Salvia News

NUMBER 80

Celebratory 80th Edition!

Official Newsletter of the

Victorian Salvia Study Group Inc

www.salvias.org.au

Spring 2020

VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP inc

THE AIMS OF THE SALVIA STUDY GROUP ARE;

1. To grow and collect Salvias for the purpose of enjoyment and study
2. Promote and encourage the growing of Salvias
3. Correctly name existing and new salvias
4. Maintain our Display Garden at Nobelius Heritage Park for the Group & the general public
5. Manage our website and Facebook page

The Group is a Not for Profit Organisation. Any monies received are used to run the Group's activities and for the planting and maintenance of our GPCAA (Garden Plants Conservation Association of Australia) registered garden collection. ('Plants Trust' has been a shortened, more comprehensive name for the GPCAAA and has been used for quite a while now).

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SALVIA NEWS

VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP INC

Website: www.salvias.org.au

Welcome to the Spring edition of Salvia News. It has been a long time between editions as we made the difficult decision to cancel our winter edition. We thank you all for your patience and understanding. As promised, we have taken the extra time to ensure this really is a bumper edition full of bright colour and glorious salvias. You may also notice some minor changes in layout and design. We hope you enjoy this supersized Spring edition which also doubles as our celebratory 80th edition!

The quality of this edition is wholly due to the generous contributions from our friends and members. It was especially lovely to get such a big response from new members.

Some of the articles were originally written for the winter edition. We have made the decision to print these articles even though the seasons have moved on. They are still excellent and well worth the read.

In this edition, Russell Cheal continues his quest to propagate *Salvia melissodora* (page 18) while Amanda Habgood (page 14) kindly takes us through her garden on a virtual garden tour.

There is a bug theme with articles on each of mosquitoes (page 21) and bees (page 22).

Pat Anderson also revisits an article on botany which is very informative for the new enthusiast (page 23). There is also plenty of information about spring.

The pandemic is far from over. As we all adjust to the 'new normal', let us hope that our gardens can offer us some comfort and sanctuary. Please be safe and look after yourselves.

Happy Gardening,

Stephanie

Editor Salvia News

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Copy deadline for the next edition of Salvia News is 31 October 2020

Please email your articles and photos to: stephanie.salvia.news@gmail.com

Cover photo is *Salvia dorisiana*
Photo courtesy of Pat Anderson

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many events for this year have been cancelled. Unfortunately, this included our New Members' Lunch which was to occur in September. Although we cannot have this event this year, we hope that our new members will reach out to us. Please do not hesitate to contact the Committee at any time (details in front cover) and we always welcome your suggestions for this publication.

We hope to see you all later in Spring. At the time of printing, the below events are still going ahead. We hope there will be something here to interest you and thank you for continuing to support the Group. The situation is continually evolving and some of the events listed may be cancelled, postponed or modified with late notice.

Please check the website regularly for any changes and additional information.

All events will be subject to social distancing requirements and you must stay home if you are unwell. We have introduced some new COVID-19 icons for events. Our new icons are:

Register of attendees to be kept

We will supply hand sanitiser

Social distancing required

Garden Visits are great opportunities to meet with members and explore some special gardens.

Selling events are opportunities to purchase salvia plants, books and seed. You can also bring plants/flowers to be identified. Many of the selling events are parts of larger fairs and shows. Remember to take your plant lists to events or email your list to Lyndi Garnett prior to the event so you are not disappointed. Please note that ❁ means it is a selling event.

Please also let Lyndi know if you are attending events. Some events need to know numbers and some events will require a register of those attending.

15 NOV

ANNUAL SALVIAS AT NOBELIUS (10AM – 2PM) ❁

Nobelius Heritage Park, Crighton Road, Emerald

Come early so you do not miss out on those bargains. Plenty of salvias for everyone. Wander through the garden to get an idea of how salvias grow and what is available. Pre-order specific salvias so that they can be put aside for you. Visit the Emerald market then come along to this end of year sale. Bring plants/flowers to be identified.

22 NOV

GARDEN VISIT AT BRETT HORAN'S GARDEN (11AM)

37 Macclesfield Road, Emerald

A lovely Garden to wander around in Spring, with so many plants bursting into flower, it's a joy to watch it all happening. See what Brett has tucked away in all the nooks and crannies of his garden. See what is popping up behind that shrub or what is coming up under that bush. See how he grows his salvias and what other gorgeous flowers are blooming. It will certainly be a chance to catch up with others, whilst browsing and chatting about his garden. Phone Brett to let him know you are coming on 0405762123. Pre-registration through Lyndi is required. Bring a plate to share with hygienic rules applying. Tea/coffee will be provided. Open to members and other interested gardeners.

6 DEC

CHRISTMAS LUNCH IN JEN KLOESTER'S GARDEN (11:30AM)

57 Austin Street, Newtown, Geelong

It is Christmas time and what better way to end such a year than wandering through Jen's beautiful garden. So many roses, poppies, salvias and other perennials. See how she manages to fit them all in to her garden. Bring a chair and a Christmas plate to share with hygienic rules applying. Please bring plants/cuttings/seeds to give to others. This is the chance to pick up that special plant or a piece of this or that. Bring bags for plants and cuttings. Geelong is not too far to travel to wander through a gorgeous garden. We will also be holding our AGM which will allow members to get involved if they wish. Ring Jen on Ph 0403846041 to let her know you are coming. Pre-registration through Lyndi is required. Tea/coffee will be provided. All members are welcome.

AGM

The Annual General Meeting will be held as part of the Christmas Lunch on 6 December 2020. A formal notice of meeting will be provided to members in due course. All members are encouraged to attend the meeting and have their say about the Group.

Words from new member Julie Kavanagh on why she joined. See more reflections from new members on page 5.

"I have only been retired for one week... Envious is a word I used to say a lot when time was limited - now I have all the time in the world to garden, propagate and visit other gardens and nurseries. That is, when COVID19 has a vaccine and we can start living again.

My husband and I have been extremely fortunate in the last six years to have travelled overseas and seen stunning gardens in many places of the world. But when the borders open, I am hoping that we can travel around Australia to see all the beautiful and creative gardens we have in our part of the world.

I belong to another gardening group and we were fortunate to visit the Salvia Group Gardens in Emerald many times. Also have listened to talks and demonstrations by Lyndi Garnett and Meg Bentley.

I am very excited at being in this group and hope that my knowledge about salvias expands."

STUDY GROUP MATTERS

As you all know, I have been steadily working on providing the A-Z of Salvias. I am sorry but this is a very slow process.

Only recently I found that I had been publishing on the wrong page! Since transferring each variety individually onto the correct page, I have found a lot more needs to be done with each entry to catch the eye of Mr Google and anyone passing by our website.

To keep Mr Google happy, the Wordpress program has now given me a new Taskmaster! The SEO. For those not familiar with this jargon, SEO means "search engine optimization". This SEO is very hard to keep happy.

If it likes you, then you receive an ok orange smiley face 😐. If it does not like you, you get a red glum face ☹. Occasionally if I have done the right thing and am a good girl then I get a green smiley face ☺. Hoorah! This makes my day!

What makes the task even harder is that these three faces are to be kept satisfied. One is the SEO, which insists on the correct key phrases are used. It assesses the phrases on certainty, length, width and density. It does not like short names (bad luck, that is all there is!) A meta-description, external links and a certain word count are all required to keep it happy. It is no easy task to find about 300 words.

When I first took on this task, I thought I would just write one or two paragraphs describing each plant. I have now realised that I need to expand the text with colourful descriptions and a lot more detail than I would normally use to describe each plant. All to keep the SEO happy.

