn up any tree trunks nor reach the canopy. A series of photos showed how this area regenerated in the following months and we could see how the risk of a serious fire had been reduced, especially compared with an adjacent, unburnt area. We also saw the Hansons' fire-shelter, an old mining shaft with two entrances - to be used only as a last resort.

Bev showed us wonderful photos that their son has taken of the inhabitants of the nest boxes that he has put up in the garden. These included sugar gliders with young, phascogales, ring-tail and brush-tail possums, kookaburras, wood ducks, Eastern rosellas, galahs and rainbow lorikeets (inspecting). It's great to have photos that prove how much the boxes are used and the value of the garden for wildlife. They have also recently had spotted pardalotes nesting in the fire bunker and seen a powerful owl and yellow-tailed black-cockatoos.

As we walked around the garden, Bev pointed out that many plants were now 40 years old. These included smaller shrubs like thryptomene and baeckea, in addition to *Acacia boormanii*



and *Grevillea obtusifolia*. A sculptural *Acacia vestita* on a mound had regenerated there from the original plant and now makes a beautiful small feature tree.

Afterwards, it was fascinating to see photos of the completely flat land area around the house before Bev and John started the earthworks that laid the basis for the garden as it is today. Mounding of the earth for the creation of garden beds provided an attractive visual barrier between their house and the neighbours not far away. It also gave the garden scope for much more interest, with different aspects and niches.

The beautiful and quite extensive use of pools and rocks reflects Bev's experience working with Ellis Stones. The water is all recycled and the pools look very natural, with complementary planting. They provide lovely cool areas in the garden, especially in summer. Bev said that, sadly, a couple of well-established Tree-ferns did not survive the damaging series of hot days last summer, though they had survived the long drought.

People commented on the beautiful views from inside the house, making the garden ever-present. There is a great variety of different plants but sufficient repetition to link the garden together and give it a natural appearance, blending with the surrounding bush.



Meeting Sunday November 16

There is still no real progress on the Ellis Stones Memorial Garden - maybe next year? Similarly, we hope to make more progress next year in the process of recording gardens. Margaret James, our key activist, has been recovering from surgery and happily is now able to help others in the group. There are a number of Melbourne gardens on the list, either being recorded now or to be recorded soon. These include those of Chris Larkin, Bev Fox, Brenda and Tony Moore, Helen Kennedy and Eleanor Hodges. Of course, it is particularly important to record long-established gardens when people are thinking of moving. A number of the same members are hoping to record the gardens of others, as are Pam Yarra and Nicky Zanen. We'd also like to record some outstanding gardens outside Melbourne, such as those below. It depends on us having the time and opportunity.

Previous garden visits

This was our first chance to comment on the gardens we visited during the Grampians weekend. We thought that the Lewins were struggling against harsher conditions than the Marriotts, with some of their soil resembling red concrete rather than the Marriotts' freely draining granitic soil. Neil and Wendy's more naturalistic garden, with a wide selection of interesting and beautiful plants, appealed to everyone - a normal reaction among us Australian plant lovers! Unfortunately, our visit here was very rushed as most of us had to leave for Melbourne that afternoon but we were very glad to have fitted it in, however briefly. Definitely a garden that should be recorded as soon as possible.

We really liked some aspects of the Lewins' more formalistic garden, which is well on the way to becoming quite outstanding. Repetition of some well-chosen and lovely plants was used to good effect, especially complementing the stunning house. There were striking feature plants (such as flowering Xanthorrhoeas) but, with the difficult, often dry conditions, some plants had not survived and the range of plants was somewhat limited. We respected the use of interesting hard surfaces around the house to reduce fire risk but thought the number of different surfaces used detracted from the continuity. Carefully placed sculptures added interest to some areas of the garden. We appreciated being shown around by the gardener, Andrew, and Neil Marriott and we thought the garden will benefit greatly from their attention and input.

Meetings for next year

Between now and then, I hope you have an enjoyable & restful Christmas season.

The first two meetings of 2015 will be as follows. (The timing as usual will be 1pm for a BYO lunch, 2pm for the meeting.) I hope to see you there.

Sunday March 15 at Pam and Jim Yarra's, 65A Dickasons Road, Heathmont (Melway 64B2).

This first meeting is important for some planning for the year.

Sunday May 24 at Bob and Dot O'Neill's, 7 Hillsmeade Drive, Narre Warren South (Melway 130 D3). It will be most interesting to see the O'Neills' new garden.

