

SalviaNews

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

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I said at one of our Salvia Study Group gatherings that a Salvia News would be a good idea. This was thought such a good idea that I was made editor. My qualifications for such a task were and are the fact that I had acquired an old computer, had no idea how to use it, no grasp on grammar or punctuation, couldn't type and no experience whatsoever!! The ideal person for the job. Now surely one of you has the ability to help me with this task. Donna was wonderful, and rewarded by my special pasta, helped with the early editions. Now she has the delightful Baby Jack in her life she hasn't time. **So HELP IS NECESSARY PLEASE. Ring me on 9754 4041.**

Dates for your Diary 2004 We have a busy interesting year ahead for you but right now it is SALVIA SPECTACULAR TIME and growing display salvias & plants for sale is a priority.

As part of the Australian Open Garden Scheme
Elly & Leon Roos invite you to Lemon Tree Cottage
59 Ferguson Street
Upwey (Mel. Ref: 74 K9)

SATURDAY 20TH & Sunday 21ST March 2004 from 10 am to 4.30 pm each day

A large variety of plants for sale

Devonshire tea & cold drinks available

Entry \$5 per person. Proceeds to the Open Garden Scheme and Upwey Fire Brigade

Note the Melbourne International Flower Show runs from the 31ST March to the 4TH April 2004, why not come to

SALVIA SPECTACULAR
APRIL 3RD & 4TH 2004 FROM 10 AM TO 4PM EACH DAY

At the Ferny Creek Horticultural Society Hall,
Hilton Rd. East, Ferny Creek. (Melways 66 E12)

THE EMPHASIS IS ON HARDY SALVIAS FOR DRY CONDITIONS

- A DISPLAY OF MANY TYPES OF SALVIAS, BIG AND SMALL, IN ALL THE COLOURS OF THE RAINBOW FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD
- A DRY LANDSCAPE USING SALVIAS
- MEDICINAL & CULINARY SALVIAS & their uses
- CONTAINER PLANTS.....SALVIAS FOR SMALL SPACES.....PATIOS, BALCONIES
- A PHOTOGRAPHIC DISPLAY OF SALVIAS FROM VARIOUS COUNTRIES
- QUESTIONS ANSWEREDPLANT IDENTIFICATION..... TALKS AND MORE

- PLANTS FOR SALE AT REASONABLE PRICES ... LIST ON BACK OF FLYER

- RARITIES AND TREASURES

Salvias for Small Spaces

For at least three years I have been growing a great many salvias in containers. At first through necessity to preserve my salvia collection as inadequate water storage made any watering impossible. Though a large tank was added the drought continued and I have continued to keep a collection in containers as an 'insurance policy'. These give me a great deal of pleasure and I will have some of them at the Salvia Spectacular. There will be others too as many Salvia Study Group members are going potty!

The main thing to remember is that salvias hate wet feet. I ensure good drainage by raising the pot with three tile scraps poked discreetly underneath. Of course all pots need watering and some fertilizer. I use a fish emulsion. The potting mix must be an open type, a potting mix not garden soil which just goes claggy. The other thing to remember is that a black plastic pot, even a well-watered one, gets hot enough in the sun to boil roots. Make sure your pot contains a good quick draining potting mix. Water as needed and fertilise occasionally. I am a fan of Daffy of TOTTERING-BY-GENTLY (by Annie Tempest). Daffy's instruction to her newly planted pots at the stately home is "if you want anything just wilt!" And they will, and you will watch and water.

Besides being good plants in pots the salvias I mention in this article will also be ideal for those of you needing something colorful, interesting and unusual in a small garden. Some will be bigger plants in the garden but all I describe have been confined to pots for up to three years. They have not complained so far.