Then there is the readability feature ☹. I am always coming unstuck with this feature – too many passive words, not enough active words, not enough transitional words, too many consecutive words to begin each sentence etc… I rarely get out of his bad books, but sometimes he gives me an ok face. On one or two rare occasions I have received a green smiley ☺! I do not know how I did it, but I cannot seem to do it again!

I am not worried provided that I receive 7-9 good points for my work and *I am* satisfied with what I have written. Afterall, it is only a bit of software written elsewhere. The software does not know anything about Salvias!

If I can keep plugging away with at least one entry each day and one or two green smileys, I am happy. Although I am only up to 'H', I am enjoying the task. Maybe I will get to 'Z' soon, then you will all know a bit more about Salvias and so will I. ☺☺☺

Thank you,

Lyndi Garnett

Group Coordinator

Editor's note: SEO is about maximising your rankings on search engines by ensuring that your website content is detailed, relevant, specific, novel and current. Search engines 'read' your website using algorithms and will return your web page in search results if the algorithm deems it relevant to the search enquiry (some exceptions apply – such as paid advertising). The goal is to be at the top of search results when someone searches for content relevant to your website. SEO is about ensuring that the actual words, questions and phrases that will be most likely be used in searches are incorporated effectively on your site.

Welcome New Members

A very big welcome to Marnie Johnson, Julie Kavanagh, Peter England, Ineke de Graaf, Rachel Eastman, Yolande Murray, Louise McKenzie, Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens, Julie Mackay and all of our fabulous new members.

"My interest in salvias started when I randomly bought the lovely velvety purple Salvia Leucantha years ago and then noticed that it flowered throughout most of the year, especially in winter when I wanted colour in my garden. Likewise the Salvia Elegans bloomed, simultaneously giving me lovely red colour. Some years I took cuttings of my late dad's Salvia Silas Dyson (I think that is the one I have) and I propagated several bushes. Having moved to another property 18 months ago these plants have thrived withstanding fierce winds here in Kallista and I have been delighted with the way several other cuttings have taken.

My daughter then bought me a Salvia Aurea, and two other salvias (I need to look up what they are called). As she knows how I love the salvias for their hardiness and their colour she birthday- gifted me the subscription for this Salvia society group (members of whom she had met at a plant expo in the Yarra Ranges last year I think). The around the year colour and hardiness of salvias plus the birds and bees that attract them have been main reasons for me to plant salvias in my garden. It has also given me much joy to pass on cuttings to other interested people. I hope to add different salvias to my garden in future.

Thank you for the lovely booklets I received with my subscription- the manual is a fantastic resource and the magazines are also full of fascinating information. By the end of winter I hope to visit your gardens.

I have included some pictures of some salvias flowering in my garden currently. Unfortunately I had a huge battle with grasshoppers late summer/autumn who ate ferociously from the salvia plants, often nipping the plants just below the lovely flowers. I used neem oil spray and have hopefully got on top of this issue- I have not seen new evidence of these little creatures attacking my plants…" **– Ineke de Graaf**

"I joined the group in order to learn more about Salvias and to make contact with other folks who are interested in them. I am re-modelling the garden at my home-of-eighteen months in Beechworth and I have plans to include many Salvias…" **– Peter England**

"The current climate has provided an opportunity to study herbs for health and aromatherapy; an interest in complementary medicine which drifted into the background overtime [sic]. *I was curious about a sage stick a friend used. I started investigating the sage/mint family and was blown away by the range of salvia. I wanted to find out more."* **– Rachel Eastman**

"I have many salvias in my garden and would like to expand my collection. I keep bees who love the nectar and pollen. Salvias seem easy to care for and are mostly drought tolerant so not too difficult to manage during dry spells. I recently visited your salvia garden and saw some lovely specimens that I would love to have in my garden.

I am a very keen gardener and enjoy meeting others with the same passion.
I will be glad when the club starts up again and this pandemic is behind us and I get a chance to meet all you lovely people. Gardeners in my experience are most often generous and happy to share their knowledge.
I trawled the net looking for interesting salvias to add to my collection and that's how I came across your club…" **– Yolande Murray**

"I joined the Society because salvias are such a delight to enjoy over a long period of time. And tough! Which suits my climate up near Kyneton. I especially love it that the native blue banded bees adore Salvia Hot Lips. So I'm looking forward to discovering which other salvias they are attracted to…" **– Louise McKenzie**

New member **Julie Mackay** has written an article about her garden. Please turn to page 28 for her salvia story.

What about you? Tell us why you joined and your salvia story for our next edition.

Did you know that you can become more involved with the Group by becoming a 'Friend of the Salvia Display Garden'? Helping out in the garden is a great way to meet fellow enthusiasts and to build on your salvia skills and knowledge. If you are interested, please kindly contact Lyndi Garnett.

Editor's Note: We reach out to new members via email and only publish names with permission. We are sorry if we missed you, please email the editor for inclusion in the next edition.

MAIL ORDER SHOPPING

(*postage prices within Australia)*

Ideas for gift giving or keeping

A Manual for Salvia Growers
*By **Meg Bentley***

$30 per copy ***Plus*** **$10 per copy posted**

Order form for this item is on inside back cover of Salvia News

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Salvia Cards - *Meg Bentley*

$10 per pack (5 single flower or 5 assorted)
Plus **$2.50** per pack posted

…… **Assorted** packs
or **Single Flower** packs -
…… *Salvia patens*
…… *Salvia roemeriana*
…… *Salvia microphylla var neurepia*
……. *Salvia gesneraeflora* 'Tequila'
……. *Salvia leucantha*
……. **Total packs @ $10 per pack $……..**

Plus **$2.50 per pack posted $ ……..**

The New Book of Salvias
*by **Betty Clebsch***

$15 per copy ***Plus*** $10 per copy posted
…… copies @ $15 per copy **$……..**

…… *Plus* $10 per copy posted **$……..**

TOTAL COST OF ORDER **$_____**

Cheque / Money Order payable to Victorian Salvia Study Group Inc
Direct Deposit: Bendigo Bank BSB 633-000 A/c No: 116846122
Account Name: Victorian Salvia Study Group Inc
PayPal: vssginc1@tpg.com.au
Please send completed form to:

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Glen Waverley Vic 3150
Enquiries to: Lyndi Garnett (03) 9803 4534

PLEASE PRINT

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Suburb/Town: …… **State:** …… **Post code:** …… **Phone**…….

FROM OUR NETWORKS

There is so much that can be learnt from our friends, extended networks and industry partners. We are pleased to be able to share the following article originally printed in the April edition of the Nursery & Garden Industry Victoria magazine "Groundwell." The article is reprinted with permission. Thank you to Nursery & Garden Industry Victoria and Plants Management Australia for allowing us to print this piece.

Plants helping wishes come true

The new Salvia 'Kisses and Wishes' continues a wonderful story of plants, and the people behind them, supporting a fine cause.

Back in 2007 Wendy Smith, a Salvia enthusiast in Rosebud Victoria noticed a beautiful vibrant magenta flowering Salvia in her garden, like nothing she'd ever seen before. Wendy did some research and discovered that what she had was indeed a new discovery and she wanted to do something special with this novel plant. Inspired by the wonderful work of Make-A-Wish® Australia, Wendy wanted to donate part of the proceeds from the sales of her plant to the Foundation and so began a wonderful horticultural tale.

From a humble beginning in a beachside town in Victoria, Wendy's Salvia (named Salvia 'Wendy's Wish') is now planted in gardens throughout Australia and across the world, with each sale contributing to fulfilling the wishes of children and teenagers battling life-threatening medical conditions, but this was just the start of the story. Inspired by Wendy's generosity, John Fisher in Orange NSW, a renowned plant breeder with a passion for Salvias, produced a deep purple-stemmed cousin for 'Wendy's Wish' and called it 'Love and Wishes' and donated more royalties to Make-A-Wish® Australia.

