# Salvia News

**NUMBER 76**

Official Newsletter of the

**Victorian Salvia Study Group Inc**

www.salvias.org.au

Winter 2019

# 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 SUBMISSIONS***

***Copy deadline for the next edition - Spring edition - is on or before 17 July 2019***

*Email your articles and full size photos on or preferably before the deadline to;*
***editor.salvianews@gmail.com***

***With the new editor there will be a new email address and you will all be notified.***
***In the meantime, Lyndi has asked that you please submit to the same email address and articles and messages will be forwarded.***

# Salvia News

*VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP INC*
***Website: www.salvias.org.au***

*Welcome to the Winter 2019 edition of Salvia News. This is my last issue as Editor. With much regret I have resigned as editor for health reasons together with living in another State. I have so enjoyed putting this newsletter together and thank all the wonderful people who have made it possible, especially those who send in their submissions for inclusion, for without you, there wouldn't be a Salvia News.*

*A special thankyou to all those who submitted their articles and photos to ensure a bumper edition for my final Salvia News. I am sure that there will be something for everyone in the pages to follow.*

*We commence this issue with an article from The Perennial Poppy Group in southeast Queensland who always submit a great read and this issue from Carol Kerkin is no exception, commencing on page 8.*

*John Anderson has allowed me to reprint two articles from much earlier editions of Salvia News and you will know why I have included them when you read, the first is called The Salvia Fanatic & the Serpent on page 10.*

*Pat Anderson's article on why Salvia Fanatics become so Fanatical is something you will all want to know and commences on page 11.*

*You may have seen Meg Bentley's garden on Gardening Australia earlier this year and saw her serve Jane Edmanson her Fruitcup Sage Tea Cake with Dorisiana Syrup. Meg has kindly shared her recipe and it can be found on page 14.*

*There are a couple of Garden visit articles too, Notes from Gruyere always a favourite and so much more.*

*Page 22 is asking for a New Editor. Please take a read and perhaps phone Lyndi to discuss further. If I can help email me. My voice isn't very good for phone calls any more. Please give it a go, there is as much support as you would like.*

*Its been a rough beginning to the year for so many , climate change really is making it difficult for many. We hope all those affected by fire, flooding and drought are managing as well as can be. We very much hope the rains come with the change of seasons where it is still so desperately needed.*

*And finally, thankyou everyone for just being there.*
*Happy Gardening*
*Beth Gilchrist*
*Retiring Editor Salvia News*

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**COPY DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT EDITION OF SALVIA NEWS IS 17 July 2019**
***Email: editor.salvianews@gmail.com***

# Calendar of Events

***Remember to check the website regularly for any changes and additional information. www.salvias.org.au***

*Remember too to take your plant lists to events or email your list to Lyndi prior to the event so you aren't disappointed. Should you have any queries, phone Lyndi Garnett, VSSG Co-ordinator on 03 9803 4534 or email lgarnett844@gmail.com*
*Also don't forget to let Lyndi know if you are attending events. Some events the hosts need to know numbers prior to the event.*

***In addition to events** open to the public, on the **website under Calendar of Events, you will find Garden Clubs where Lyndi Garnett is speaking** and a contact number for further information.*

**June 15 Sat 9.30am**

**RHSV GARDENER'S DAY OUT**
Deakin University
Burwood Hwy, Burwood

3 fantastic presentations by Diana Sargeant (Roses), John Arnott (Cranbourne Botanical Gardens) and Angus Stewart (horticulturalist, author and media personality.
Many specialist plant sellers and allied stalls, superb Special Effort, Great 'Goodies Bag", Hanging Basket Awards.
Vibrant atmosphere that sets the day apart. Lunch available must be pre-ordered, Ample undercover parking, public transport.
Only $15 p/p . More info on the RHSV **www.rhsv.org.au**

Our Salvia Stall Includes plants, books and seed for sale.
Bring plants to be identified.
To avoid disappointment, please email your list to Lyndi and the plants on your list will be put aside for you. *lgarnett844@gmail.com*

**July 1 Sun 11.30am**

**LESLEY EDMOND'S GARDEN VISIT**
270 Costa Rd, Modella (Lang, Lang)

A gorgeous Salvia farm garden full of surprises including a very productive vegetable garden and of course our new Herbaceous border. This really is one venue you will not want to miss.
Tea & Coffee provided. Don't forget to bring a plate to share, a chair and enjoy a great Viewing.

Please phone Lesley if coming Ph 5629 4405

**Aug 4 Sun 1.30pm**

**PROPAGATING DAY AT NOBELIUS**
Nobelius Heritage Park, Crighton Rd, Emerald,
under the Packing Shed, along the Puffing Billy line: Mel 124 G4
***See mud map on the back page of Salvia News***

Come and learn how to propagate Salvias. Learn how and when to take cuttings, a good propagating mix, when to pot up.
You will also have the opportunity to take home a pot of cuttings.
Bring secateurs and plastic bags for your cuttings.
Tea and Coffee will be provided.
Phone Lyndi if coming, 9803 4534

# Calendar of Events

***Remember to check the website regularly***
***for any changes and additional information.***
***www.salvias.org.au***

**Aug 18th Sun 12.30pm**

**VSSG MEMBERS LUNCH AT NOBELIUS -**
Nobelius Heritage Park, Crighton Rd, Emerald,
under the Packing Shed, along the Puffing Billy line: Mel 124 G4
*See Mud map on the back page of Salvia News*

This is a thankyou event for joining the Group and all members new and old are very welcome. ***The Committee will be providing the lunch for everyone*** including tea and coffee.
Bring a chair, wander through the gardens. Meet others within the Group, meet the Committee.
***Please phone Lyndi on 9803 4534 if coming, it is imperative for catering purposes.***

**Sept 15th Sun 1.30pm**

**PRUNING DAY AT NOBELIUS**
Nobelius Heritage Park, Crighton Rd, Emerald,
under the Packing Shed, along the Puffing Billy line Mel: 127 G4

Learn how and when to prune Salvias – Learn the different types of Salvias and how to prune them.
Tea/coffee will be provided. Bring secateurs and plastic bags for cuttings to take home. Don't for get to bring your chair.
Phone Lyndi if coming 9803 4534

**Oct 5/6th Sat/ Sun 10am-4pm**

**GARDEN LOVERS FAIR**
Bolobek – 370 Mt Macedon Rd, Macedon

Entry: Fair & Garden $10.00

Lots of stalls with rare, unusual plants and products.
Salvia plants, books and seed will be for sale
Bring plants/ flowers to be identified.
To avoid disappointment, please email your list to Lyndi *lgarnett844@gmail.com* so those plants can be put Salvias aside for you to collect from the Fair.

**Oct 26/27th Sat/Sun 10am-5pm**

**YARRA VALLEY SPRING PLANT FAIR**
125 Quayle Rd, Wandin

**A *NEW Plant Fair* for the whole weekend!**

Speakers, demonstrations, over 40 stalls, including plant specialists and plant products.
Food, wine and craft beers
Salvia plants, books and seed will be for sale
Bring plants/ flowers to be identified.
Please email your Salvia list to Lyndi *lgarnett844@gmail.com* so those plants can be put aside for you to collect .

# Living with a Salvia fanatic

***John Anderson, Warrandyte, Vic***

***Editors Note:*** *This is reprinted with the authors permission from Salvia News Spring 2006, Edition No 26. Enjoy!*

This Newsletter invariably contains plenty of information from fanatics about identifying and growing salvias but it rarely contains any news about what we partners of salvia cranks and nut-cases have to endure. We have to live with books and papers about salvias on every bench, table and desk around the house, salvia juice and muck all over the surface of the scanner, computer memory congested with photographs of salvias, a glasshouse full of salvia seedlings, a nursery full of salvia cuttings and garden beds groaning with salvias and other lamiaceous wonders that overwhelm the place with their pungent pong.

