

# SalviaNews

Victorian Salvia Study Group  
A Branch of the Herb Society of Victoria

March/ April/ May 2003

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*I bought a rain gauge. No use at all, the scant drizzle hardly registers but the salvias are transforming from dry sticks to green and in some cases have colourful flowers. The Cockatoo Market was a great success, 140 stalls and droves of people. We sold well and have used some of the proceeds to buy 2 folding wooden trestle tables with an attached metal base. Quick and easy to erect, strong and 1800x 665 x 760mm. Jillian and I have one each too so these will be a real asset for displays.*

## Dates For Your Diary

**April 27 11.00am – ‘The Botany of a Salvia’**

Meg Bentley's Garden

3 Fords Road, Gruyere BYO Lunch to share Ph 59 649 360

**Plants for sale**

**May 18 11.00am**

**Hampton Workshop**

21 Barnett Street, Hampton BYO Lunch to share **Plants for Sale**

**June 15th 11am lunch BYO lunch to share**

**Elly & Leon Roos Garden**

**59 Ferguson Street Upwey ph 9752 6712 Plants for Sale**

**August 17<sup>th</sup> 11 am meet at the Herb Garden at The Melbourne Botanic Gardens**

### LEMON TREE COTTAGE ... the garden of Elly and Leon Roos

A fantastic, garden full of surprises at every turn, a garden absolutely filled to the brim with flowering plants of all descriptions. The colour coordination has been utilised to the finest degree and very pleasing to the eye... not just with flowers in bloom but with foliage, artifacts and the simple building constructions like archways. Everything flows throughout the whole garden. Anyone who has visited. Elly's garden will understand what I mean when I say this is a wonderfully creative garden... not "God's little half acre" but Elly's little third of an acre!

It is incredible to think that this garden is only six and a half years old; the house, built on a very steep slope, was the only thing that stood out from the barren land that was home to blackberries, rubble, rocks... and of course... the lemon tree!

The rocks were the bane of Elly and Leon's life... everywhere you tried to dig a hole to put in a plant you had to remove all the rocks... so, the creative Elly put her mind to work and utilised the rocks to make stone walls for garden edgings and to create 'terraced beds' so to speak. The small 'landing' areas have been designed in a way that not only is it a place to pause but an area of interest because amongst the stonework paving you will find a colourful mosaic of crockery pieces cemented in a pattern. Seating has been strategically placed in areas where one can rest quietly under the canopy of a tree to view the salvias, roses and other perennials.

It is easy to see that amongst the many interesting plants growing in Elly's garden, roses and salvias are just some of the main attractions, (these will be covered in more detail below) but one very interesting area was the vegetable garden where fruit trees lined the pathways. For example, a beautiful Nashi pear, grafted onto a William and laden with fruit was espaliered and covered with netting to stop birds and possums getting the fruit, apple trees, also espaliered, were given the same treatment... to see fruit trees growing this way along the edge of a pathway, given the circumstances of steepness and size of the block has great merit!! (Something I shall be looking into in the future... since our fruit trees have been all ruined by the possums, espaliering trees might make for constant work but so much easier to protect the fruit... just hang the netting over the main fruiting area)

Another pathway near the vegetable garden has been lined with varieties of citrus trees. This pathway led down the hill to the native garden section where one could find amongst other plants, correas and grevilleas, there was also a great specimen of *Cunonia capensis*, the Butter Knife Tree... with buds, this is a very hardy tree which comes from South Africa and grows very well, even without additional water, looking quite at home in this garden.

And where else would one expect to find the cooking sage *Salvia officinalis* including the varieties *Salvia officinalis* Purpurescens and Icterina but in the vegetable garden, amongst the Chili peppers, ornamental peppers, beans and broad beans including many other vegetables. Nearby, a beautiful lax bush of *Salvia azurea*, smothered in soft powder blue flowers almost filled the corner of a garden bed, quite a contrast to the orderly fashion of *Salvia scabra* which responds well when trained as a neatly clipped hedge, as this one shows.