With the two 'Wishes' Salvias experiencing such success, the breeding team at the renowned Victorian plant nursery Plant Growers Australia took up the baton and introduced a third 'Wish' Salvia which was named via a Make-A-Wish® Australia Charity Auction where the winning bid was for the name 'Ember's Wish'. Between the three 'Wishes' Salvias currently on the market, Make-A -Wish® Australia has received more than $75,000 in royalties derived through plant sales and an additional $10,000 in other donations. With the new release, Salvia 'Kisses and Wishes' available in 2020, this support is set to continue for years to come.

As gardeners we see every day the joy that plants can bring and the generosity of spirit Wendy, John and PGA have shown has helped bring great joy to some very deserving kids.

Jobs for Spring

Spring is a wonderful time to be in the garden. It is always lovely to see the pops of colour and bountiful new growth, especially after a long cold winter. Make the most of the milder weather to get some big jobs done before it gets too hot. It is also time to plan for summer, including reviewing your watering systems.

Spring is a great time to take cuttings from many large leaf, small leaved and herbaceous varieties. Salvias are reasonably easy to propagate and taking cuttings is generally the best and quickest way to obtain multiple plants. Propagation also ensures that the species you are dealing with comes true to form. Tips for propagation can be found on our website:

http://salvias.org.au/pruning-propagation-of-salvias-information

There is also a great article on propagation of *Salvia melissodora* later in this edition.

What will be keeping you busy in your garden this Spring? We would love to know. Send us a few words or a photograph of you working in your gardening for inclusion in our next edition.

NEWS FROM SOUTHWEST QUEENSLAND

Lynn McAllister
The Perennial Poppies Group Inc.

Hello from southeast Queensland and almost goodbye to April. I hope everyone is safe and well and managing to smile through the pandemic restrictions and 'different' ways of operating. Working from home ('WFH') has become quite a catchphrase, my new normal, and for many others too. I cannot say it is my preferred 'office' or most productive mode. It does have a few fringe benefits not the least being a stroll round my garden at lunchtime, or any other time for that matter! The weather is still very dry here with above average temperatures, although the nights are beginning to cool a little. By midday, it really is too hot to be meaningfully engaged inside, so what better than 'off to the garden' for inspiration, maybe a breeze and a leisurely wander. I have time to appreciate all the different plants and animals that call my garden home, and of course all the things that need doing!

It has been wonderful to repurpose my usual 2½ hour commute, to take stock of the salvias and their companions, plan for the spring garden and clean up overlooked issues such as the scale and mealy bug infestations on several of the large-growing salvias (spotted a few weeks ago). *Salvia madrensis* and *S. iodantha* have been showing off their beautifully contrasting flowers of light yellow and a dark pinkish purple, nonstop since August. They are favourites of the solitary blue banded bees and are never without several different types of native bee in summer. The plants do not appear to be badly affected but the constant stream of ants and sticky mass of scale renders them useless for the vase. There is an endless march of ants farming mealy bug and brown scale. I went looking for a clue to the cause of the outbreak and found that both hail from Mexico so I suspect they may be too shaded by the canopy of flowering peaches. I pruned off many of the lower branchlets to increase the light and improve air flow. Here is hoping this reduces the infestation!

Interestingly, their nearby companions (also in dappled shade) the quite tall, leggy varieties, *S. involucrata* 'Joan' (lovely bright pink flowers and darker calyces), and *S. karwinskii* x *involucrata* 'Timboon' and 'Winter Lipstick' flower only for a short time in the middle of winter and have never been affected by insect attack. Those gregarious clowns and acrobats, the native noisy miner birds *(Manorina melanocephala)* give these big salvias a hard time, swinging on the flower heads and bickering over the flowers. The plants bounce back though with no ill effects. The large growing varieties are significant stayers here, providing colourful displays and habitat for birds and insects. This area has been refurbished over the past few years to provide a shade canopy of flowering peaches, chosen as I was so taken by the overall effect in a friend's garden.

These flowering peaches are local varieties and seedling grown from my friend's fallen fruit. They are now 4 years old, 3-5 metres tall and provided good shade during our recent long hot summer. Being deciduous, they will let in the gentler, winter sun. Last year, they gave our

local flying foxes a small crop of immature peaches…not one was wasted. When I planted the peaches, I had not pictured what an aesthetically pleasing background the different shades of pink could provide for the salvias underneath. Purely by chance, *S.* 'Pink Icicles', *S. wagneriana* (and its dark form) and the common polka dot plant (*Hypoestes phyllostachya*) that have been in this spot for some years looked quite spectacular for a few weeks in August-September. So pretty, that I bought several smaller varieties, *Salvias* 'Merlot', 'Pink Blush" and 'Scorcher' and moved 'San Carlos Festival' and 'Angel Wings', in hope of a repeat performance this year. Flowering times are hit and miss here with often very warm winters, but whatever combinations eventuate will be very welcome. I shall endeavour to take some photos, something I usually think of after the fact.

Of course, there were several varieties that were never going to meet the new pink agenda, so they have been 'relegated to the fence line' my solution for "currently out of fashion and perhaps not really wanted, but I cannot bear to throw you away!" The western section of the garden was due for a clean-up so the 'not quite pink' varieties, *Salvia* 'Huntington Red', *S.* 'Garron', and *S.* 'Hot Lips' have been moved and I'll plant a punnet or two of red splendens closer to spring. Time will tell if the salvias can flourish here as it is a very clay soil, with slightly raised beds and a simple irrigation system, so mostly tap water. Hopefully they will settle in well and provide a pleasing display together with the day lilies in mostly cream, yellow and peach tones… perhaps a story for another day.

A snapshot of Amanda Habgood's beautiful garden …

Here are a few photographs of Amanda Habgood's beautiful garden as a taster for our virtual garden visit commencing on page 14. It was a pity that we could not visit in person but this virtual tour is almost as good! Keep reading to see more of her lovely garden.

FROM OUR MEMBERS

If you would like to contribute to the Salvia News but do not know where to start, please contact the editor and we can work together formulating a piece. We are always grateful to receive articles and to get new perspectives. In addition to articles, we are happy to receive paragraphs, anecdotes and photographs.

Some ideas for the summer edition –

- What's happening in your garden in summer?
- Planning for a dry summer
- Salvia inspired Christmas ideas

Notes from Gruyere

Meg Bentley, Gruyere, Victoria

Gardens are wonderful feeders of the soul, aren't they? Even more so during times like this where we are all confined to the home. This Covid-19 has enforced many changes and challenges to every one of us, one way or another. I am sure when all this is over that we will all have a much better appreciation and value of the simpler things in life.

The gardens here in Gruyere have been growing madly (so too the weeds) but I think that the rains coming at the right time earlier in the year whilst the weather was still warm, have made a tremendous difference to my garden. I have often heard people say they have pruned their salvias nearly to the ground, something which I have dared not do because of the lack of water. Well, I take it all back, I have to cut back all my salvias 'hard' if I am ever going to find my pathways again, yes, there are little tunnels where the wallaby can scramble through or the wombat can 'bulldoze' underneath, but I cannot walk through.

I have started to hack away at the growth, but you know how it is, a common feeling amongst us all, "I can't throw all that onto the compost, there's great propagating material there, I must put in a few cuttings." Yes, and we end up with pots and pots of new babies coming along. It is something that goes way back to childhood where father or mother pruned the plants and cut everything back. Who of us did not have the heart to follow along and cut off all the flowers that would have gone to the compost? I for one did that, those perfect little flowers just going to be thrown away. What is the difference now other than we are the gardeners? We still see the value of the plant with cutting material on it but we need to label all the material as we go (unless of course you want to create a salvia jungle of mixed plantings.)