Now as if this is not enough, my partner, Pat, collects seeds and then allows them to dry and mature before packaging them. These are then added to her already enormous seed collection which she stores in the fridge, thereby minimising the space available for chilling wine, cheese and other essentials that are needed to appease her partner, not to mention herself. Pat normally uses old butter containers in the glasshouse to dry out her seeds but she sometimes places the freshly gathered seeds in the kitchen in our prized stainless steel bowls which we normally use for serving ice-cream in the summer. My partner's aim when drying seeds in the kitchen is to use the pungent pong, sorry, beautiful bouquet, emitted by the drying seeds to overwhelm the cooking odours and she uses stainless steel bowls in the kitchen as they are a little more decorous than the old butter containers she uses in the glasshouse.

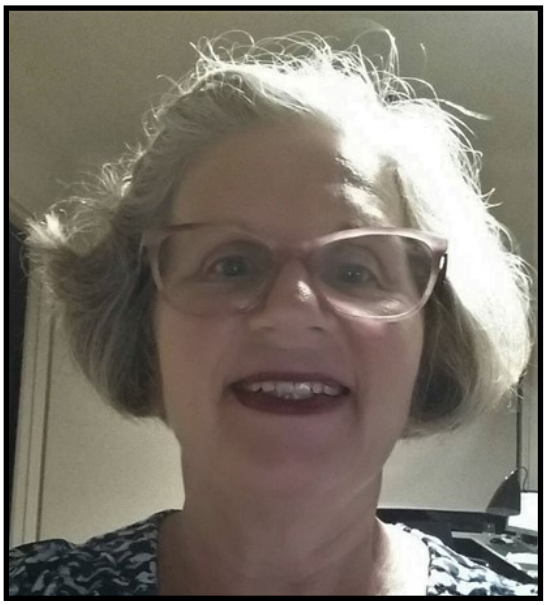
Well, one day last summer, Pat placed a few newly collected seeds of *Salvia reflexa* in one of our stainless steel bowls which she then put on the shelf above the kitchen bench in her usual way. The following day, Pat went to place an object inside the bowl on top of the seeds and was aware of a mouse staring up at her from the bowl, happily drugged to the eyeballs with its tail bolt upright like a newly emerged spear of asparagus. Now, normally a mouse would be off like greased lightning but this poor little bugger could only sit there on it's haunches and grin. It was quickly placed in a clear plastic food container and a few drops of methylated spirits were added which the mouse seemed to sniff with great delight. As it did so the tail gradually declined, permanently, to the horizontal position.

*S. reflexa* is indigenous to Mexico and USA but is now a widespread weed on the heavier soils of much of north-west NSW and south-central Queensland where it causes losses in sheep and cattle (Hurst, 1942; Everist, 1981; McBarron, 1986). Early studies by Australian scientists suggest that the toxicity of *S. reflexa* is attributable to the accumulation of nitrate (Williams & Hines, 1940; Hurst 1942). Nitrate as such is not especially toxic but it can be converted either by the plant or the grazing animal to nitrite which reacts with haemoglobin to form methaemoglobin. Thus, the action of haemoglobin in transporting oxygen around the body, which is essential for animal function, is inhibited. It would seem that, depending on the availability of nitrate in the soil, *S. reflexa* can be very potent in this regard. In one experiment an aqueous extract prepared from minced foliage of *S. reflexa* was fed to sheep. In less than 6 hours, 72% of the haemoglobin in the sheep was converted to methaemoglobin at which time the animal died (Williams & Hines, 1940). However, it should be noted that these investigations were conducted in the early 1940s before techniques for studying individual terpenes/terpenoids (see below) became available.

Grazing of foliage of *S. reflexa* has also caused losses in livestock in North America but in this case the symptoms are reportedly not consistent with nitrate/nitrite toxicity (Kingsbury, 1968) perhaps suggesting that other compounds (maybe in conjunction with in nitrate/nitrite) could be involved in the toxicity of this species. In this regard, it is of interest that some salvias (e.g. *S. officinalis* and *S. triloba*) contain thujone which has pharmacological properties similar to the active constituent in cannabis (Polya, 2003). Also, salvinorin A is an extraordinarily potent hallucinogen in *S. divinorum* (Bruneton, 1999). Thujone and salvinarin A are members of a large class of compounds known as terpenes/terpenoids (terpenoids are compounds formed from terpenes) which are common constituents of salvias and are largely responsible for the characteristic bouquet of individual species. The pharmacological activity of individual terpenses and terpenoids varies greatly. Some, such as salvinarin A and thujone are extremely potent, some exhibit mild activity but, in the absence of any reports to the contrary, it is likely that many presumably show little if any activity. Clearly, the toxicity and pharmacological activity of any one salvia species depends is related to the activity of the particular terpenes/terpenoids it contains. on a mild pharmacological activity. Some

***Continued on page 7 ...***

# *Hi from Tine*
# New VSSG Membership/ Subscription Officer



*My name is Tine (pronounced Tina) Grimston. I retired in 2018 after working as a Librarian in various special libraries for around 40 years. I am just coming up to one year of retirement and I can recommend it highly. I cannot fathom how I ever had time to go to work.*

*I love getting my hands in the dirt and gardening and also love rescuing stuff from the roadside hard waste collections and re-purposing it for use in my garden.*

*I am a member of several garden groups so I can indulge my love of looking at other peoples gardens, learning new things and meeting new people..*

*I'm currently very disheartened by the parched state of my own garden, and have been pulling out a number of poorly performing plants.*

*My husband Wayne and I will be doing quite a bit of travelling in the next few years, so hopefully I will get to see some great gardens overseas too.*

*In 2017 I was lucky enough to visit the Keukenhof gardens in Holland which were an amazing display of tulips and other bulbs.*

*Cheers, Tine*

- - - -

# NEWS FROM SOUTHEAST QUEENSLAND

***Carol Kerkin, Kingsholme, Qld***

I'm not sure about the weather across all of Australia but I can say with certainty that we have had the most horrendous summer here in southeast Queensland. Our garden is midway between Brisbane and the Gold Coast and slightly into the hinterland. There has been very little rainfall this season, light showers, a few millimetres here and there and the occasional hit and miss storm. Higher than average temperatures and humidity had us and our gardens simply melting. Our enthusiasm for gardening has waned somewhat, with the odds so stacked against us. We had trays of plants sitting idly in our little nursery, begging to be put into the ground. Being on acreage, it is so easy to lose track of new plantings. Before you know it, they have 'gone to god'. Weekend mornings hold a bit of a ritual for us. We take the first cuppa of the day for a walk, to see what has been happening in the garden and what needs immediate attention. Lately, the 'to do' list is simply never-ending. Many of our salvias completely missed their summer prune this year. They will be very long and leggy by the time they hit flowering season. We shall have to keep our fingers crossed that we have few windy days over the coming weeks or they will end up snapped off, or worse still blown over completely with their roots pointing skyward. I recall that happening to *S. involucrata* 'Pink Icicles' a few years back and it is not an overly large grower. John rolled his eyes as I savagely cut it back, manhandled it upright, banged a stake in for support and then stomped its roots firmly back into the ground. (I am normally a non-stomper.) How wonderfully forgiving our salvias are. Replanted, this 'Pink Icicles' performed brilliantly! (if a tad later than most other years).

We have suffered a few casualties during this period. We gave in and cut back a lot of our microphylla and greggii varieties and we are never gentle with them. In a small garden, you can cut back 'little and often', but it simply isn't a viable option in our acreage garden. We must cut back hard when we can no longer stand the sight of the 'leafless legginess'. Several plants decided we had punished them once too often.

*All is not doom and gloom, the leucanthas are a riot of colour*

Others though look quite unfazed and are flowering happily after some much-needed rain, in the past couple of weeks. A plant bought as *S.* 'Dwarf Red' was planted as a hedge beside the pergola. Every time I hack it back, I look at the aging and thickening trunks and think to myself 'I must put in cuttings and replace these with fresh plants' ….but do I get around to it?