The latest addition to Elly and Leon's garden is the 'Balinese Garden', small, serene with an air of ethereal distance. The slender maroon construction blends so beautifully with the multicoloured False Beech... *Nothofagus*, their small leaves in colours of wine, cream and green looked so dainty beside the larger foliage of *Salvia splendens* Van Houttii with its rich maroon and deep red flowers. This colour combination was carried through to the plum / wine colours of *Heuchera* and deep bronze foliage of *Anthriscus sylvestris* 'Ravenswing'. Further along is an archway, overhanging with the rose 'Golden Showers' blending colours of apricot and lemon, tying them in with apricot *Mimulus*, *Salvia greggii* 'Tangerine' and *S.* 'Coral', *Salvia splendens* Van Houttii, a rare white *Mimulus* and a beautiful blue/purple, large flowering *Clematis*.

There were combinations of salmon pink roses, blue Easter Daisies, brilliant salmon pink *Gerbera*, assorted blue pansies, *Salvia farinacea* in blue and white. *Salvia* 'Phyllis Fancy' looked a treat amongst roses *R.* 'Margaret Merrill' and *R.* 'Genevieve'. There were clumps of *Salvia greggii* Sierra

Pink, *S.greggii* Alba, *S.greggii* Raspberry Royal, a great specimen plant of *Salvia tingitana*, taller species were placed in the background like *S.Black Knight* and *S. karwinskii* which complimented the hydrangeas and a shrub of *Tibouchinia Grandiflora* with its large brilliant purple flowers.

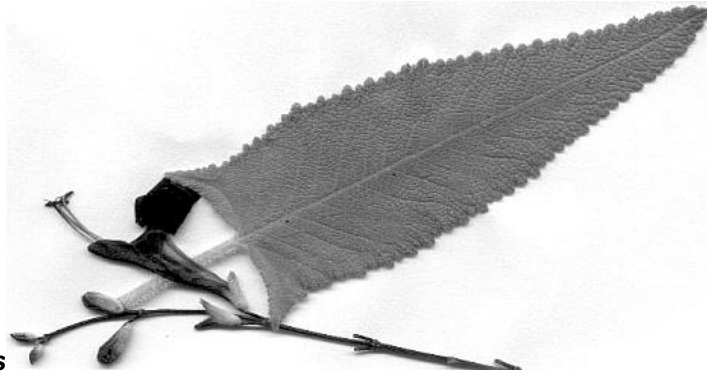
Other salvias represented were *S. mexicana* Limelight, *S. mexicana* Lolly, *S. mexicana* major, *S. sprucei*, *S. concolor*, *S. involucrata* Joan, *S. Marine Blue*, *S. chamaedryoides* and *S.sagittatus*, Elly also has an unusual shade of tangerine/coral amongst her *Salvia coccinea*.

The front entrance was a glorious display of roses, geraniums, pansies, allysum, nepetas, campanulas and a lovely section of salvias amongst roses and azaleas. These included *Salvia chiapensis*, *S. Anthony Parker*, *S. Waverly*, *S. Phyllis Fancy*, *S. farinacea* Strata and a very good specimen of *Salvia* 'Kathe'.

A few new varieties like a lovely blue *S. microphylla* x *greggii*, a red and white *greggii* called *S. greggii* 'Hot Lips' and another blue flowering salvia, *S. 'Cookie'* which looks very much like a *greggii* x *chamaedryoides* and would be a great asset to have for the front border. But there were so many, many other plants not mentioned here to which all add to the wonderful garden of Lemon Tree Cottage

Not only has Elly been busy getting the garden ready for the Open Garden Scheme, she has also prepared around 1,000 plants to sell... young plants that represent many of the flowering specimens within her garden. It was a great effort and we all hope that the 'Lemon Tree Cottage' open garden weekend was a large success for all concerned!

**Meg Bentley**



***Salvia sagittatus***

**Stratford News**

My garden and salvia's will be glad to see the end of this summer, and go into the cooler weather pattern. Now have the threat of bushfires hovering nearby-its a worry. Have taken my photo's to my daughters who is surrounded by green grass and no trees.

#### **Now the news of my salvias!**

I am very disappointed with my *Salvia sagittatus*- "mosquito". I sprayed with stressgard for the frost as I do every winter and this is the first time I have ever lost a plant with stressgard. But "mosquito" must be too frost sensitive as I lost it last winter. The blue flowers are just so striking. Any ideas where the best position is to put "mosquito" in the garden? I would appreciate.