Colour in the garden is an interesting subject and where we place salvias to get the benefit of each bloom. Some salvias look good when placed high and you look up into their corolla, like *Salvia wagneriana* or *Salvia macrophylla*

especially when the sun shines through its purple leaves. Others need to be down lower to view their little faces looking up at you, like the microphylla and greggii type flowers. But when it comes to matching colour there are just some colours that are very hard to place, either they fade away, will hit you in the eye or just simply clash with what is around them. I must say I do my best to try and colour coordinate each salvia so they can be 'friends' with their neighbour in the garden but one such salvia flowering at the moment is *Salvia bullulata* with its turquoise blue-green colour. It is a magnificent colour but it can even clash with foliage around it and other colours so I have tried placing it with delicate pinks and creams which seem to work well. It goes well with the electric magenta blooms of *Salvia* 'Cait's Dream' another one is S. 'Pink Zapper' others are 'Purple Passion' and the delicate pink of 'Orchid Showers', two-tone 'Angel Wings' and 'Iced Lemon'. I noticed that because of the narrow turquoise corolla it tends to get lost if planted beside anything else with narrow flowers and lcoks better with the 'flared' lips of the microphylla/greggii types.

There is another lovely salvia flowering in my garden, a new one grown from seed that propagates well from cuttings. It flowers in late Summer to Autumn. Growing about 30-40cm high. The calyx is very dark almost black-green and the corolla is palest pink with a deeper pink border around the lower lip which contrasts well with the dark calyx. Well suited to the name that I have given it, 'Morning Light', representing the sunrise and pink glow in a dark sky. The salvia leaves have microphylla/greggii tendencies, more on the greggii side than the large microphylla leaves.

Gardening of any sort will I hope ease the trials of our 'lockdown' and I do wish each and everyone good health, keep safe and enjoy peaceful moments when you can.

Guess this Salvia flowering in Spring…

- I am difficult to propagate.
- My flowers are pure white.
- I like it sunny!
- My leaves are thick textured, silvery white in colour and the edges are finely crenulated.
- I am… (turn to page 31 for the answer)

Virtual Garden Tour

Amanda Habgood, Wandin, Victoria

Unfortunately, due to Covid 19, you were not able to visit my garden in May. Hopefully, I will be able to extend an invitation at a future date when restrictions are eased. In the meantime, I took several photos just before your scheduled visit, and I would like to share some of these with you – a virtual tour – of my garden!

Firstly, to set the scene, a brief history: The house was built in the 70's and the garden evolved from that time. I think it was planned to a certain extent – it was not just a random planting. For example, the front garden is predominantly conifers – Scots Pines, a Douglas fir and several cedars. There is also an area of smaller conifers and some prostrate ones. The rear of the property features mostly deciduous trees – Elms and various types of Oak. There are many camellias and rhododendrons near the house which were also already well established by the time we moved in. There were no natives. I guess you would say that it was an 'English Garden'.

We have lived here for 20 years and so it is a mature garden now. We have added several more flower beds and I have planted quite a few natives too, some in separate beds and others intermingled in the flower beds. Purists may not like that idea, but I find it works well. For example, we have many roses in the garden which are dormant over winter. This is just the time when many of the natives are flowering and at their best. Natives are more hardy of course, and require less water, which was particularly relevant during the drought years. Watering a garden of 2.5 to 3 acres is quite challenging. There is a fully automated in-ground pop-up watering system. This was not working when we moved in. We did get it functioning, only to discover that it did not water the beds – only the lawn! It was most frustrating. We do not use it, as far too much water would be needed to keep the lawns green in the summer. In the not too distant future we would like to put in a simple form of watering system – even if it were only for some of the beds.

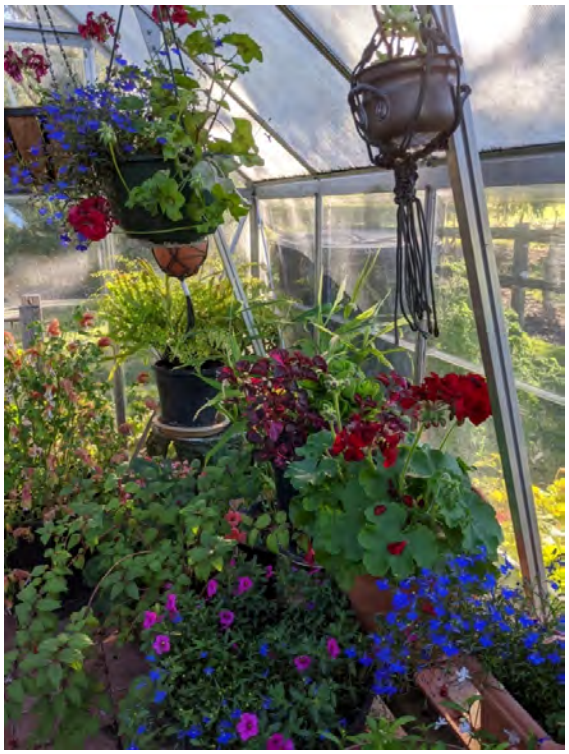
I tend to specialize in perennial plants which rabbits prefer not to eat. I say 'prefer' because they have a tendency to try plants from time to time. Rabbits are our major problem – both from a burrowing perspective and also because they nibble and gnaw. Most young plants are protected to give them a chance to become established. I find too, that a well filled bed is less attractive to rabbits and much easier for me to maintain – less weeds and the plants protect the soil from drying out. I mulch quite a bit too. Still, talking with others, I feel that I am lucky. So far we have not had problems with deer, kangaroos, wombats, possums or cockatoos – all of which are around!

Returning to choice of plants – I love roses, salvias (relatively newly discovered) and penstemons. I also have a few interesting succulents! A lot of my plants are from cuttings which have been given to me by friends and I also propagate many more. If a plant is eaten, I have only lost my time! Also, I am not keen on planting very expensive plants which may be squashed as the eucalypts in the garden shed limbs from time to time. I also feel that when plants are acquired from friends it makes the garden so much more personal.

We have a vegie garden which keeps us well supplied throughout the year – raspberries (for 6 months), strawberries, tomatoes, cucumbers, broad beans etc. In addition, I have a wonderful greenhouse – expertly constructed on a brick base by my husband, John. In another area of

the garden which is fenced from the rabbits, I fiddle around with a few Bonsai trees (mostly grown from cuttings – so not particularly good or spectacular, but fun).

So there you have it. When you do come, please bring a pair of secateurs so that you can take some cuttings home with you. In the meantime, enjoy a glimpse of my garden in Autumn.



Interior greenhouse

Natives mixed with others

Smokebush and salvias

Splash of colour

Mosquitoes

Lyndi Garnett, Glen Waverley, Victoria

Pesky little blighters! How often have you sat down outside to enjoy a book, a cup of tea, a glass of wine or just wandering around your garden, when suddenly you have been bitten on your leg, arm or hand. Immediately you begin the inevitably itching of the bite – it never goes away!

Have you noticed that when you go to slap that mosquito on your arm, that you wack it so hard, that you almost break your arm in the process or you wack your hand so hard on the chair/table that it makes everyone jump? If the little blighter instead lands on your leg, you again slap it so hard that you finish up black and blue with a lot of red welts! Only to find that you still did not get him. He got away, probably laughing his head off at how silly you are. Pesky little blighter!

Mike comes outside and sits down to read his newspaper to enjoy the sun on his head, when suddenly… slap, slap, bang, curse, and more cursing etc. He is yelling "I'm going inside, I'm being eaten alive out here, they must like my sweet blood." I tell him that only the females bite!

In the meantime, I contend with all the small males around my face. They nip my ears, kiss my eyebrows and forehead, while caressing my cheeks, all of which I find very annoying!