Two years ago, we planted *S. dorisiana* (fruit salad sage) under a magnolia, in the back yard. I simply adore this plant, the velvety leaves, fruity scent and large, bright pink blooms late in winter. It was one of the first salvias we planted and each summer it would struggle valiantly, withering and drooping through the heat. Each morning, it would manage to revive a little, only to be gasping what seemed like last breaths, by midday. Re-location was called for. Perhaps a bit of shade and it would be much happier. What a sight it was during flowering last winter. It had thrived and was now a lovely specimen, 1m high and 1.2m across,

# NEWS FROM SOUTHEAST QUEENSLAND

***..Continued from previous page***

loaded with blooms and native bees coming from every corner of the garden. But with the summer just past, I am sad to say it has now dwindled to a single sickly stem. I do not hold a lot of hope for it and will plant the one coming on in a pot somewhere else and see how it goes. We may just have to treat this variety as an annual in our conditions. (I will say that at our recent salvia study day, others reported the same issues. Comforting to know that we are not alone.)

**Salvia 'Meigan's Magic**

All is not doom and gloom though, with eight inches of welcome rain over the last 4 weeks or so, the wave of a magic wand. Sad bedraggled plants have burst forth, in a celebration of flower. The leucanthas are a riot of colour. The first of the little winter birds have started to visit 'Anthony Parker', a neat and rounded 1.5m of dazzling navy blue. 'Meigan's Magic' draws the eye from way across the garden, with startling white flowers against the dark calyces. Now we must be patient and wait for the winter flowers to put on their show. It will be interesting here, as *S. purpurea* and *S. iodantha* are already nudging 3m and I see the buds starting to form. The involucratas are big and blousy, with no sign of blooms yet. Ahh, the challenges of being a gardener. Now what was I going to do? Oh yes, the cuttings of 'Dwarf Red'.

Until next time, Carol Kerkin
The Perennial Poppies Group Inc.

***Editor's Note:***
*Jillian Barkell has advised that S. dorisiana needs shade and moisture and if you cant supply those things, then try growing it at the bottom of a down slope.*

*See page 14 for more on Salvia dorisiana,*

**Salvia dorisiana**
*Photo Lyndi Garnett*

# The salvia fanatic and the serpent

***John Anderson, Warrandyte Vic***

Early every morning my partner, Pat, inspects her salvias while munching from a bowl of muesli topped with preserved fruit and fresh yoghurt. The daily inspection is used to determine the day's priorities. On dry days the first task usually involves recording on a spread sheet the condition of each individual salvia in the garden. However, on mornings after rain or heavy dew, Pat knows that the gastropods will be out in full force attacking her salvias and so on these occasions priority is given to taking affirmative action against the enemy. Pat's weapon for controlling gastropods is a large yoghurt pot of water containing a good lashing of liquid detergent. Soft-bodied animals with a wet skin such as slugs and snails are especially sensitive to surface active agents with the result that when enemy troops are placed in the container they are very rapidly subdued.

Last year, about the time of the autumn equinox, we had many beautifully warm sunny days followed by chilly nights. Once during this period Pat inspected the garden on a very snappy morning after a heavy dew. She knew that the enemy would be out and so she went off in search of gastropods, taking particular care to lift the foliage of those plants that she knew to be their favourite hiding places She checked the "New World" and "Latium" plots and soon had a good haul of slugs and snails in her container. Although the plants in the "Gondwana" plot are not known to be especially attractive targets to gastropods she nonetheless thought she would check underneath the canopy of the "grass" tussock *Splottium unknownum* (more correctly it is a sedge tussock belonging to the genus *Carex*) where she has seen battalions of gastropods take refuge from time to time. But instead of revealing a mass of gastropods she found instead a very compactly coiled-up serpent which in this form appeared quite small. Fortunately it was quite inactive on account of the very low morning temperature and this probably explained why it was so tightly coiled up. Although the serpent was just a few centimetres from her bare hands Pat decided it was not necessary, nor for that matter, wise, to place the tidily packaged creature in her container of detergent.

Pat came down to the house and casually explained that she had found a serpent coiled up under a tussock in the "Gondwana" plot and that she thought she would leave it undisturbed as it was "only a little one and not doing any harm". We discussed the situation and noted that the serpent would be very active in an hour or so when the temperature increased dramatically. We also noted that it had taken up residence in a high use area where Pat constantly tends her plants with un-gloved hands with her face close to the ground. Much as we dislike taking action against serpents we agreed that it would be wise to be pro-active in this instance as the serpent could prove to be a weapon of mass destruction. Indeed we had already noticed that the croaking of frogs in the pond on the other side of the path opposite the tussock had ceased a few days previously and that there was the danger that a higher organism might be the next to stop croaking. (Hence the derivation of the verb 'to croak', meaning 'to expire').

Pat lifted the foliage of the tussock with a stick and there it was, exactly as she had described. I brought down a long-handled implement very firmly as the ground beneath the serpent was spongy due to a covering of pea straw as well as decaying leaves from the tussock. But, despite the serpent's obvious torpor, the spongy nature of the straw allowed it to gradually wriggle out from under the implement towards the protection of the thick vegetation on the far side of the tussock. We made frantic moves to prevent the getaway and several times when we thought we had it secured so that we could extract it, it would again start to wriggle out until eventually just a few centimetres of tail were still visible. At this stage Pat decided that, as it was still pinned down, and since "we must have given it a bit of a headache", she would pull it out. So she grabbed the serpent's tail and pulled like hell. It was meant to be "only a little one" but, as Pat pulled, out came 50 centimetres, then 60, 70, 80 centimetres. After she had extracted a metre the head had still not appeared and Pat thought it would be sensible to let go at this stage. With deft movements of our implements we were able to flick the serpent onto the firm gravel path where it was easy to take decisive action. There it was, a neatly banded 115 centimetre specimen of *Notechis scutatus*, the common tiger snake which seemed so small when it was compactly coiled up. I did wonder whether Pat had stretched it when she pulled it out but since snakes are vertebrates with a skeleton I soon discounted this idea.

The serpent was duly laid to rest on the compost heap. There, given due processing consistent with the concept of sustainable production, we confidently expect to recycle the serpent, perhaps in the form of one of those pungent fragrances so typical of the genus *Salvia*.

***Editor's Note:*** *This is a reprint with the author's permission form Salvia News Summer 2008, Edition 31. Hope you enjoy as much as I have.*

# Why do Salvia fanatics become so fanatical?

*Pat Anderson, Warrandyte Vic - April 2019*

***A hard question to answer – or is it?***

My own interest began around 1990, when I was co-ordinator of a community learning centre and used to arrange, among other things, gardening groups. This is how I met Arja Toivanen, who before operating her special nursery in Hurstbridge, ran a small herb and cottage garden nursery from her home in Panton Hill. While we had a garden ourselves, I had despaired of trying to grow beauties like delphiniums, but I discovered that there were other plants that produced tall stems of lovely blue flowers, called salvias, and Arja had a few of these for sale. A visit to Heronswood showed me that there were many more of these plants. Arja and I would egg each other on whenever we saw another new one, until one day I discovered Sue Templeton's advertisement in a gardening magazine and sent off for her catalogue. This would have been in about 1995. The catalogue arrived – a list several pages long, detailing various salvias, and four colour post cards of photographs. Between us, Arja and I made quite a big order…… and on it went. One Christmas, my husband John gave me a copy of Phillips and Rix's "Perennials: Vol 2 Late Perennials," which detailed nineteen different salvias, some of which I didn't have and my goal was to have every one shown therein. Then Betsy Clebsch's book appeared, with pictures and descriptions of so many more, so the greed for salvias grew. Finally in 2001, the Victorian Salvia Study Group, (a branch then of the Herb Society of Victoria) about which I had previously been unaware, advertised a Salvia Expo to be held at Ferny Creek and naturally I went. Sue Templeton was there with an enormous range of salvias for sale, and, in between attending every talk (Lyndi on landscaping with salvias, Trudi on growing them in pots, Graham Ellis on propagating them and Sue on the latest releases), I stayed for the whole day, buying more and more plants from Sue and others, in between the talks, until the car boot was full and the wallet empty.

Does this sound familiar? It seems that many people who start with a few Salvias, realise what fantastic garden plants they are, with different sizes and colours, different growing conditions, bird and bee attracting etc – and they get hooked, and turn up regularly at plant fair's and group meetings, hoping to add to their collections.