The rest of the salvias are growing well using bore water. We had our bore put down in the 1972 drought, so I have always had water for the garden. The bore is 240 feet underground, and I pump the water into a 5000 gal tank, then water from the tank and can have up to 5 hoses going at the one time. Having a bore is a great asset as one is able to have a garden and to be able to grow all those salvias !!

My love of salvia's has grown since joining the salvia group and going to the salvia expo last year. Now I want to have a garden bed of just salvia's and penstemons. On a recent trip to Tasmania at the Hobart botanical gardens, they had just that and it looked fabulous. Now I have the headache of trying to find the space to make this salvia/penstemons patch, or maybe its time to extend into the stock paddock.

Happy salvia gardening, and look forward to all the rain that is forecast!!! **Jane Lee**

### Potty about Salvias

I was most interested to read about Trudi's experience with keeping potted Salvias cool over the heat of the summer. My own experiences with pots had brought me to the same conclusion and so I did some experiments to test the effect of heat on the pots. I thought I would share my experiences and my results with you.

Why put Salvias in pots in the first place? In theory, they ought to perform much better in the ground - especially those monsters that reach several metres high. Trudi is on tank water so it makes a lot of sense for her to keep her precious plants in pots. We are on town water as well as having pumping rights to the river, so in theory, my Salvias should thrive in the ground. However our block is heavily treed, the soil thin and it is essentially a bush block, so out of choice, we have restricted the size of the garden area. My plants are often straining up to reach the light while the trees suck up the moisture. When I only had a few Salvias this wasn't a great problem but as my collection grew along with my fascination for this genus, I lost some plants through competition. Others died back in the winter, never to be seen again, presumably lost to waterlogging, snails or whatever. Furthermore, there was no room in the beds to add more. So I made the decision to keep one of everything of my burgeoning collection in a pot, retaining some in the garden as well.

So far, so good. But then they grew, so I put them in bigger pots. With more leaf area, they demanded more water. So I stood some thirsty ones in saucers. I acquired some metal benches from a friend on which I proudly placed them - in a location to maximise the winter sun. As summer began to unleash its worst, I moved the benches to a cooler position and continued the daily watering routine. In this way, I managed to kill a few off with kindness (over-watering or water logging their roots in saucers), including a *Salvia apiana* that I had grown from a cutting and some lovely new additions that I had recently bought. Then, like Trudi, I concluded that they needed shaded pots and moisture, without getting waterlogged. So out went the saucers and in came the polystyrene boxes - not the ordinary fruit sort, but the deeper broccoli boxes. I made holes fairly low down on the sides which allowed me to keep a wet layer of scoria in the bottom of each, although I think wet screenings would be as good, if not better. The roots of the big plants grow into the scoria. The important thing is the evaporative cooling effect of the wet stones.

Having established all this, I then set about testing the effect of pot size, pot colour and various shading/cooling strategies on pot temperature. What fun I had. I lined up black pots of every available size from 50mm to 200mm, another set of seven 140mm pots of different colour and then some 140mm and 200mm black pots covered in foil, in poly boxes and in poly boxes on wet stones. The pots were all filled to the top with identical potting mix and well watered and left to stand for an hour in the sun (naturally I didn't want to subject my salvias to any experiments). When the shade temperature reached 31<sup>o</sup>, I recorded the temperature in all pots, at the same depth, both in the centre of the mix and at the outer edge where the mix was in contact with the plastic. Predictably, the highest temperatures were recorded near the outside of all the black pots, irrespective of size - 54<sup>o</sup> !! - and the coolest, outer edge temperatures were recorded with the largest pot on wet stones in the poly box - 34<sup>o</sup>. The foil wasn't too bad either, at 37<sup>o</sup>, but then foil is expensive. The lighter colours naturally had an effect, but how often do you see white pots and don't they look awful? And in any case the outer temperature in the white pot was still 43<sup>o</sup>. By the time I had finished this arduous recording process, the ambient shade temperature had reached 34<sup>o</sup>, but the temperature in the centre of the potting mix of the 200mm pot standing on wet stones in a poly box was only 31<sup>o</sup>.