Garden Visit – Milton, South Coast, NSW

Catriona Bate and Phil Trickett, NSW

Members of the Day Activities Group (DAG) of ANPS-Canberra Region and the Garden Design Study Group (GDSG) made the trek from the ACT to the South Coast to visit our garden on an unusually grey and threatening day on 13 October. While the rain held off for a later tour of the garden and lunch, a morning shower allowed a detailed demonstration and lively discussion of propagation and grafting techniques in the shelter of the shed.



Garden bed near the house

Our property is located on the edge of the escarpment overlooking Lake Conjola and Milton at an elevation of 350m, just below the Little Forest Plateau area of the Morton National Park. We are about ten kilometres from the sea. While the national park and much of the surrounding bush is classic Sydney sandstone country, we are on the rich soils of former rainforest pockets once used for dairy farming and cedar cutting. The volcanic soil is derived from the Milton monzonite. Of our two hectares, the steep slopes near the creek running through the back of the property remain original rainforest while the relatively level areas nearer the house where we are creating gardens have extensive areas of lawn dominated by kikuyu grass introduced for cattle.

We chose this property because it seemed to be able to support native plants (demonstrated by the number of healthy *Hakea salicifolia* trees), had good rainfall (we were sick of the drought in Canberra), was large enough for our purposes but still manageable, and had an area suitable for creating a garden which did not require the destruction of existing bush. In addition it had a suitable existing house, and was no further away from family than Canberra had been.

In terms of climate, the Little Forest locality has around double Canberra's rainfall (around 1,200mm a year), more moderate temperatures, and no frost. Winter temperatures may be as low as six degrees overnight in winter, but in summer can reach the forties although high twenties and early thirties with humidity are more typical. It differs from the coastal climate of nearby Ulladulla in being less influenced by easterly weather patterns although we do experience east coast lows which usually deliver large amounts of rain in a short period. A major influence is the strong westerly wind which comes in over the escarpment in the winter months. We have also noticed that our climate appears to be more moderate than other south coast towns such as Batemans Bay.



House garden bed with *Pimelia ferruginea*

This garden has given us the opportunity to further pursue the growing of native plants after outgrowing our suburban block in Ainslie, Canberra. It is now about four years old, and is constantly evolving. There were many practical considerations which influenced the design, such as prevailing winds, slope, and drainage. While there was no overall design, we wanted to achieve a relatively informal garden that:

- celebrates and displays Australian native plants
- is filled with a wide range of plants we love such as banksias, dryandras, grevilleas, isopogons, waratahs and eremophilas; and allows for the study and reporting of their progress in cultivation
- allows for growing trials of grafted plants, many of which are endangered in the wild
- is attractive to native birds and insects
- provides us with privacy
- requires relatively low maintenance
- complements and enhances the sea and escarpment views
- is a sustainable landscape, structurally and botanically diverse

Our first aim was to progressively clear the existing exotic garden which was high maintenance, overgrown and weedy. It was dominated by plants which spread aggressively via suckering, bulbs and tubers as well as seed – a long-term elimination challenge. We also had many plants in pots brought from Canberra, which needed to be planted out. Some of these were precious grafts dug out of our Ainslie garden and transplanted as advanced plants. We quickly planted a screen of *Grevillea johnsonii* beside a neighbouring garage for privacy (now at least five metres tall). Plants are easier for us to maintain once they are in the garden, as they do not usually require watering after planting. We first tackled the existing garden around the house, then along the driveway, at the same time developing a large new garden area on the level space on the south of the block. We extended the beds around the house down the existing slope which provides good drainage. Along the driveway we raised the beds with additional soil and/or larger edging rocks.

The garden incorporates curving paths to create different vistas. The rock naturally occurring on the property has been used extensively for garden edging, to build height in garden beds, and for rockeries. A visit to Cranbourne Botanic Gardens in Victoria inspired the use of the smaller rocks in bands about a foot wide for garden edging. The gravel used for the paths is sourced locally and has a range of sizes and shapes which has a less formal effect. We are also planting out the sight of the fence line and road to incorporate the wider view of the ocean into the garden.