The most interesting lot are the South African Salvias confined in 12" pots 3 or more at a time. This was done as an experiment to show off their contrasting foliage but they flower too, each in their season. *Salvia africana lutea* (silver form and gracefully droopy), *S. runcinata*, green ferny and stiff, *S. scabra*, harsh stiff leaves, soft mauve flowers and *S. dolomitica* straight and silver leaved are all together in one pot. Another pot has *S. lanceolata*, brownish rose flowers and small stiff leaves with ferny *S. runcinata*, as a foil to *S. africana caerulea*.

Salvia runcinata can be clipped to a neat 'topiary' solo in a 12" pot. I have also it used as a hedge around a formal garden.

Salvia chiapensis is a tough, tolerant beauty in the garden and a good container plant with a graceful stylish look. It has shiny foliage, and cyclamen flowers all year round. A real survivor. In fact mine has never deigned to wilt demanding water. Probably has more character than that! I have combined it with S. 'Marine Blue' with its contrasting silver foliage and intense blue flowers in a 12" pot.

Salvia semi-atrata is a delightful thing. Dark velvet green leaves and purple/blue flowers with a magenta calyx. I describe this one differently every time I see it. I combined it with *Salvia discolor* which has willowy stems, silver leaves and flowers that droop from silver bracts like black tears, some say dark purple or navy blue, but the impression this Peruvian gives is unforgettable.

Culinary sage, *Salvia officinalis* comes in some interesting forms, all useful for flavouring or teas and handy to have in a pot near the kitchen door for 'nipping' purposes.

Various *S. microphylla* and *S. greggii* have been potted together or with other salvias to give contrast of foliage and flower colour. *S. greggii* white form looks charming combined with *S. chamaedryoides*, silver leaves and blue flowers. Vivid purple/blue *S. coahuilensis* looks stunning with *S. chiapensis*. Nothing like hot cyclamen and deep purple/blue for shock value. Another treasure is *S. blepharophylla*. The name means eyelash fringed leaves, now I must admit with my eyesight the eyelashes rather escape me, but the leaves are glossy green and the whole plant striking both in container or garden.

All these and more will be at the Salvia Spectacular. I have a bluetongue lizard currently employed as slug eater and topiary assistant. Lying on cuttings does them heaps of good so look forward to some interesting shapes.

Trudi Fry

SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE FOR THE SALVIA NEWS.....
SUBSCRIPTION FORM INCLUDED WITH THIS ISSUE

NOTES FROM GRUYERE : SUMMER AND THE SUBJECT OF WATERING.

This summer has not been a very kind one to my garden, the plants have suffered badly in the heat and the dry. The water tanks are going down and one with only four rungs left in it, we can't afford to let the tanks get too low before it rains again, because the water coming in stirs up the sediment in the bottom and can clog up the filter and even clog up the outlet pipe.

The main watering has been to keep all the salvias growing strongly for the *Salvia Spectacular* in April... and they are looking good. The evening ritual of hand watering the plants usually goes on for hours, mostly after tea but unfortunately the mossies are at their hungriest and swarm on you in droves.

Watering can be a problem here in as everything sits on varying degrees of sloping hillside, consequently everything has to be propped up. The slightly flatter areas are more on the topside but this is usually above the water tanks and there would be very little water flow. Of course you can carry full watering cans up the hill to water the plants, which I did for many years but heat with the full sun scorched the leaves and dried out the pots (it also put a lot of strain on the back) so I decided to move everything down the hill. At least the hose works better and even when the tanks are low (which they are at the moment) the water will still run, albeit quite slowly, and the plants are a little more protected in the filtered sunlight.

The filtered light is a great help for the larger leaved tropical and sub-tropical plants and the grey leaved plants that so like the dryer conditions prefer to be out in more sunlight. This applies more to the African - South African, Mediterranean, Californian and some other areas like Peru and the Canary Islands. The garden itself is in a very bad state and desperately needs a really good downpour... or two, but I must say however that these extremely dry conditions really show how well the dry climate salvias cope. One can't afford to think about the sad state of the Central and South American salvias and even some of the Mexican species but I know that as soon as the Autumn rains come they will pick up again, providing that they make it through to Autumn.