From all this, it is clear why we can so easily cook our plants' roots in plastic pots on hot days when the plants are already transpiring like mad. This, on top of killing them by waterlogging. What bad mothers we are!

Since learning all this the hard way, my potted Salvias are all doing fine. The only trouble now is that they are jammed far too close together and competing again. Also, as the equinox approaches, they are beginning to need more daily sunlight. But this is easy to remedy. I shall have to shift them back to the other side of the garden, take them out of their boxes and give them more bench space. Then, what am I going to do with all those ugly polystyrene boxes until next summer?

The tough, grey leaved ones -*Salvia apiana*, *S. lanceolata*, *S. muirii*, *S. dolomitica*, *S. africana lutea* - cope well in pots (when not over watered) as do the smaller *greggii*-type plants. Oh yes. One more thing. My *S. ciinabarina* was growing beautifully until I did some pruning of the overhanging *Kunzea*. Once exposed to more light, it curled up and died.

I've given my pots a feed of slow-release fertiliser, and, following Sue Templeton's suggestion, I've found that some watering with a soluble fertiliser with higher phosphorus and potassium proportion has stimulated flowering.

Next I shall do some experiments with different mixes, pH and fertilisers. After all, with so many different Salvias from so many environments, their demands must be different.

**Pat Anderson Warrandyte**

### Geelong News

The derelict fence in the corner of the yard has been replaced. The adjacent *Salvia discolor*, *S. pulchella*, *S. madrensis* and *S. greggii* Alba cut almost down to ground level have all recovered strongly. This *S. discolor* was my first salvia given to me by a salvia enthusiast 11 years ago and is now bearing one stem of flowers. During all these years I think it has never been without its striking flowers.

Our council covering the Geelong region has supplied all residents so far with two 240 litre bins with the third one, 120 litre to be supplied in April. One of the 240 litre bins is for green waste, which the council will then mulch and supply back to the residents at a small cost. This allows me now to prune my plants without the bother of trying to get rid of this waste. The *Salvia purpurea* which nearly died from the recent heat along with the other tall salvias, have now all been pruned. The large hollow stems of the *S. purpurea* in particular showed their age and needed pruning.

I recently received 2 large pots containing *S. glechomaefolia* and *S. arizonica* from Des Lawrence of the Geelong Botanic Gardens with the Director's blessing. In return I gave Des the seeds from my *S. leucophylla*, *S. mellifera* and *S. officinalis* 'Rosea'. Also I gave him 2 pots of *S. officinalis* 'Berrgarten' which the Gardens did not possess.



*Salvia glechomaefolia* or Ground Ivy Sage is native to at least 3 provinces of Mexico and only became available to gardeners in 1992. The specific part of its botanical name indicates that its foliage is similar to the small genus of plants named *glechoma* of which Ground Ivy is a member.

Its small mid-blue flowers are borne in whorls unevenly spaced along its stems. The lower lip contains 2 parallel and highly visible white stripes. The mid green leaves are lanceolate with serrations around the edges and approx. 40x30mm in size, the stems are up to 40cm in height and there are indications of a stoloniferous growth habit.

**Bill Whitehead**

## NOTES FROM GRUYERE

Now that Autumn is here we usually give a great sigh of relief... I guess the relief will really set in when we have some 'wetting' rain and not just a sprinkling of drizzle on the roof! Even the wildlife is having a job coping with the dry, what with rabbits scratching holes in the lawn areas for roots, blackbirds undermining plants in the garden by digging out the mulch whilst looking for worms, huge big Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos stripping the foliage off the *Hakea salicifolia* and dropping the nuts onto the roof... having cracked them open to remove the seeds. Wombats doing a fine job in the earthmoving department down in the bush and the Echidna ferreting through ant holes... under logs...through the garden... into the birdbath and up-ending my potted salvia plants everywhere to find anything at all that resembles food.