You are in the middle of taking cuttings and these pesky mosquitoes come from nowhere and start buzzing around my face and ears. Suddenly, the cuttings are cut in half, you have skewered yourself with the secateurs and almost taken out an eye while trying to swish these pesky things from around your face. Other times they appear when you are potting up and before you know it soil is going everywhere, plants and pots are upturned, arms flailing everywhere, dirty hand marks all over your face. You look around and the whole place is in a shambles – all because of those pesky little blighters! Mosquitoes are their normal name. I think most of us can think of a few others…

The sensible thing to do would be to use some mosquito repellent. Those citronella, lavender and commercial sprays smell nice but are useless. To be effective, you have to smother yourself in something that either absolutely smells of chemicals or is revolting and stinks to high heaven. You are so covered with this stuff that even a dog would not go near you. You need a shower to get rid of the stuff and the revolting smell (now all through the house)!

Maybe one day someone might develop a mosquito repellent for the garden that smells nice and actually keeps the mosquitoes away. A solution that does not irritate your eyes or skin, so we can go outside and enjoy our gardening and do our cuttings and potting up with no mess – without those pesky little blighters!

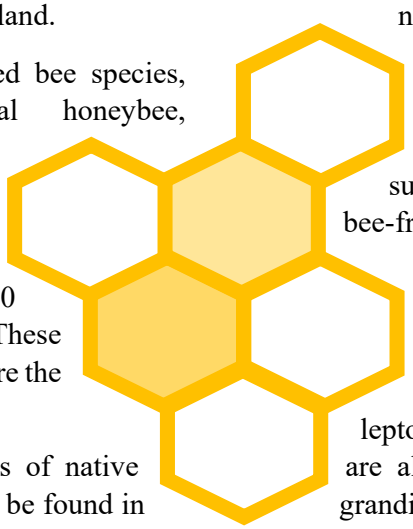
To Bee or Not to Bee

Wayne Burgess, Kilsyth, Victoria

Bees are specialised insects that gather pollen to feed their young. As they do this, they pollinate innumerable flowers and provide priceless benefits to humans.

Many agricultural crops are dependent on bee pollination as are garden flowers, trees, shrubs and wildflowers in native bushland.

Just a handful of domesticated bee species, such as the commercial honeybee, bumblebees, orchard mason bee and the Canadian leafcutter, are used in agriculture around the world. There are, however, over 16,000 species of bees worldwide. These thousands of wild bee species are the world's native bees.



There are about 1,700 species of native bees in Australia, and they can be found in most states, especially those with warm climates.

Some of the common types of solitary Australian native bees are masked bees, leafcutter bees, resin bees, blue banded bees, teddy bear bees and cuckoo bees.

Most of Australia's native bees live solitary lives. They do not have queens or workers and the female builds a nest by herself. The nests are usually in small burrows in soil or wood, and in isolated crevices. The female stocks the nest with pollen and nectar and lays an egg. The mother usually dies before the young emerge.

Other types of Australian native bees are semi-social. Two or more females live together in each nest and co-operate to excavate and guard the nest and rear the young.

Finally, we have eleven species of social native bees that live in colonies with a queen, males and hundreds of workers. They live in hollow trees and produce a flavoursome honey.

Our social native bees are stingless, but the females of almost all our solitary and semi-social bees can sting. Although most are too small to deliver an effective sting to humans, a native bee sting can cause an allergic reaction in some people.

Worldwide, bees are under threat from many factors, but you can support our native bees by creating a bee-friendly garden.

Australian native bees enjoy the pollen and nectar of native flowers such as grevillea, brachycome, callistemon, westringia, leptospermum and eucalyptus. Many are also attracted to flowers of abelia grandiflora, daisies, osteospermum, alyssum, pig face, lavender, salvia and buddleja davidii.

You may also be able to provide good safe nest sites in your bee-friendly garden.

Many species of native bees nest in burrows in the ground, so you need to allocate some mulch free areas. Other native bees build their tiny nests inside hollow stems and in the pithy canes of abelia and buddleja.

You can also make a Bee Hotel, which will be much appreciated by many solitary bees. Take a block of untreated hardwood and drill holes in it ranging from 4 mm to 10 mm wide and 100 mm to 150 mm deep. The depth is important as I have read that if the nest is too shallow, the offspring will all turn out to be the same sex.

A container of bamboo canes of similar dimensions to hardwood can be used, as can be

a handful of bamboo, buddleja or hydrangea canes, 30 cm long, tied into a bundle.

Artificial nests should be located in a warm spot that is sheltered from rain and wind. You could put them on a windowsill so that you can see your bee visitors from the comfort of your armchair.

Now that you know a bit more about our Australian native bees, make sure you spend time in your garden looking for our wonderful little pollinators. I am sure that when you find them, you will *bee* happy.

A bit of Botany: Part I

Pat Anderson, Warrandyte, Victoria

Most gardeners do not really want to be bothered with technical terms. They do not improve the beauty or performance of a plant in the garden. However, when we want to distinguish one plant from another, there are some basic terms that we need to understand so that we can compare specific parts of the plants. These terms describe flower parts, flower symmetry, stems, leaves, the flower groupings, flower colour, flowering time and whether they die down, loose leaves etc in the winter and various other things. The following is not a comprehensive 'Botany of salvias', rather some terms that we use a lot to describe salvia flower parts, and in subsequent editions, we can add descriptions of some of the other terms.

Corolla: The corolla refers to the group of petals, which usually make up the colourful, eye-catching part of the flower. It can be roseate (looking like a wild rose or apple blossom), campanulate (bell shaped), tubular, ligulate (strap-like) and many other forms. Salvias have a special corolla form which is called labiate, or lipped. There are basically five petals which are fused into two lips, the upper lip made up of two fused petals, and the lower lip made up of three fused petals. Unfortunately, there are heaps of other plants that also have this form, so there are other features to consider to determine whether your flower is a salvia. These 2 lips are sometimes referred to as upper/ lower, superior/inferior or posterior/anterior (just for a bit of confusion).

The upper lip of the corolla can be:

- Straight or nearly straight, as in *Salvi regla, S. scabra* and *S.* 'Van Houttei'; or
- Falcate or falciform: when the upper lip is sickle-shaped or arched or hooded, as in *Salvia patens, Salvia glutinosa*, *Salvia indica* and *S. forskaohlei.*

The upper lip is usually shorter than the lower lip, an exception being *S. nipponica.*

The lower lip has three lobes, of which the median (or central) lobe may or may not be indented (have a notch in the middle), cup shaped as in *S. indica*, curving downwards as in *S. cruikshanksii* or pointing downwards as in S. *lanceolata.* Lips are sometimes recurved (curved back on themselves) as in the lateral lobes of the lower lip of *Salvia roborowskii.*

Other features of note on the corolla are the presence or absence of hairs (as in *S.* 'Red Dragon') and bee lines, or markings which guide the pollinating insect into the tube. These markings are strong on *S. forskaohlei.* In fact, the shape of the corolla tube of specific

salvias has evolved to accommodate a specific type of pollinating creature. The nectaries at the base of the long narrow corolla tube of *S. dombeyi,* for example can only be reached by the beaks of hummingbirds. Others are shaped to accommodate insects. Some insects that are too fat to squeeze into a corolla tube and will puncture the tube from the side in order to reach the nectar, which means that pollen is not transferred from one flower to the next. But, more about that in the next part of this series.

Calyx (pl. = calyces): This refers to the group of sepals that surround the base of the corolla tube. In salvias, the sepals are fused, just as the petals are, to form a 2-lipped structure. In salvias in particular, the number and shape of the "teeth" of the calyx, the number of veins and the hairiness of the surface of the calyx are all important indicators in identifying the different species.