Watering in itself is an interesting subject, some plants do not like over head watering in the summer, that is of course until it has rained and the elements are most favourable, then the plants really buck up no end.

But on the whole it is the grey leaved plants with a few of the others, that don't take too well to over head watering, especially if they are coping with tough conditions. I guess this would apply to any small-leaved plants that have a surface covering of fine hairs. Some good examples would be *S. officinalis* and all their varieties, *S. blancoana*, *S. lavandulifolia*, *S. pomifera* and *S. leucophylla*, even *S. clevelandii* can have problems if the soil is on the dry side and it gets an over-head watering. Glossy foliage on the other hand, is more able to take surface water and that would also apply to most salvias with broader type leaves which includes species like *Salvia tubifera*, *S. curtiflora*, *S. mexicana* and their varieties, *S. gesneraeflora*, *S. gesneraeflora* 'Tequila', *S. elegans*, *S. confertiflora*, *S. dorisiana* and *S. karwinskii*.

When to water is another problem. Personally I prefer to do the watering in the evening because the moisture has a greater time to work on my plants rather than the mornings when the sun hits the plants all too quickly and we go through another day of heat and dry.

Contained plants will dry out much quicker than plants in the ground so their water requirements are much greater. One has to be particularly careful the over head watering doesn't just wet the first few millimeters of soil while the rest of the pots stay dry, as can happen. There have been many occasions when we have dunked the pots and plants into buckets of water and leaving them there until the bubbles stop. This can be quite a massive job when hundreds of pots need dunking.

This problem was solved by digging a very large hole in one of the propagating troughs, large enough to sink a poly box in, then we lined it with plastic and put boards around the edges, holding them firm so they would act as a draining board. Batches of plants were placed in poly boxes, then dunked into the water and placed up on the draining boards when the job was completed. This is also another good way to liquid fertilise the plants, en masse.

Because we don't have mains pressure, all the plants have to be hand watered and when one is on tanks there is no other option but to use water sparingly, which we do. It makes one more cautious and look for better ways to use this precious commodity more wisely, that's why this water saving dunking trough was quite a good brainwave and will remain part of the watering / propagating / growing area... in our garden anyway!

By the time April 3rd and 4th arrive we should all have some great looking salvias for our *Salvia Spectacular*... both in sales and in the displays but it would be lovely to have just a good drop of rain every now and again. Meg Bentley

A Garden in Tyabb

Our Salvia garden has now survived its first full year (most of it has) and is now beginning to look a little more like things are growing in it rather than tiny plants just stuck in the ground. It has been a challenging time with several plants not surviving winter; due to the heavy ground rather than cold I would think as the garden is virtually frost free. In addition, I lost a couple of months from the garden due to illness and was later than I intended with mulching. Something I will try to avoid in future as mulch does not add moisture. It only helps retain what is already there.

Salvia Kathe didn't survive anywhere in the garden so I would guess it was just too wet. The one example of *S. mellifera* didn't look happy right from the time the ground became really wet and has long since departed. Another casualty was *S. mexicana* 'Lolly' although planted right beside it. *S. mexicana* 'Limelight' has thrived.

Here at Tyabb, we missed the couple of storms which drenched parts of Melbourne, so this summer has been almost as tough as last. I try not to water at all but in the last few days (end of February), with several days of mid 30s heat forecast, I have had to risk watering with water from our dam; the dam which was saline last summer. I guess it was a choice of letting things die or risk killing them. I have an anxious few weeks ahead.