I must say though that the Echidna is one of my favourites in the wildlife department... when I am busy around the garden and hear the quiet rustling of leaves on the ground I stand very still and watch the echidna emerge from the bush, I know its quiet movements so well. Many a time it comes up near to where I am standing, then, treat of treats, will come very close to me, sniff at my shoe and on a few occasions, has lifted up my foot whilst sniffing out ants, other times it will just waddle past me on its way up the hill. There have been a variety of sizes lately, one very large echidna came every day just to sit in one of the lower birdbaths and soak up the water, I know it was big because the birdbath is 18" (46cm) inside diameter and this echidna fills the birdbath as it lays there, snout poking over one edge and hind legs resting on the other edge. When cooled off, the echidna climbs out, dripping with water, slides down the side of the logs where the bath is resting and sits and has a good scratch in the shade. All that remains in the birdbath is a small puddle of muddy water.

I did on one occasion, watch a very small echidna walking through one garden bed where I place potted plants to drain after watering them. I stood very still just watching all the pots being lifted up with its strong snout, looking for a feed and knocking over each container in the process, being only a foot or so away I could clearly see the beautiful brown, soft fur between the spines. My joys are many as we struggle through these dry times. Some of my salvias have pulled through remarkably well since having had a change in temperature and a small pittance of drizzle, many of the South American and Mexican species are coming into bud... *Salvia mexicana* Limelight, *S. Costa Rica Blue*, *S. Black Knight*, *S. splendens* Van Houttii, *S. puberula*, *S. greggii* and their varieties also *S. microphylla* Iced Lemon, *S. microphylla* Pink Blush. *Salvia azurea* is also coming into bud with just a few flowers starting to open... this is a lovely salvia and can be placed anywhere in the garden.

The new 'flat area' is coming along fine, also the remodeling of the vegetable, herb, cactus and salvia gardens... hopefully these will be finished in time for the 27th of April, when we have the next Salvia get-together. Everyone interested in Salvias is quite welcome to come! The topic will be 'Botany of a Salvia' it is a BYO lunch to share, there will be plenty to eat, tea and coffee will be provided. There will be plants for sale and orders can be taken for anyone interested in obtaining the Salvia Seasons Posters ( a set of 4@ \$28.00) There are still a number of *S. miltiorrhiza* printed Tea-towels available and a few *Salvia gesneraeflora* Tequila blank greeting cards available plus other items...

Meg Bentley

## SE Queensland Salvia News - 24/2/03

At the time of writing – late February – South East Queensland has been fortunate to receive good rains in some areas although some parts are still badly drought stricken. At our recent ‘Perennial Poppies Group’ meeting we began our day sitting in the open when suddenly the heavens opened and most people scuttled for cover – among those braving the weather under umbrellas were two of our members from the Beaudesert area who are badly drought affected and in recent times have had such severe restrictions that they cannot even bucket water to their garden! They were revelling in the rain!

February is not a great time for salvias to be flowering – *Salvia azurea*, S. Blue Ribbon and S. Phyllis Fancy were three that I took along to the meeting to talk about. *Salvia Phyllis Fancy* is a superb performer for us – Sue Templeton advises that she has been disappointed with its flowering, however here it is a stunner. The other new plant to us, S. Anthony Parker, I thought at first was going to be a great one – flowers are lovely but not enough of them however it may do better in the winter months. *Salvia madrensis* always surprises us as it is supposed to be autumn/winter flowering however we find it flowers on and off all year. I seem to repeat myself every report when mentioning the salvias that are flowering – wonderful anchor plants – the microphyllas, greggiis, S. Purple Majesty and S. chiapensis.

I purchased one of the Navajo series for a raffle prize for our meeting and it was received with great gusto – Unfortunately this plant does not have a botanical name on the label! It has been put out by Ball Australia. The plant is labeled *Salvia Navajo Dark Purple* and states that it is a PBR plant until 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2003. The first time I saw it I thought it looked like *S. coahuilensis* – it has been bred for Ball Australia so we suspect *Salvia coahuilensis* has been mixed with *S. microphylla*. It appears to be a rather brittle plant – I’ll give more information on it’s growth and flowering in the next issue! In the same nursery there was Navajo Red and Navajo white – the red salvia looked just like a *S. grahamii* and the white looked just like a *S. greggi*. All these plants without botanical names are going to cause some confusion in the market place I feel.