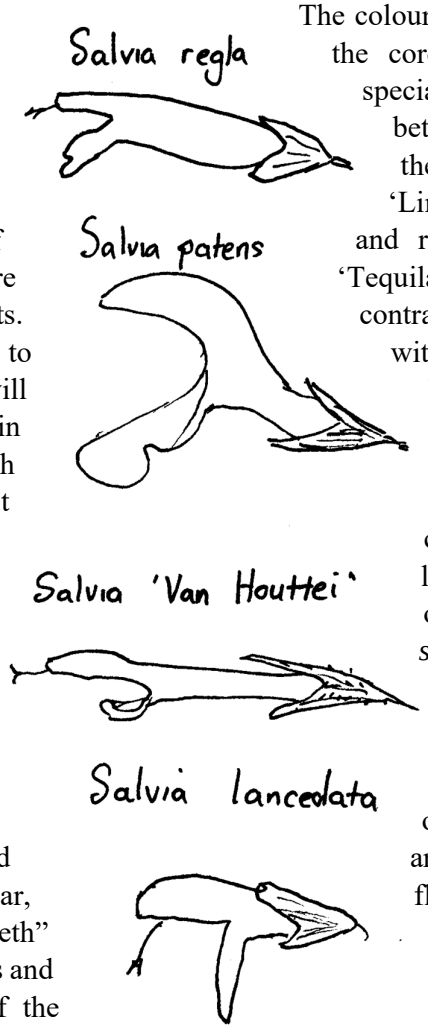


Fig. 1: Some general shapes of salvia corolla and calyx

The colour contrast between the calyx and the corolla gives some species their special beauty. Consider the contrast between the lime green calyx and the blue corolla in *S. mexicana* 'Limelight' and the near black calyx and red corolla of *S. gesneriiflora* 'Tequila'. Other beauties with contrasting colours are *S. discolor*, with the silvery calyx and the nearly black corolla and *S. semiatrata* with the dark rose pink calyx and the mauve/blue corolla. The species with colourful calyces remain very attractive long after the flowers have fallen off, such as *S. canariensis, S. spathacea* and *S. lanceolata.*

Bract: These are leaf-like structures, though smaller than leaves, that commonly occur at the bases of branches of an inflorescence (or cluster of flowers) or under individual flowers. The presence or absence, shape and colour of these are also significant in identifying salvia species. In some cases, the bracts are deciduous (or drop off), which is also significant.

Another point of interest about the calyx is the way it hangs on, enclosing the seeds, after the flower has finished and dropped off. In several South African species, it changes shape at this stage. *S. africana lutea*, for example, expands from about 2cms across the opening during flowering to nearly 3cms during fruiting.

Fig. 2: Some forms of the upper lip of a salvia calyx, opened out

In some species, such as *S. sclarea,* the bracts are very significant, being both larger than the flowers and more colourful. In the photo on the opposite page you can see that it is the large pink structures (hairy and pointed at their tips) that are the bracts and make this flower so attractive - even if the leaves are a bit smelly. Near the top of the inflorescence, you can see greenish/white flower buds (will be the corolla tubes) emerging from brown/pink/green and hairy sepals of the calyces. Further down, you can see the white corollas that have already opened up, with very falcate upper lips, but their calyces are mostly hidden.

S. sclarea

In Part II of this series, we will look more closely at the stamens – the bits that carry the pollen – as these are very significant in salvias. There are only 2 stamens in salvias, unlike nearly all of the related plants in the family Lamicaceae. The shape of the stamen in *Salvia* is also highly significant, both in the pollinating process and in evolutionary terms. Subsequent parts will cover leaf shapes and surface and the different forms of inflorescence.

References for some basic botany for those wanting to learn more:

Clarke, I. and Lee, H., 1987, "Name that Flower". Melbourne University Press

Mager, S. "Botanical Field Guide" – a handy, fold out card containing 280 symbols and 400 keywords (bought mine at Adelaide Botanic Gardens)

Harris, J. G. & Harris, M. W., 2001, "Plant Identification Terminology: An Illustrated Guide".

Capon, B. 1990, "Botany for Gardeners: An Introduction and Guide". – this one is great for anyone interested in subjects like plant function, adaptation, reproduction.

Chong, S. N. (revised by King, E. L.) 1996, Basic Morphology of Flowering Plants", Training Publications of Western Australia.

Salvia greggii

There truly is a rainbow of *Salvia greggii* available these days. Here is just a sample of some of the gorgeous colours available. Which one is your favourite?

'Alba'

'Wensley Apricot'

'Raspberry Royale'

'Coral'

'Cherry'

Alowyn Gardens

Heather Lucas, Heathmont, Victoria

This is really a glorious garden which began its life in 1997. It covers 4 acres and five main areas - the perennial border, a formal parterre garden, a silver birch forest, an edible garden with fruit trees and display gardens.

I personally first visited Alowyn on 25 May 2014 with my Mum on a garden visit for our group. I love to see how visiting gardens that are open to the public progress and change over the years, and from season to season. The second time was on 4 November 2018 and of course the most recent one being 1 March 2020. I have seen three different seasons there - winter, autumn and spring.

The first visit was in winter and I was totally blown away by the five main areas and how well planned out the whole garden was. I took 48 photos on this day and looking back at them has been really interesting. Although the garden was 17 years old at that time, there were areas that were obviously completed only for a couple of years. The most recent area was a gorgeous long rectangular water feature with box hedges, trees and iris' planted around it. The trees were very spindly, around 12 foot high by 3 foot wide and the box hedges around the water feature had gaps in between each bush.

When I visited again 4 years later, there was heaps more growth in all areas, the trees now around 30 foot high by 12 foot wide and the box hedges all one solid hedge. Two more years on from that and the trees are now all intermingling, thick trunks and everything now fully mature.

Being winter some of the areas were of course not in full growth, i.e. the perennial border area was all cut back and in the process of some plants being moved and divided, but I still thought that it was beautiful. As you entered the gardens there was a wonderful arched walkway (two sections) of wisteria, it was of course not in flower, but there were some leaves.

There was also a small section of garden that was devoted to salvias, the entrance to which had a gorgeous little wooden fence with a metal gate and a pathway that led to a beautiful seat area with a wooden trellis and wood ceiling beamed structure over it. There was a climbing rose over it, which was not in flower yet. The salvias that were flowering were 'Phyllis Fancy', *S. guaranitica* Black and Blue, 'Wendy's Wish' and various greggiis.

The second visit I went by myself on the way back from the most glorious 2 ½ days weekend break at Sunnymeade in Kithbrook, in the Strathbogie Ranges (now that is another article I should write about).

The change from the first time was fabulous with heaps more growth on all trees and plant areas. New buildings had been built and the plant nursery moved to another area and now filled with heaps of plants, pots and ornaments. This visit was at the end of spring and therefore lots more plants were flowering, the perennial border in particular looked beautiful with heaps more growth and flowers. I was much taken with a beautiful light blue Ixia that was flowering and there were many more plants, foxgloves, aquilegias, roses and phlomis.

The salvia garden had been cut back and had a great amount of manure over all the beds. There were not many salvias flowering. Salvias that were flowering were various greggiis, spathacea and mystic spires.