Despite all the doom and gloom there is plenty to be happy about with the striking brightness of *S. gesneraeflora* 'Tequila', the blues and dark purple of *S.* 'Costa Rica Blue' and *S.* 'Black Knight', the dainty blues of *S. arizonica*, *S. marine blue*, the blue/white and very long flowering *S. chamelaeagnea* which started flowering in October and is still going strong. The purple *S. coahuilensis* has been flowering for almost as long.

s. x jamensis 'La Luna' (one Bill Whithead has written about a couple of times recently) seems to enjoy the heat and dryness. Various *S. greggii* and *S. microphylla* have thrived. One, labeled when bought and I can't remember where, *s. greggii* 'Navajo' Dark Purple, I can't find in any of my books and it doesn't appear on Trudi's list, really is sensational. Another I have *S. leucantha* 'Midnight' is listed by Clebsch and the flowers are certainly much deeper in colour and more striking than any other of our *leucanthas*. It is interesting that Clebsch lists this plant as a parent of 'Anthony Parker' which quite coincidentally I have planted immediately alongside.

I could go on but I remember writing about a year ago, shortly after our first planting of the new salvia garden that it would take the full four seasons before we would be confident that the conditions we have were suitable for salvias. I should have been more confident that some would thrive, given they have been collected from such a variety of different geographic locations and climatic conditions. However I do find it quite amazing so many do well in what should be hostile environments eg. *S. karwinskii* from moist mountain forest areas of central America and growing 1200-2500 m. above sea level (Clebsch), happily growing under full sun, in heavy soil, less than 100 m. above sea level here at Tyabb. There are many other examples and I guess that is one of the interesting things about *salvias*.

Bevan Whelan

What's in a Name?

Salvia is a large genus in the family Lamiaceae that currently includes more than 900 species. Inevitably, as plants have been discovered and named over the centuries, some have ended up with more than one name. The botanical convention in these circumstances is to take the earliest recorded name and note the synonym in brackets. An example is *Salvia africana-lutea* - named by Linnaeus in 1762 (syn. *S. aurea*). This is certainly confusing for a relatively new-comer to the *Salvia* world, like me, because it adds to the already considerable number of names floating around the literature.

Furthermore, the blossoming of interest in *Salvias* over the past 20 or so years in Australia and for longer in Europe and America has led to the introduction of many species into different countries. Now, because some closely related species in the *Salvia* genus appear to hybridise easily, plants that have been introduced into a country by seed may not have always been true to type. This has resulted in more confusion in naming. The problem has been further compounded when nurseries and individuals have developed cultivars and given them names. The more one delves into the literature, the more confusing things appear to be. Different "authorities" have different ideas about the origins of various crosses. Who is **the** authority on the subject? Who should we believe? I wish I knew.

So, for other relatively new *Salvia* enthusiasts like me, I offer this summary of some of the confusion and own my queries from my own reading. I would really appreciate any comment or answers to my queries and in particular, I would like to know who the world authority is.

Hybridisation appears to happen easily between related species within the same section of the genus. The natural hybridisation between forms of *Salvia greggii* with forms of *Salvia microphylla*, (both *S. greggii* and *S. microphylla* belong to the section Calosphace) from the same area, has given rise to many hybrids named by James Compton as *Salvia x jamensis*, after the village of Jame in Mexico, near where some of these forms were found in the wild. This has been well documented by Christine Yeo (vol I, p 34) and Lyndi Garnett has explained some ways of identifying the various forms in an excellent article in this newsletter (Feb/Mar 2002). Similarly, according to Christine Yeo, *S. nemerosa* has hybridised with *S. pratensis* to give *S. x sylvestris*, both parent species belonging to the section Plethiospace (Flora Europaea). Other species that hybridise easily, according to individual entries in Betsy Clebsch (1st edition) are *S. apiana* with *S. leucophylla* and *S. clevelandii*, all of Californian origin, the Mexican species of *S. involucrata* with *S. karwinskii*, and the Mexican species *S. coahuilensis* with other species.

But, first of all, lets look at some views on possible names for the plants that may be the same thing.