At a recent Queensland Horticultural Media Association meeting I, and several other members, expressed concern that so many plants are appearing on the market without botanical names and a decision was made to follow up the issue.

One of our local wholesalers is putting out a salvia called ‘San Carlos Festival’ – new to us – Ross McKinnon, Curator of the Brisbane Botanic Gardens is going to provide me with a plant. It will be interesting to see if it has a botanical name!

*Salvia Microphylla* ‘Margaret Arnold’ is doing well in our gardens – is it definite that this is to be called ‘Margaret Arnold’ or should it be ‘Margaret’s Rose’?

It’s pruning time for the large winter flowering salvias in our garden – I find most years that summer pruning gives a good dense plant that flowers early May. Our garden is to open with Australia’s Open Garden Scheme in May of 2004 so this year is a trial year to see how good they look at this time. Our group feel it is best to prune part of the plant at a time – wait for the new foliage to appear and then prune the remainder – the larger varieties in particular we feel cope with pruning almost to the ground. I’d be interested to hear of other experiences.

### Update

*I have been given a salvia called San Carlos Festival - says it is red and black - wandering looking plant - leaves not like anything in particular - smallish - no botanical name of course! I'll see if the wholesaler can give me more info - Ross McKinnon got it from a wholesaler in Brisbane. Have you ever heard of it?*

*I've lost a few salvias in the wet - 15 inches of rain in a week last week - too much - I know I shouldn't complain! that beautiful pink S. lanceolata has gone.... I think Deb still has it. It was in a well drained spot too. I have lost S. lavanduloides and S. runcinata (have another though from Deb - she doesn't get the rain so a lot more survive for her).S. neurepia also but that is not a brilliant salvia anyway. I am at the stage where if it is difficult to grow and not wonderful I'm not going to bother. A lot of my soil needs building up to raise the beds so I need to get a few metres of soil in, more work! At least it is little cooler now . Guess it is autumn - yes we do.... have an autumn Happy salvia gardening! Barb Wickes*

### The South Australian Study Group Salvia Show Date??

We arrived at Urrbrae House Gardens for the SA Salvia Show at 1pm. It opened at 10am. The setting was sublime; beautiful garden beds full of roses at their peak under planted with blue salvias, throngs of people, and a warm welcome from the S.A.Salvia Group and on a sales table about 12 pots of salvia! There had been a remarkable rush of eager buyers carrying off loads of salvia plants as they arrived and then descending on Robin Powell as she drove back and forth to her nursery for fresh stock. The throngs of people were waiting for her to return once again. It even began to rain and the people still waited to descend on her final load as soon as it arrived. Other people had sold out too before we arrived. Simon Ardill had been holding a plant for me but it had accidentally left with some other lucky customer.

Inside the hall was an informative display and it was great to see our Meg Bentley's work there. The setting and the enthusiasm was exciting to see. We should all go next time but **early**.

When Robin finally left she invited us to follow her to her nursery in spite of having overseas visitors and leaving with them for Kangaroo Island early in the morning. We could have spent hours there (and probably did) buying wonderful healthy well grown plants. All the plants we saw at the show and elsewhere were solid, well grown and healthy.

Peter Love and Kay gave us a great welcome and a *Salvia pomifera* plant. It died after a few weeks of my loving care. Sorry Peter. He was at first reluctant to show us his garden...his work for the very successful had taken its toll. He thought the garden untidy or something. I thought it was fascinating. So many interesting plants. The thing to remember is that salvia enthusiasts are not ones for garden inspections but only see plants. To see his *Salvia brousonetti*, regularly slashed back to enable the car to be driven in made me green with envy. At Selby, I'm told, mine flowered when I was in Queensland and grows so slowly.

Simon Ardil and his family live at G..... He and his wife grow a range of good well grown plants. Simon introduced a lot salvias from the early days of our Study Groups and his generosity is legendary. He gave us a *Salvia clevelandii* (oh! *The responsibility*) as well as some other treasures and took us to Margaret Arnold's new garden. As she had just shifted house most of her plants were still in pots looking wonderfully healthy. We are still identifying one she gave us.