Being the sort of fanatic I am, I quickly had everything documented on a spreadsheet, recording all my plants: their colour, height, where and when I had acquired them, their country of origin, growing conditions etc etc and I find I am not alone. National Collection holders like Sue, Meg Bentley and the Salvia Study Group, are obliged to keep records. But, on reading early issues of Salvia News, I noted that in 2001, Graham and Velda Ellis had been collecting salvias since the early 1990s and were recording everything on a database, not just where they had acquired a plant from, but also to whom they had distributed a plant, so that they could say that *Salvia* 'x' in one garden was the same as *Salvia* 'x' in someone else's garden. This was because, at the time there were nine listings of *Salvia coccinea*, some of which might have been the same, but with different cultivar names. Sounds familiar???

How complicated it has all become. With so many addicted collectors out there, it would be impossible to keep up this sort of record keeping in a meaningful way, but how nice if we could!

A recent visit to Russ Cheal's beautiful garden in Wonga Park in March showed that he too likes to keep records. Shiralee Fish is another collector in Yackandandah who also keeps careful records – a practice for her that goes back to managing dairy cows! Only two weeks ago I was at Julie Campbell's lovely, large garden, 'Birchwood", which is packed full of salvias growing extremely well, and she showed me her copy of Meg's book, scribbled all over with information about the salvias she owns – so much so that she has a second copy to keep clean! I am sure there are many more people like us. The whole business of collecting salvias is totally addictive.

I was interested to learn how Sue Templeton became a salvia specialist. She was a horticulturalist, writing a regular newspaper column and teaching herb classes when she had the thought about specialising. On world travels in the late 1980s, she decided that salvias might be an excellent genus in which to specialise. At that time there were quite a few expeditions happening to Central America and a lot of interest in introductions of salvias, mainly into California. The late Richard du Fresne in North Carolina, connected Sue with Betsy Clebsch in California. Then in the early 90's Kathe Navarez made a big collection of salvias at Cabrillo College and shared seed with Sue. Sue also went to a number of annual meetings of the American Rock Garden Society, whose members were the best plant innovators at that time. And so began her life as a salvia specialist, bringing in many new species to Australia. To this end, she has visited salvia specialists in New Zealand, France, the USA, the UK and Africa. Sue has been on two salvia-hunting expeditions

***Continued on page 13 ...***

# Notes from Gruyere
# Continuing a Walk through the Garden

***Meg Bentley – Gruyere Vic***

I'm actually glad my garden has not been open to the public this past Summer or to garden groups because of the terrible heat, plant stress and fires throughout Victoria and elsewhere. I do feel for all those who have gone through such hardship.

On our continued walk around the gardens here in Gruyere we start at the 'Top of the Hill' garden. This dry area was originally a garden in part-shade, that is until the huge Cyprus came down which opened up vast areas of full sun, wind and even frosts. It turned out to be a real testing area to see how hardy some of the salvias were and now, with an open exposed area, how the new plantings would cope.

The salvias showed great adaptability as they usually do and the ones that survived this new open area were growing in leaps and bounds, that's not to say that others didn't survive.

At the joining of pathways *Salvia* 'Celestial Blue' proved to be one of the hardiest and most fragrant as you walk past, brushing the foliage as you go. Nearby, another extremely hardy one *Salvia aurea* 'Green Ginger' and of course *Salvia chamalaeagnea*. This area is home to many other plants amongst the salvias including *Origanum, Sideritus, Nepeta, Pelargoniums Euphorbia, Rosmarinus* and lavender.

Around this open bed are *Salvia fruticosa, S.muirii, S. aurea* 'Silver Lady', *S. canariensis* var *candidissima, S.* 'Greek Skies', *S. leucantha* the species and the Purple form. *Salvia aurita* var *galpinii* has spread itself around and through nearby plants and whilst it can travel it does take hold and is good for soil erosion, it can also be used as a ground cover but it does better if growing amongst other plants. *Salvia* x jamensis yellow quite surprisingly came through our hot Summer very well and of course the hardy *Salvia microphylla* 'Margaret Arnold' came through with flying colours and grew so well I had to prune it back off the pathway. There were a few salvias that suffered a bit of drooping and sulking in a really exposed area and I know they will pick up as soon as the weather changes, these are *Salvia's* 'Meigans Magic' and 'Anthony Parker'.

Succulents have also been planted amongst the salvias and one fantastic example which blends so well and adds colour contrast both in leaf colour, texture and flower is *Cotyledon orbiculata.* The chalky white leaves and pale salmon/orange flowers look extremely good growing through *Salvia* 'Celestial Blue' with blue/grey foliage and lavender blue flowers, as does the near black *Aeonium* 'schwartzkopf'. These taller succulents are a great asset to any dry garden and fantastic for structural contrast amongst the salvias.

Nearby, underneath the glorious maple 'October Glory' grows the prostrate salvia 'Bees Bliss' and *Salvia lanceolata* together with the purple form of *Salvia leucantha.* And I must say in the fullness of Autumn these colourings look quite magic I have included a photo here from last Autumn so hoping this year will be the same, although with the extremely dry, hot summer we have had I doubt we will get such grand colours this year.

As we continue back down the other side of the garden, we come to an alcove called the 'Nook', a part shaded, circular garden lined with all the sawn logs that came from the fallen cypress. At varying heights, they form the 'stumps' where all the potted plants of the Lamiaceae family present themselves in a mixed display. The 'Nook' is home to *Prostranthera, Rosemarinus, Thymus, Oreganum, Lavandula, Lepechinia, Plectranthus, Monado, Teucrium, Sideritus, Stackys, Ocimum, Lamium, Coleus* and naturally *Salvia.* It is set out as a display area to show many of the plants that are in the family of Lamiaceae.

As we wander past, there are other hardy plants like the grey leaved *Teucrium heterophyllum* which has

# Notes from Gruyere
# Continuing: A Walk through the Garden

***Meg Bentley***

***...continued from previous page***

orange flowers, an uncommon plant and not often seen, it grows well with the hardy *Plectranthus argentatus* and the orange flowered *Leonotus* Lions Ear. Other plants include Abelia, Syzygium, roses that can take part shade and many other salvias such as *Salvia Mexicana* 'Snowflake', *S. curviflora, S.apiana, S.* 'Josh', *S.chamaedryoides, S.* 'Romantic Rose' and a few greggii's and microphyllas including *Salvia* 'Annie B' which looks to be very much like an 'Anthony Parker' cultivar but with much brighter blue flowers. There is also a large Chinese Pistachio tree and a large shrub of *Salvia adenophora,* which looks great with the reddish-brown calyces of *Abelia grandiflora* and the golden foliage of *Salvia officinalis* 'Icterina' growing below, also in this area are *Salvias' microphylla* 'Baby Sage', *tomentosa, clevelandii, aurita var galpinii, lavandulifolia* and 'Finngrove' all growing in the vicinity of the middle pathway. This path leads to a shaded area under a large *Pittosporum undulatum* which gives dappled light to assorted begonias including the tall cane begonias, a large Crinum Lily, various camellias in containers and a few ferns and pots of *Salvia koyamae* that really like this shaded area. There are quite a few birdbaths situated around the garden too where all types of birds including parrots, robins, blackbirds, finches wrens, thrush, bush wrens and honeyeaters bathe and/or fly in for a drink. Birdbaths ideally are best situated in a semi-shaded area and lifted off the ground and placed either on a stump or log where scratched leaf mould won't swamp the water. Blackbirds and parrots are the first to empty the water with their flapping as they take a bath. Within this shaded area there are fuchsias and abutilons and a large Cotinus and a white flowering corea growing amongst the taller salvias of 'Pink Icicles', involucrata the species, 'Costa Rican Blue' and oxyphora. This is where we come to the end of this section of the garden.