S. fulgens*, *S. cardinalis*, *S. "Red Dragon"

Sue Templeton describes *S. fulgens* in her 2002 list, as a 2m high plant, suckering, with red flowers, and *S. "Red Dragon"* as of unknown species, possibly *S. cardinalis*. Meg Bentley has given a comparison of the two plants in this newsletter (Nov/Dec 2001). Clebsch, Yeo, Dufresne and the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) database all list *S. fulgens* as synonymous with *S. cardinalis*, *S. fulgens* being the first recorded name (Cav. 1791)

Question? Is *S. "Red Dragon"* really a form of *S. cardinalis*, in which case, should we refer to it as a form of *S. fulgens*?

S. staminea* and *S. transcaucasia

Some nurseries sell *S. staminea* and the list distributed by Trudi Fry to the VSSG (Victorian *Salvia* Study Group) members includes *S. staminea*. Sue Templeton calls it *S. transcaucasia*. Clebsch (first edition) makes no mention of either species. Yeo and the RHS database say they are synonymous, *S. staminea* being the first recorded name (Montbr & Auch. Ex Benth, 1836).

Question? Shouldn't we then refer to it as *S. staminea*?

S. oresbia* and *S. darcyi

Sue Templeton describes these as synonymous in the *Salvia* Association of Australia (SAA) newsletter (Jan 2003), with *S. oresbia* appearing to be the recognised name. The VSSG list includes *S. oresbia* only, Clebsch mentions *S. darcyi* only, Yeo mentions *S. darcyi* only and the RHS database lists *S. oresbia* only!

Question? What should we call it? Clearly, it is important to note who assigned what name and when. According to Yeo, *S. darcyi* was named by Compton in 1992. Is *S. oresbia* an older name? The RHS database mentions both, makes no mention of synonymy, but notes that the last time *S. oresbia* was listed in the RHS Plantfinder as 1997.

S. disermas* and *S. rugosa

Apart from misspelling, most sources concur on their descriptions of *S. disermas*. Apart from seed available from Lyndi, I have seen no written description of *S. rugosa* yet, but then I haven't seen or read everything yet by a long chalk. Yeo describes a plant called *S. radula* as being very similar to *S. disermas*.

Question. What is *S. rugosa* and where is it from?

S. reptans* and *S. leptophylla

RHS database lists *S. reptans* and *S. leptophylla* as synonymous, *S. reptans* being the chief name, I think.

S. concolor* and *S. holwayi

Sue Templeton lists both. They are clearly different - *S. concolor* is blue and *S. holwayi* is red. Both are listed on the VSSG list. Clebsch describes only *S. holwayi*. Yeo describes only *S. concolor*, but says this is synonymous with *S. cyanea*. Dufresne says *S. holwayi* is related to *S. madrensis*. The Good Scents Nursery catalogue 2002 says *S. concolor* and *S. holwayi* are synonymous!

How confusing

S. "Black and Blue" and S. "Costa Rican Blue"

The commercial nurseries in Australia introduced *S. "Black and Blue"* in Australia in late 2002, as an attractive compact plant with blue flowers of the *guaranitica* type with black calyx. *Salvia guaranitica* "Black and Blue" was named by Compton in 1987 (listed by Yeo (p 44) as tall - 2.1m). Dufresne also describes *S. guaranitica* "Black and Blue" as being found in a nursery in Costa Rica and being twice as tall as the hardier *S. guaranitica* "Argentine Skies". The RHS database also lists three types of *S. guaranitica* - "Black and Blue", "Argentine skies" and "Enigma". Oh, and just for a bit more confusion, the "World of Salvia" Placard Books listing on www.eclerstasy.com lists a *S. guaranitica* "Black and Blue" as well as a *S. guaranitica* with a common name of Costa Rican Blue Sage!!

Question? Could it be that our *S. "Costa Rican Blue"* is the same plant that Yeo, RHS and Dufresne call *S. guaranitica* "Black and Blue". I realise that the leaf is a different and the flowers are much bigger than those of a *guaranitica*, but who named *S. "Costa Rican Blue"* and when?