Anthony Metcalf garden is an education in itself. A suburban block that seems like an immense acreage. There are winding paths leading to interesting vistas, masses of flowers of all kinds salvias included. No space is wasted, no lawn. Just a garden that would never be boring and certainly one that one can't see all of at a glance.

**Trudi Fry**

Salvia discolor

#### **Sticky And Tricky**

Some salvias are very sticky. *Salvia glutinosa* has a very descriptive name but one of my favourite salvia is, I think, the stickiest of all, *Salvia discolor*. This 'tanglefoot' comes from glands and trichomes which burst on contact and trap and repel insects such as aphids and the like



### A Garden in Tyabb

The salvia section of our garden is new. Virgin soil, rotary hoed prior to last winter, was mulched with newspaper followed by a thick layer of stable straw. Some 40+ salvias were then planted in two stages, November and early February. As we are on tank water and our dam water is too saline to use this year these plants have been watered possibly half a dozen times. In spite of this area of the garden being totally devoid of shade, the mulched heavy soil has held the moisture really well. We have lost only two plants, one to poor water quality and one, a very small *S. plectranthoides*, probably to rabbits disturbing the roots. I have solved the rabbit problem by cutting the bottom out of plastic pots and placing a pot over small plants until they are well established. Nothing new here, but it is working for me. I still need to find an aesthetically acceptable method of staking. Several of the November plantings have grown to 1.5 m or more and in spite of the garden being enclosed by a hedge, wind damage has been a problem. (I have used both single stakes and tripods but I am not particularly happy with either. Suggestions welcome!)

As I know absolutely nothing about salvias they all go into the same area. The idea being that after the full four seasons, I will find out which ones are suitable for the conditions, although I think plants are often much more adaptable than we imagine. I am inclined to plant what I like even when I know the conditions are not ideal. I have several Western Australian banksias, which normally grow in deep sand, growing and flowering on a large clay bank. (I ask my friends when they are in that part of the garden, not to mention the inappropriate growing conditions, as my banksias don't seem to realise they shouldn't be doing so well. I would like to keep it that way.)

A visit to the Cockatoo Plant Market last Sunday, where Meg Bentley provided the expertise, has enabled us to double our collection. We have plenty of happy planting ahead with the prospect of a wonderful display, or a disaster, to follow.

Stop press news *Salvia tubifera* is about to flower!!

**Bevan Whelan**

### Remark News

I visited my brother's garden today. I was impressed and somewhat envious by how well his salvias are doing. My salvias were growing on a red sandhill and up until today I thought they were fine specimens, well some of them anyway.

My brother lives on loamy-clay river flats. Some metres down you eventually strike pure white sand but the topsoil is sticky stuff that results in several inches added to your height if you are rash enough to walk on it after rain or irrigation. He has counteracted this heaviness by digging in a lot of well rotted leaf mulch. He also added blood and bone and raised the beds slightly. The garden is protected from the wind by a high, cream coloured shadecloth fence. All the salvias look healthy and robust with the exception of *S. involucrata* x *S. karwinskii* which is 2 metres high and wide with yellowing of 30% of the leaves. The following are flowering profusely: *S. involucrata* 'Joan', *S.* 'Black Knight', *S. mexicana* Major, *S. longispicata*, *S. somalensis*, *S. involucrata* 'Bethelii' 1.25m, *S. purpurea*, in bud, *S. iodantha* in bud, *S.* 'Purple Majesty' and *S.* 'Indigo Spires'.

The following are also doing well, *S. dolomitica*, *S. hians*, *S. sprucei*, *S. dorisiana*, *S. dolicantha* and *S. karwinskii* 3m. *S. forskaelci* is doing well away from other plants but where it is crowded the snails have eaten decorative round holes all over every leaf.

As far as my own salvias go, I am constantly delighted when yet another unfamiliar one gently presents its first flower. *S. azurea* with its tumbling sea of unbelievable blue brightens the view from my kitchen window. I find the whiskery flower heads of *S.* 'Red Dragon' fascinating even before the velvety red "fire" emerges. So far I have only met one other local salvia enthusiast. My visitors are all surprised at the diversity to be found amongst salvias and I am taking cuttings for gifts at Christmas time to encourage their interest.

**Mary Ann Dyer**