Mind you, this past summer has played havoc with all the garden plants, the extreme dry and heat has knocked the garden and no doubt there will be many losses. I'm sure there are many gardeners out there who have battled the same harsh elements too and worse for the folk who have been through the disaster of bushfires, my heart goes out to you all. In your garden this summer, when plants look so frizzled and dried specimens, don't be tempted to prune too early. Just be patient enough for a change in the weather and if lucky enough, rains fall, you will see new shoots emerge down the stems of your salvias and you'll realise at last that the plant is alive after all. That then is the time to trim off the frizzled part, pruning back to where the green shoots emerge lower down. Then feed and mulch the plants and give a watering of diluted seaweed to buck them up and they will grow well and flower into the next season.

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# Why do Salvia fanatics become so fanatical?

***Pat Anderson***

***...continued from page 11***

with Mexican universities and has also attended and spoken at the 3 salvia summits in California, developed a mail-order salvia nursery and a web site.

From initial collections of five and then twenty species of salvia, many of us now have around two hundred species, with many more cultivars and crosses, so it has become a thriving industry.

There were others in the Victorian Herb Society who had also begun a specialist collection for the society in the late 1980s (Meg, Lyndi, Ray, Bill, Trudi, Graham and Velda etc,) and Meg went on a plant-collecting expedition to China with the Royal Botanic Gardens, where some salvias were collected. Many nurseries now import salvias into Australia and others collectors (fanatics) use the internet to purchase seeds from a growing list of sources overseas. In fact there are salvia fanatics all over the place, but in terms of getting so many people started and introducing so many species to Australia, I think we can safely call Sue the 'Matriarch of Salvias in Australia'.

***Editor:*** *Many of you may have seen Meg Bentley's garden on Gardening Australia earlier this year where she served this cake. Enjoy!*

# FRUITCUP SAGE TEA CAKE with Dorisiana Syrup

***Meg Bentley***

Tea cake using the leaves of **Salvia dorisiana** for both cake and syrup.

**FRUITCUP SAGE TEA CAKE**

3 large eggs,

150g castor sugar,

150g butter or margarine, soft but not melted

150g self raising flour

2 teaspoons grated lemon peel (zest)

4 or 5 leaves of Salvia dorisiana (Fruit Cup Sage) wash and gently pat excess moisture with paper towel.

Beat eggs then add castor sugar and other ingredients, mixing gently to combine then beat on high until smooth and creamy.
Line base of 20cm cake tin with baking paper and place the cleaned leaves of Salvia dorisiana in a pattern across the base. Make sure that the top surface of the leaves face the baking paper and the undersides with the veins are closest to the cake mixture. Cover with the cake mix and place in a moderate oven 180 degrees, cook for 35-40 minutes approx. Allow to cool in the tin before inverting it onto a cake plate.
Serve with the Dorisiana Syrup and a dollop of natural Greek Yoghurt.

**Salvia dorisiana** *Photo Lyndi Garnett*

**DORISIANA SYRUP**

¾ cup water,

¾ cup castor sugar,

2 shaved strips of lemon peel without the pith

3-4 Salvia dorisiana 'Fruit Cup Sage' leaves (washed)

2 leaves of Salvia elegans 'Pineapple Sage' (washed) optional if you have them.

Dissolve the castor sugar in the water over low heat then bring to the boil. Add sage leaves and lemon peel and boil gently for about 5 minutes. Allow to cool, then strain contents into a small glass jug, ready for use. Delicious served warm or cold over the cake.

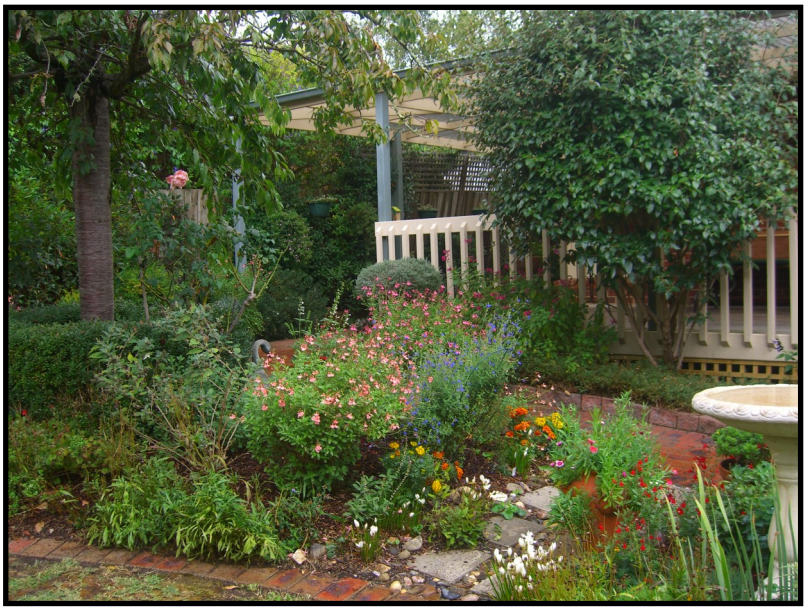
# PROPAGATION DAY/GARDEN VISIT
# RUSSELL CHEAL'S GARDEN IN WONGA PARK.

*Heather Lucas, Heathmont Vic.*

We've all been told the benefits of gardening for our health and for our minds as well and I will attest to finding that an hour or two in the garden lifts my mood and brings me great contentment as well as joy. Then there is the next level, visiting other people's gardens and getting the benefits of getting new ideas, spending quality time socialising and talking to people from all walks of life, but with the same common love – plants and gardening.

On a Sunday morning, 31st March, I set off to pick up my Mum and go to Russell's garden, not just to admire same, but also to hear him speak about the propagation of salvias. Now anyone that has either bought or received

Russell's plants knows that they are extremely healthy and floriferous. Indeed I always think how come my cuttings don't (a) look like his or b) make it to actually surviving. We arrive just after the 11 am start time and note that there are already a lot of people walking around the garden, a very good sign that it is going to be a great day and a good turnout of numbers. When we were having lunch I did a quick count and there was 25 people, could have been a couple more as some people might still have been walking around the garden. We had our 3 ladies who came from Moree, Stratford and Maffra, whom we fondly refer to as our Sale ladies and also a lady who lives in Canberra. The



Sale ladies have been long time salvia members and regularly come down and support our gardening visit days and they are always a pleasure to catch up with. I also must admit that our garden visit luncheons have been getting better and better and this day we had an array of so many different food items, with our host Russell's wife, Barb (Barbara) cooking up a wonderful tomato soup which was made from their own tomatoes grown in their garden. Spotted in their vegetable garden section were a great number of very healthy pumpkins which Barb had already decided on many dishes to make with them.

***Continued on page 16 ...***

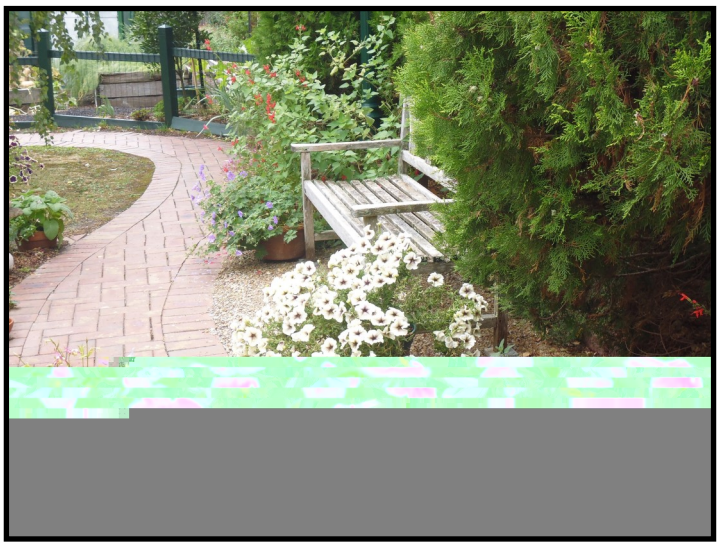
# PROPAGATION DAY/GARDEN VISIT
# RUSSELL CHEAL'S GARDEN IN WONGA PARK

*Heather Lucas, Heathmont Vic*

***...continued from page 15***

I knew that as a Group we had visited Russell's garden before and thought it was about 2 to 3 years ago, but when I checked my photo files of garden visits, was very surprised to see that it was actually the 19th May 2013, six years ago, that we last visited, boy does time fly!!