Two beautiful purple clematis vines on each side of the entry gate area were flowering and the rose on the wooden structure over the seated area was in full bloom, a glorious deep

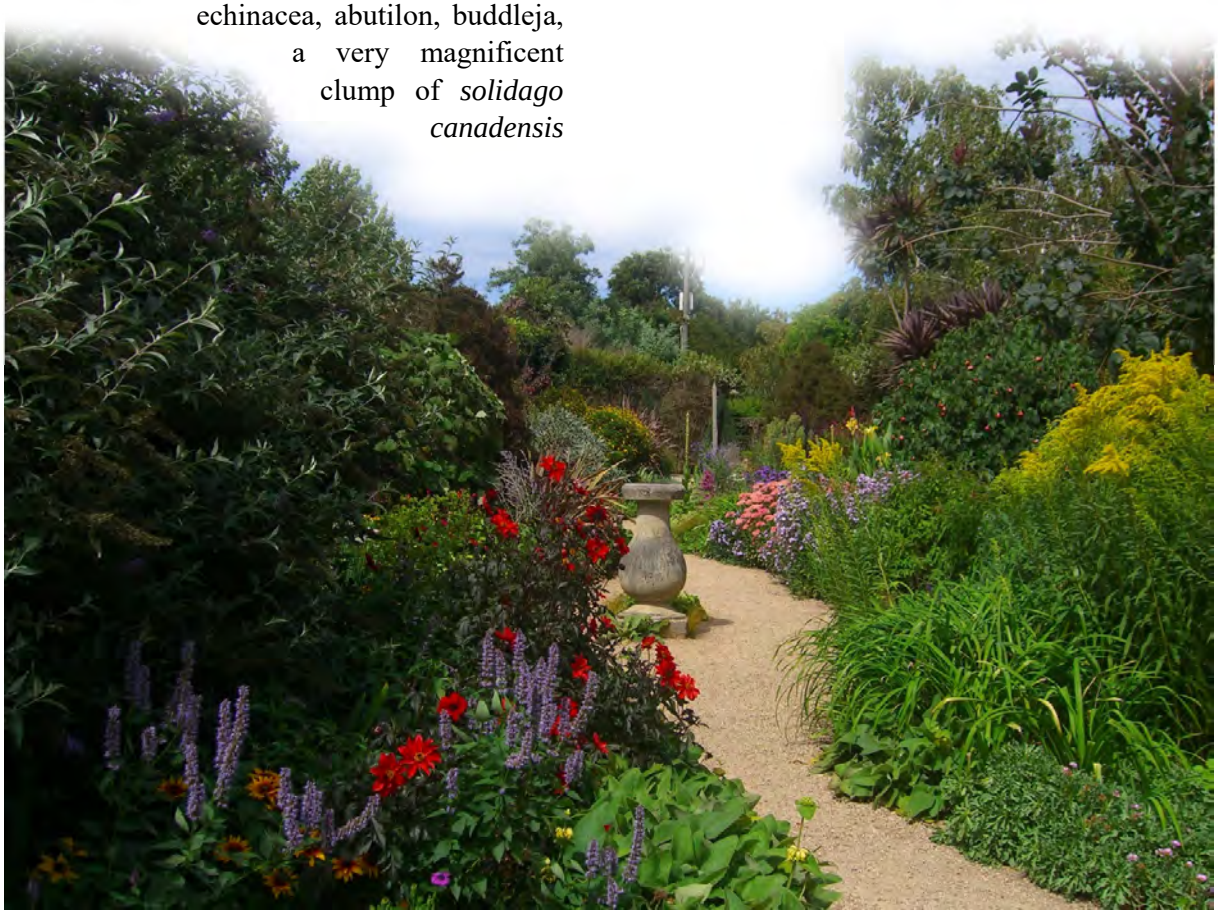
red colour. The wisteria walkway this time was just finishing its flowering period. There were roses everywhere, flowering profusely, so pretty and gorgeous.

I arrived at 1.25 pm and spent an hour and a half walking around the garden and took 115 photos. Now really, what better way to spend a couple of hours than that? Well my next visit was two years' later and that brings me to our recent visit with our group.

My third and most recent visit was an autumn visit for our group and was definitely the most glorious and impressive of the three visits. I think what made this the most enjoyable for me was the company, the perennial border area and also because the whole garden and garden areas were now so well established. The perennial border area was truly magnificent with so many plants in flower, amongst them red and yellow cannas, *lepechinia salviae*, sedum autumn joy, daisies, asters, pink echinacea, abutilon, buddleja, a very magnificent clump of *solidago canadensis* (Golden Rod) and many different types of salvias.

The salvia garden was looking really good, with lots of leafy growth. I did not take many photos of this area and so I am not sure what was flowering, certainly lots of greggiis and microphyllas.

On this visit I only took 58 photos, which I was surprised by as it was definitely the most gorgeous I had ever seen the garden. I could not understand why I had taken 115 photos in 2018 and only 58 photos this time. Then I very quickly realised why, the 2014 visit I was by myself and this time I was with the Salvia Group! We were walking around together, talking and identifying plants. I love being with people and talking! I naturally did not take as many photos – next time maybe I can do both, talk and take lots of photos.



My Garden

Julie Mackay, Linton, Victoria

I have just joined the Victorian Salvia Study Group and thought I would introduce you to my garden and my salvias.

We moved to our property in Linton in 1994, we are on 141 acres situated on a dirt road and surrounded by State Forest.

The first couple of years we did not do a lot with the garden, but in 1999 we put in a new dam and ended up with 28 truckloads of top soil. At that time, my garden began in earnest. We had the soil carted up to the house and beds were created, adding organic matter and edging the beds with beautiful volcanic rocks collected from local farmers willing to have them removed from their paddocks.

I am fortunate that we live within reasonable proximity to a number of well-known nurseries selling roses and perennials and these became my regular haunts.

As the dry weather increased and my ability to provide water to the ornamental beds (other than one slow drink for a few hours during the end of summer for the roses) it became clear which plants were truly hardy.

My deceased plants list due to frost and drought could fill a book. Not limited to salvias, but in this family I lost all my *Salvia nemorosa* types, clary sage, microphyllas and corrugata. My successes have been *S. leucantha, S.* 'Anthony Parker', *S. leucophylla, S.* 'Marine Blue', *S. involucrata* 'Joan' and to a lesser degree *S.* 'Mulberry Jam' and a couple of others that I have no name for that I was given by a neighbour.

I have recently purchased *S.* 'Waverley', *S.* 'Meigan's Magic', *S. microphylla* 'Pink', *S. leucantha* 'Velour Pink', *S. greggii* 'Pumpkin', *S. greggii* 'Sierra Pink', *S. jamensis* 'Soft Yellow', *S. africana lutea* and *S.* 'Amistad'.

On my wish list now are *S.* 'Black and Blue', *S.* 'Costa Rica Blue', *S. discolor, S. fruticosa, S. indica, S. lanceolata, S. lasiantha, S.* 'Timboon' and *S. semiatrata*. I took cuttings a few days ago (early July) of a couple of these but I am not holding my breath on their success at this time of year, even though I have put them into mini cloches.

I hope to join with you in garden and plant events in the coming year when the Covid restrictions are lifted and it is safe to do so.

Spring

What is flowering now

September	October	November
adenophora	*adenophora*	*argentea*
‘Black Knight’	*apiana*	*aethiopsis*
coahuilensis	‘Black Knight’	‘Anthony Parker’
‘Costa Rican Blue’	*coahuilensis*	*blepharophylla*
discolor	*chamaedryoides*	*broussonettii*
dorisiana	*desoleana*	*canariensis*
flocculosa	*dorisiana*	*desoleana*
fruticosa	*eiggii*	*dolomitica*
gesneriifolia	*forskaohlei*	*eiggii*
gesneriifolia. var ‘Tequila’	*fruticosa*	*forskaohlei*
greggii vars	*gesneriiflora*	*gesneriiflora*
‘Hot Lips’	*gesneriifolia. var’Tequila’*	*gesneriifolia. var’Tequila’*
involucrata spp	*greggii vars*	*greggii vars*
‘Hadspen’	‘Hot Lips’	‘Greek Skies’
‘Pink Icicles’	‘Pink Icicles’	‘Harmony’
‘Romantic Rose’	‘Romantic Rose’	‘Hot Lips’
‘Timboon’	‘Timboon’	*karwinskii*
‘Joan’	‘Joan’	*leucantha vars*
iodantha	*iodantha*	*leucophylla*
karwinskii	*karwinskii*	*microphylla vars*
leucantha vars	*leucantha vars*	*miniata*
lyrata	*leucophylla*	*nemerosa vars*
‘Marine Blue’	*microphylla vars*	*officinalis vars*

microphylla vars	*nemerosa vars*	*pratensis vars*
nemerosa vars	*pratensis vars*	*repens*
pratensis vars	'Purple Majesty'	*romeriana*
adenophora syn pulchella	*rumicifolia*	*rubescens*
'Purple Majesty'	*sclarea*	*scabra*
rumicifolia	*sagittata*	*spathacea*
sagittata	*superba vars*	*staminea*
semiatrata	*subrotundra*	*superba vars*
superba vars	*sylvestris vars*	*subrotundra*
subrotundra	*transylvanica*	*sylvestris vars*
sylvestris vars	*uliginosa*	*transylvanica*
uliginosa	*verticilliata vars*	*uliginosa*
univerticillata	*wagneriana*	*wagneriana*
verticilliata vars	*waverley*	*waverley*
wagneriana	'Wendy's Wish'	'Wendy's Wish'

Editor's Note: Please see the wonderful fundraising efforts of 'Wendy's Wish' set out earlier.