Top: Southern garden in 2010

Below: Southern garden in 2015



The move from Canberra brought many changes to our gardening and propagation practices. We were faced with completely new challenges:

- The soil retains moisture very well and in some places is quite heavy. Subsurface rock and natural springs add to the moisture levels in some areas, not to mention the dam which leaks (perhaps we should import some Canberra clay to seal it!). High rainfall events lead to some local pooling of water. We have found that many plants need to be grafted to flourish here, particularly eremophilas and WA isopogons and dryandras. This provides an opportunity to demonstrate the value of grafting plants. We also have some very dry and hard soil in the garden.
- The vigour of the kikuyu grass has provided a challenge to reduce constant maintenance. It spreads by long runners and will quickly overwhelm anything in its path, including agapanthus and large rocks. Our strategy has been to develop defined beds, keeping the kikuyu away from the garden as much as possible, using gravel rather than grass for paths, large beds rather than small 'islands' in the kikuyu, and progressively reducing the amount of lawn where possible. Mulching garden beds and poisoning around the edges of anything abutting the kikuyu also helps to keep it under control. Thankfully, kikuyu does not grow during the winter.
- The down side of the vigour of plants produced by the rich soil is, of course, the vigour of weeds which we generally control with thick mulch. Some plants put on spectacular growth through spring and summer but are top-heavy, lacking an adequate root system when the winter winds hit. These plants tend to fall over although in some cases they can be propped up and will recover.



Above: *Isopogon divergens* and to the right:
Grevillea georgiana

- In addition to causing plants to fall over, we find that very strong wind can cause some large plants to snap at the base and either disappear completely, or be found hundreds of metres away on the fence line. Hakeas and some grevilleas are particularly susceptible. Broken branches and shredded leaves can also occur. Our current strategy to address wind damage is to use tomato stakes, and increasingly, star pickets, to assist larger plants. Pruning long branches which are likely to catch the wind has also been helpful. We are also trying to nestle plants together so they can protect each other, and to plant more wind breaks which will help in the longer term. As the garden grows, the plants will be more protected.
- We first became aware of the negative aspects of the wildlife after noticing that many plants seemed to be shrinking rather than growing, the new growth proving irresistible to rabbits and wallabies. Waratah and orchid flowers are particular wallaby delicacies (also citrus leaves). Both animals are now under control with the former targeted using *bunnybait* and the latter with strategic fencing. We just put up with wombats who like to trample plants, dig and leave their droppings, and, occasionally, kangaroos breaking branches.
- While humidity is not generally a major problem due to constant air movement at this elevation, borer and webbing moth is much more common here, requiring constant vigilance. We find it difficult to grow many eucalypts without constant spraying.

Our most recent project was a rockery created from large rocks in situ discovered under a mound of kikuyu. Our next project is to tackle the jungle in the exotic garden bed on the south side of the house, and then continue around to the back of the house. In the future we will look at the large expanse of lawn bordered by garden beds which stretches along the front of the block, and also the northern part of the garden near the dam.

The plants in our garden include many which are rare and grafted, as well as locals. We have planted 67 species and subspecies of banksia (38 grafted), 90 species of hakea (23 grafted), 21 species of isopogon (14 grafted), and 40 species of eremophila (most of which are grafted). There are also many species of dryandra, grevillea, and waratah doing well. The success of different species of waratah on their own roots is particularly pleasing given we could not grow them in Canberra.



Telopea 'Shady Lady'

The garden is always changing. Plants at their peak for the recent visit included waratahs ('Shady Lady', 'Braidwood Brilliant', *mongaensis*, *speciosissima* and *oreades*), grevilleas ('Elegance', *eristachya*, *williamsonii*, *georgeana*, *alpina*, *lanigera*), local isopogons (*anethifolius* and *anemonifolius*) and petrophiles (*canescens*), WA *Isopogon divergens*, boronias (*muelleri*, *pinnata*), eremophilas (*cuneifolius*, *mackinlayi*, *nivea*, *hygrophana*), pimeleas (*suaveolens*, *nivea*, *spectabilis*, *ferruginea*) and *Alyogyne huegelii*. Only a month or so earlier the highlights were very different, with *Isopogon cuneatus*, *Pimelea physodes*, hakeas (*purpurea*, *lehmanniana*, *bucculenta*), hardenbergias, grevilleas (*maxwellii*, 'Canning Classic'), local banksias (*spinulosa* cultivars), and WA *Banksia praemorsa* 'Lemon Lantern' contributing to the floral display. Now the show for Christmas is beginning, with a red palette of Christmas Bush (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*), Kangaroo Paw (*Anigozanthos flavidus*) and flowering gum (*Eucalyptus ficifolia*), complemented by repeat flowering waratahs, and red callistemons.



Eucalyptus ficifolia photographed in Ian Tranter's garden in Queanbeyan

Treasurer's Report

Cash on hand:

Account 285385	\$ 8,566.46
Account 181703	\$ 6.20

Term Deposit:

Due 19 July 2014	\$ 23,811.05 (will accrue interest of \$ 463.30)
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Total Value of all deposits: \$ 32,383.71

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