Russell's garden was literally blooming marvellous (as Peter Cundell from Gardening Australia would say), with a heaps of flowering Salvia Greggii's & Microphylla's of every possible colour, S. Coccinea's, S. Involucrata Joan and S. Concolor to name a few. There were also many other plants that complemented the salvias, amongst them Aster, Geraniums, Aquilegia and Roses.



**Following the Garden Path**

I loved the placement throughout the garden of ornaments, artworks, obelisks, various different bird baths and seating. The 2 swans that looked like they were foraging in the garden beds, the glazed birds on stakes and the metal pelican in the garden bed, all adding to the wonderful ambience of the garden.

Russell very kindly gave us a talk and demonstration on propagating salvias with many questions asked and answers and information given, from propagating to fertilisers and soil mixtures. Russell also had a table of salvia plants that he had propagated for everyone to take one (or maybe a couple) home for our own gardens.

Russell's garden was indeed therapy for our senses with all those wonderful flowers and healthy looking pots of salvias and other plants.

Many thanks Russell and Barb for a thoroughly enjoyable day; from the garden, to the food provided and your generous hospitality.

**Photos previous page: *Heather Lucas***
**In the garden** (top and below)
**Yamagata Pot (**centre**)**

***Photos this page: Lyndi Garnett***

**Russell explaining Propagation (**above)

**Russell's propagating table (**right)

# A multiplicity of microphyllas

*...Continued from page 18*

**Blue Purples – Blues**
chamaedryoides (a separate species)
Charles Shann
coahuilensis (a separate species)
Cookie
Judy-Anne
Marine Blue
Mesa Azure
Mexican Bandit Purple (from 90s – but not really purple)
Mirage Deep Purple
Navaho Purple
Navaho Dark Purple – probably coahuilensis
P9 (ex Christine Yeo – spreading)

Purple Warrior
Rowan Shann
So Cool Lilac
So Cool Purple
So Cool Violet
Superior Purple
thymoides (a separate species)
Velveteen Purple

**Reds**
Baby Sage
Crimson & Black
Desert Blaze
Firebright
Furman's Red
Garron
greggii Cherry
Heatwave Inferno
Holly
Hot Lips
Huntington Red
microphylla var neurepia
microphylla Red (ex microphylla Cerise)
microphylla var microphylla
Miss Scarlet
Raspberry Ripple
Red Beacon
Royal Bumble
Sierra Red

**Apricots and Oranges**
A-lo-ha
greggii Tangerine
Heatwave Glow
Poppy Shann
Quirky Colleen
Ribambelle
Rose Poppy
Silke's Dream (= cross with ? S. darcyi )
Tango ( = ex Cienego de Oro)
Wensley Apricot

**Lemons & lemon bicolors**
Candle Glow
Ciena Rose
Easter Bonnet
greggii Bicolor
Jo-Anne Shann
Kate Shann
Keegan
Peaches & Cream
Pink Marshmallow
Pumpkim
Sensation
Sweet Laura
Tutti Frutti

**Yellows & Creams**
greggii Yellow
Heatwave Flash
Iced Lemon
jamensis Yellow
La Luna
Navaho Cream
Sally G Vanilla

**Whites**
greggii Alba
Heatwave Glare
Heatwave Glimmer
Peg
Snow White
White Hot (A sport of Hot lips)

**Also have – ex seed and possibly not true:**
Ex Alegria (from seed)
Ex Blue Note (from seed)
Ex Javier (from seed)
Ex Jezebel (from seed)
Ex Cerra Potosi (from seed)

**Missing – currently, but there are probably others:**
grahamii Purple
Navaho White (but = same as greggii White)
Navaho Red
Pink Jewel
Ballerina
Dreamy
Moonlight Pink
greggii Pink
greggii Raspberry
jamensis Blueberry (formerly listed by Zephs)
jamensis Contessa (formerly listed by Zephs)

# BIRCHWOOD NEAR BENALLA
# Julie & Gary Campbell's garden

*Heather Lucas, Heathmont, Vic.*

Wow, wow, wow, this is a magical garden in a magical place. I was truly blown away by this garden, which is like seeing salvias on steroids, so healthy, so huge and so, so pretty. Now where do I start to describe this garden, if you haven't been to Birchwood near Benalla, then put it on your bucket list and go. It is a salve for one's mind and a journey of a multitude of flowering treasures (plants).

So this weekend away started with a conversation with Julie and Gary Campbell (the owners of Birchwood) at the Ferny Creek Horticultural Society Plant Collectors & Garden Expo sale, where I mentioned that I had seen her beautiful photos and post on Facebook that they were having an Open Garden from Friday, 5th April to Monday, 7th April to coincide with Benalla's Wall to Wall Festival. I mentioned that I had been meaning to come up and see the gardens and would love to go to her Open Day weekend. Julie said come up with your Mum and so I decided yes I would. Unfortunately Mum didn't come up with me, but I was delighted to have Pat Anderson come up with me and we stayed overnight on Saturday in the lovely accommodation that is available.

Okay I'd better describe this beautiful garden – it really starts as you turn off the main road (Kilfeera Road) onto O'Dea Road, Molyullah, which at first is a tarred road but becomes a lovely winding dirt road, with gorgeous Australian outback farmlands/fields and eucalyptus trees. Then out of nowhere is this green oasis, one acre of gently sloping land with their home and garden, which is packed full of plants, structures and artwork. The front of the property has a beautiful slate grey iron picket style fence with entry gate that has a small arbour entry over the top and there is a white sign on the fence with `Birchwood' written in slate grey italic letters. From this entry there is a lovely winding pathway flanked by beds of flowers that leads to a large stone paved area with a lovely carved stone pedestal and urn that is filled with succulents. On either side there is the most luscious green lawns, indeed all the lawn areas of this garden are so green, healthy and manicured, not unlike all of the plants in the garden. Then you walk through a long arbour that has clematis and roses growing up the posts and over the top which opens out onto a large grassed area with garden beds and the house. There are lots of winding paths around the garden with garden beds of all sizes and shapes. Besides the plants in the garden, there is also lots of trees on this property, unfortunately I'm not very well acquainted with names of trees, but they were gorgeous and provided shade and height and texture to the garden.

So our first stroll of many in the two days we were there around the garden was really awe inspiring and such a delight, with Pat and me really just taking in all the wonderful plants, structures and artwork. I indeed needed many walks around the garden to see everything and truly enjoy it all. What did strike us was how many bees and birds were in the garden and I mean hundreds (well around that amount). There were lots of Honeyeaters and Eastern Spinebills flitting from plant to plant and also Rosella's, King Parrots and Bowerbirds. Of course the Bowerbirds can be a bit of a pain as the male Bowerbird collects seeds, flowers, sticks, colourful feathers and objects to make his bower to attract the female Bowerbird and then once they have mated the female Bowerbird builds a nest in a tree with sticks for her nesting duties, which can cause a bit of a mess.

The artworks, ornaments and structures were beautifully placed in areas around the garden, from the gorgeous 6 foot plus wire lady structure with her arms stretched upwards to the sky to the gorgeous mosaic items, which included concrete tables with mosaic table tops, mosaic bowls, teapots and cups. There were lots of structures, ranging from arches, intricate iron chairs and tables, obelisks and a lovely iron arched bridge with railing that spanned the lovely dry river bed that led to the dry garden area. In this garden area there were many dry tolerant plants and salvias, amongst them S. Interrupta, S. Argentea, S. Recognita and S. Chateau Cathare.

*… continued from previous page*

Another beautiful feature in the garden was a dry creek bed area that was done by Phillip Johnson Landscapes that had lots of native plants and huge boulders and rocks.

As it was an Open Garden event, there was morning and afternoon teas provided in the entry price, which Pat and I certainly partook of, having one or two of the yummy homemade biscuits and slices. My favourite being the chocolate chip shortbread biscuits, but there was also apricot thumbprints, Anzac and Anzac chocolate chip biscuits and a few different types of slices. Coupled with a lovely cup of tea or coffee and sitting in a paved area with tables and chairs and a beautiful water fountain outside the front of the house was pure heaven.