Shade tolerant Salvias

Many Salvias grow in the shade, depending on the degree and the type of shade, e.g. dry or moist shade.

Numerous varieties grow well on the Eastern and Southern side of the house, especially the big-leaved salvias. Although originating from tropical countries, salvias are generally found high in the mountains in cool rainforest areas. A lot of varieties are tolerant of dappled light or semi-shade and do well growing through deciduous trees. Some varieties even grow in dry shady areas. Very few varieties grow well in dense shade.

Many shade loving salvias can be grown in a sunny protected position if well mulched in among other shrubs and trees to give protection from frost.

Some of the shade tolerant varieties flowering in Spring include, *Salvia minitata, S. chiapensis, S. coccinea varieties, S. amarissima* and the Japanese varieties. Please see more information on the 'Shade loving Salvias' page on the website.

"Some brightness in Winter. Here's a lorikeet enjoying the lovely rose salvia "Timboon" in Glen Iris." Photo and words courtesy of K Davison.

Comments & Feedback

We hope you enjoy Salvia News as much as we enjoy collating it for you. We welcome your comments and feedback regarding this publication, our website, the Facebook group and the Study Group in general.

You can send your feedback to us at any time by emailing the Editor or Lyndi Garnett (Group Coordinator).

stephanie.salvia.news@gmail.com

lgarnett844@gmail.com

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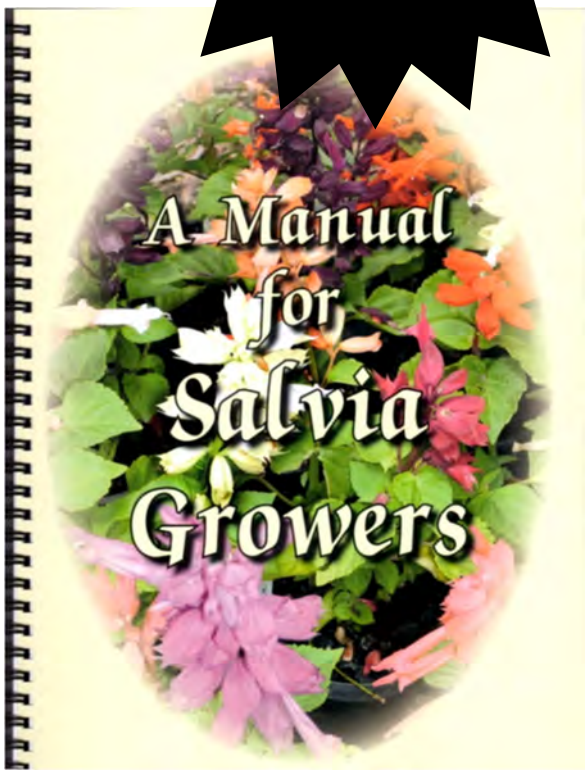
- Purple Majesty and Black Knight
- Salvia Maintenance
- Hardy Salvias and Shade Lovers
- Containers/Hanging Baskets/Hedges
- As an Accent in the Garden
- Propagating and Pruning
- Colourful Tints of Stressed Leaves
- Pests and Disease
- Where to see Salvias
- Cultivation Notes and Name Changes



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_____	A Manual for Salvia Growers by Meg Bentley	$30.00	$10.00 (Australian postage only)	$_____

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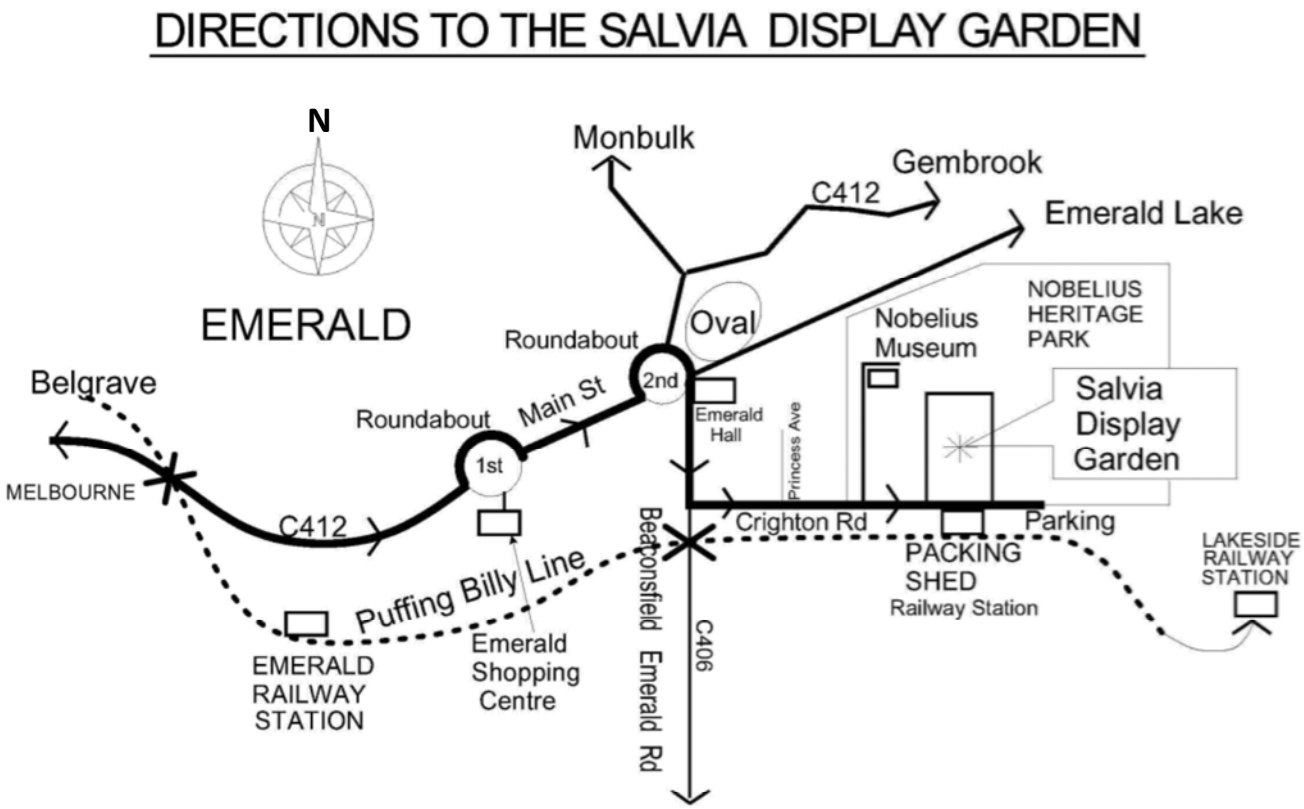
Glen Waverley Vic 3150



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