Now the piece de resistance, the salvias in the garden beds, never have I seen such huge, healthy and gorgeous salvia specimens. I was blown away by the huge S. Anthony Parker, S. Azurea, S. Canariensis, S. Canariensis var Candidissima, S. Gesneriiflora `Tequila', S. Greggii's, S. Lanceolata, various different types of S. Leucantha's, S. Microphylla's, S. Meigans Magic and S. Pallida. This is only naming a few of the salvias in this garden, there were also several salvias that were growing marvelously in the shade, i.e. S. Black Knight, S. Flocculosa, various types of S. Involucrata's, S. Longistyla, S. Madrensis, S. Mexicana Minor, S. Mystic Spires, S. Oxyphora, S. Rubiginosa, S. Tubifera and S. `Van Houttii'. There are indeed over 200 different salvias in the garden, with 2 salvias really impressing me; S. Regla and S. Sessei.

Everyone knows that I adore salvias, but I have now started to plant and love other plants – I know who would believe it!! Another plant collection in this garden and a new type of plant for me to purchase are dahlias. Their dahlias were simply to die for, they were huge and they had many different types of all sizes and colours. I loved them and bought one of Julie's dahlias (a red one) from the table she had with plants for sale. Other plants in the garden included Daylilies, Helianthus, Iris, Native plants, Peonies, Phlox, Watsonias and Zinnia's (hot pink, orange, white, red, pink, apricot and yellow).

I meant to say earlier on in this article that I think that the secret to this wonderful garden, besides the hard work that both Julie and Gary do in the garden, is very good soil, water and fertiliser. These three items are definitely something that I really do need to apply to my garden, which is very much in need of soil replenishment, always water and definitely to fertilize it heaps in the future. Then who knows maybe my salvias will look as prolific and healthy as theirs.

Lastly I want to thank Julie and Gary for a truly wonderful weekend, from the magnificent gardens and accommodation to the fantastic hospitality and great conversations.

So do yourself a favour and check out their website www.birchwoodnearbenalla.com.au or on Facebook:/ Birchwood Near Benalla and book yourself a garden visit or weekend away.

Happy Gardening.

# SALVIA NEWS EDITOR RETIRES /
# NEW EDITOR URGENTLY NEEDED

It is with some regret that I have to retire as Editor of Salvia News. I doubt that my interest in Salvias will ever lapse, it is an addiction that I doubt can be cured and I wouldn't want it to be. I will remain a member and enjoy from afar, may even attend the occasional venue as per the Calendar Page, in fact I will be attending the Gardeners Day Out run by Royal Victorian Horticultural Society in June so may even see you there.

The Group is seeking a new Editor. Whoever she or he may be, they will find that it is time consuming for a few days each quarter but it is a learning curve too; a great way to meet some special people and can be lots of fun too. The only qualifications is to be computer literate. There is already a detailed outline with Lyndi and there will be even more if the new editor hasn't done something like this before. I will give as much support as the new editor would like, but will not take over, you will get to do it your way in accordance to the Committee's direction. I am sure you will give the new Editor the same wonderful support I have received over the years.

Anyone who has had anything to do with a newsletter is very aware that there are a lot of people involved before it arrives in subscribers/'members' letterboxes whether via Australia Post or online. Salvia News is no exception. It's a great team and I have very much enjoyed being part of it.

Preparation 3-5 days (editor)

Articles received and written (many salvia enthusiasts, new and established, including the editor)

Proof reading and forwarding for proof reading up to a week (editor mailing to Jillian)

Corrections and final preparation and sending via email to printer 2 hours max (Jillian and Editor)

Printer 2 days (external Printer)

Collection (Lyndi or Jillian)

Preparation of labels for current members to receive the latest Salvia News (Membership Officer)

Inserts (Jillian and Lyndi) usually Winter edition for Membership renewals

Preparation for sending and mailing 2-3 weeks (Jillian)

Online Distribution (Membership Officer)

There is a legal obligation to get it out on time because the subscription is paid for. (ACCC)

Copy Deadlines for every edition of Salvia News

| | |
|---|---|
| Spring Edition deadline 17 July | distributed on or before 1 September |
| Summer edition deadline 17 October | distributed on or before 1 December |
| Autumn edition deadline 17 January | distributed on or before 1 March |
| Winter edition deadline 17 April | distributed on or before 1 July |

Plus some additional jobs that allow the above to be completed.

To all those who have given such support to each edition and to me personally, the special friendships that have resulted, my sincerest thanks. This especially includes those who have sent in articles and photos each edition for without your expertise and sharing there would be no Salvia News. Likewise to the many members/subscribers, we are indebted to you for you ongoing support.

It's a big year, VSSG's first year on their own, run by an elected team with the Co-Ordinator still the same after 25 years. What an achievement! Why not give being Editor a try, joining the team, you may find it is just what you had been looking for? You will get as much support as you choose.

I wish you all the very best, happy and successful gardening.

**Beth Gilchrist**
Outgoing Editor Salvia News

# PRUNING WINTER SALVIAS

*Lyndi Garnett*

Many of these tall large leaf Salvias may have finished or are almost finished flowering. They may be looking a bit bedraggled from the wind, or Wattle Birds crashing into them, many clumps may have old canes that need taking out. Have a look at your plant and decide what needs coming out. Old canes can be pruned right down to the base, of course if there are new growths coming from the old canes fairly low down, then prune to those new shoots.
Usually you always prune to a bud or new shoots, but it may not be possible to find new shoots happening on large plants, so you will have to prune to where you think there should be a bud or prune to a suitable height and wait for that new growth to appear. While you are taking out the big old canes, don't forget to clean out the clump of weak, old, dead or crossing branches, the same principle as pruning a rose bush.

If you are like me and cannot throw away any pruning – (you just have to take all those cuttings), well now is the perfect time. If you find yourself with too many plants to pot up, just give them to a friend or give them to the group to sell – we can always use some more pots of whatever you give us. (just phone and we can organize to pick up.)

Don't even think about taking cutting of the small leaf Salvias e.g. *greggii's* and *microphylla's*, they will only sit and sulk in this cold weather. They are best taken in the warmer months.

**Taking Cuttings**
Take tip cuttings, anywhere from 8 – 14cm long, strip off the lower leaves and any flowers and buds. (we want the energy in the cutting to go into producing roots and strong growth – if there are flowers or buds, then the energy goes into producing that flower and not roots. If the cutting does root with a flower, then it is likely to be weak and may not survive any shocks or stress.) Nip out the top bud of leaves as this promotes bushiness.

As many of these large leaf Salvias can have hollow stems, it is best to take the cutting by cutting through the node, or at least leave a heel.

Dip the cuttings into a rooting gel or powder and put into a pot of ordinary potting mix. Plant the cutting deeply so that there is at least one node below the surface. This all goes to help produce roots. Many people prefer to plant one cutting to one pot – this can take up a lot of space. The idea here is that the cutting will continue to grow in that pot, no repotting and no shock associated with repotting for the plant but some people don't have a lot of room e.g. me, so I put a number of cuttings in one pot and tease them out and pot up into individual pots when rooted.

Always water the pot of cuttings or potted up plants in well – this is to settle the soil and to eliminate the air around the cutting stem, so the cutting can then get on with the task of producing roots.

Place the pot/s of cuttings in a sheltered place, out of the wind and if possible a warm area. It is not necessary to place them in a heated propagating unit at all. Because of the cold weather, these plants don't transpire (lose water) as much as in the warmer weather, so leave them outside in the elements in a sheltered position.

To tell if the cuttings have rooted, you can either see the roots appearing through the bottom of the pot or you can tip up the pot, carefully taking the pot off the soil to see if there are any roots. If there are no roots, carefully place the pot back over the soil and firm the soil around the cuttings again, water again. Another indication that the cuttings have taken is that the cuttings are putting on new growth.

But beware, there are some cuttings that seem to put on new growth, but rather these elongate their stems and leaves, but don't produce any roots. Once the cutting/s has rooted and you need to pot up, carefully tip up the pot with your hand and fingers carefully positioned through the cuttings and tip out, carefully lay them out and gradually tease them apart, placing a cutting in a half filled pot of soil. When all the cuttings have been teased out, then proceed to cover the cutting with good potting soil and firming around the stem. Don't forget the label and water in. Scatter around a little Osmocote and set them aside and watch them grow.

Its that easy so give it a go. You never know, you may have success where others fail and have some to give away that make another person's day!

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# Lyndi's Findings Autumn 2019

***Lyndi Garnett - VSSG Co-ordinator***

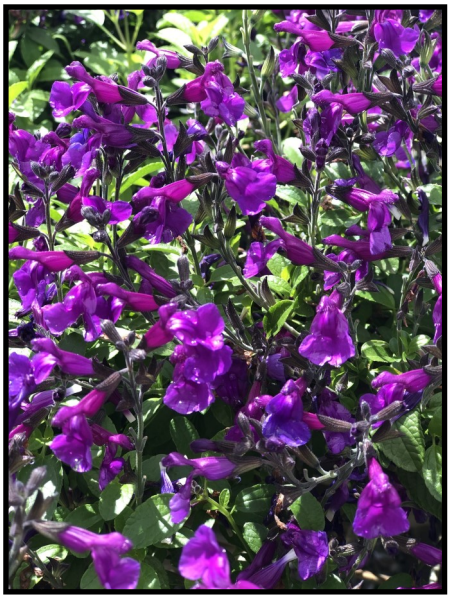
Two new Salvias as were seen and sold at MIFGS, grown by Greenhill's Touch of Class but sold by Tesselaar. Salvia ''Ignition Purple' and Salvia 'Blue Bouquetta'
I know that to some, Salvia 'Ignition Purple ' looks like so many others, but this plant has both purple and a rich violet colour flowers. A compact plant with a typical microphylla type leaf.

This differs from 'Mirage Dark Purple' ( all Australia) released this summer season. This Salvia has consistent purple pink flowers, also a compact plant but with an elliptical leaf.

This is also similar but different from 'Purple Jewel' , found in Bunnings 2 years ago. 'Purple Jewel' has a good purple flower with a dark calyx and a microphylla type leaf but with a pointed apex.

I know it's all very confusing and many couldn't care less what each plant is called just so long as they can purchase a plant. By taking note of a few characteristics of each plant, eg. the leaves or the flower colour, then there is a good chance that the same plant isn't purchased yet again.

'Blue Bouquetta' may also look similar to many dwarf forms of these herbaceous Salvias but looking at the photo, I think you'll agree that this plant is compact, produces a mass of flowering stems which would seem much thicker than other, and those stems are all well clothed all along the stem. Most of the other dwarf forms have a paler blue colour, but this has a rich violet purple colour helped by reddish calyces.



**Salvia 'Ignition Purple'**

**Salvia 'Bouquetta'**

It has also come to my notice (photos given to me) by Fiona and Heather that plants of 'Love and Wishes' are being propagated and sold in Bunnings as 'Black Prince', which is a shame as each plant of 'Love and Wishes' is sold and a portion of that money is given to the 'Wish Foundation'

Keep vigilant when going to Bunnings and other nurseries and see what you can find, but don't be duped into buying a plant that you already have in your garden just because that plant has a different name.

**'Mirage Deep Purple'**

**Salvia 'Purple Jewel'**

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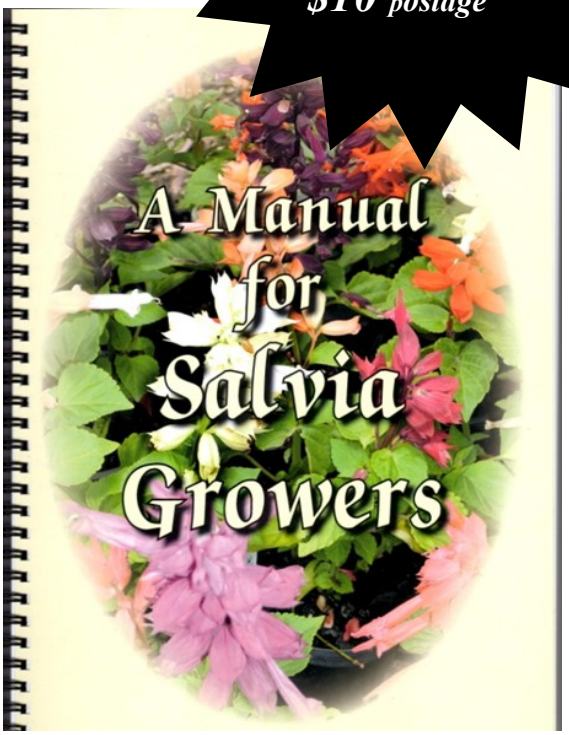


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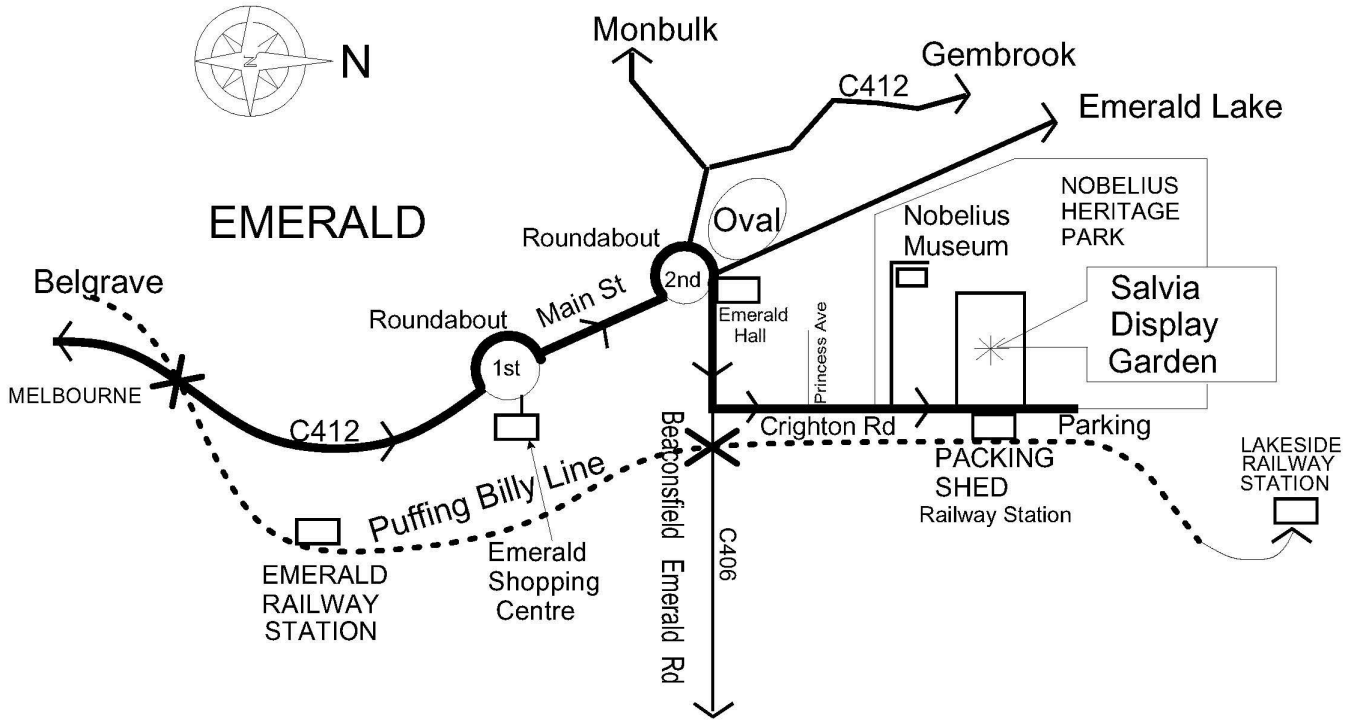


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