Question? If the nursery release in Australia is a compact plant, should it really be called something like *S. guaranitica* "Black and Blue" compact form?

S. leucantha

This one is relatively straight forward. The corolla comes in various colours, whereas the calyx always seems to be purple. The type plant has a white calyx (hence the "leuca" bit in the species name). Betsy Clebsch refers to the violet corolla form as "Midnight". Christine Yeo describes a "new" cultivar with a purple corolla as "Purple Velvet". The RHS database lists *S. leucantha* "Midnight", "Purple Velvet" and "Santa Barbara", and, last but not least, and probably with no authority, the Good Scents Nursery catalogue describes *S. leucantha* "Nioko" as having soft velvet purple flowers surrounded by a deep purple calyx!

S. karwinskii* and *S. involucrata

Now things start to get a bit more complicated because of the variation in colour and because of the crosses. These species are closely related and hybridise easily.

Sue Templeton sells two versions of *S. karwinskii* - a peachy pink one and a cyclamen coloured one. The VSSG list includes *S. karwinskii* and *S. karwinskii* "Verdi", while group members also talk about a "Tall Grey" form.. Betsy Clebsch says that the plant comes in brick red, rose red and scarlet forms. Christine Yeo describes only one - bright pink, with flowers in whorls of 6 - 8 in interrupted racemes. Dufresne describes *S. karwinskii* as having grey leaves and long red flowers, but he also notes a recent hybrid of *S. karwinskii* x *S. puberula* as a "tall, grey-leaved selection".

With the *involucrata*s, Sue Templeton sells three: *S. involucrata* "Bethelii", "Joan" and "Pink Icicles". These same three are listed by the VSSG. Betsy Clebsch describes *S. involucrata* as having beetroot-coloured flowers and bracts. She goes on to explain that individual plants collected in the wild have been evaluated and given cultivar names, including "Bethelii" (1881) and "Deschampsiana" (1869). She further describes a *S. involucrata* cross of slightly shorter stature but very handsome as "Mulberry Jam".

Sue Templeton sells a lovely *S. involucrata* x *karwinskii* that grows to 3m and flowers throughout winter with enormous cerise flowers. The VSSG lists *S. karwinskii* x *involucrata* "Romantic Rose" (Is this the same as Sue's?) as well as a *smaller S. karwinskii* x "Winter Red". And there may be more.

Question? How many more? What are they called? Who calls them what and are they recorded officially somewhere?

Now for some real complications.....

S. nemerosa*, *S. pratensis*, *S. superba* and *S. sylvestris

S. nemerosa and *S. pratensis* both belong to the section *Plethiospace*, and, according to Yeo, have hybridised to give *S. sylvestris*. Now, John Sutton *believes S. x superba* to be a hybrid between *S. sylvestris* and *S. amplexicaulis*, although Yeo describes the parents of *S. x superba* as *S. nemerosa* and *S. virgata*.

Sue Templeton sells *S. nemerosa* (lavender flowers), *S. superba* "Blue Queen" and "East Friesland", and *S. pratensis* (pink and blue and "Souliei"), but notes that *nemerosa*, *haematodes*, *superba* and *pratensis* can easily be confused.

The VSSG lists *S. nemerosa* "Blauhugel", "Lye End", "Ost Friesland", "Snow Hills" and "Lubecca", *S. pratensis* and *pratensis* "Rosea" and *S. superba*. A note in the Sept/Oct 02 news also mentions *S. haematodes* as a garden escape.

Betsy Clebsch doesn't mention *S. nemerosa*, but lists *S. pratensis* (blue, white and pink) and also *S. pratensis ssp haematodes* (with lilac sprays) as being naturalised in the wild in California and named *S. virgata*.

Yeo concurs that *S. pratensis* has many named forms, including *haematodes*. However, Yeo lists named forms of *S. nemerosa* including "Lubecca", among others, as well as "East Friesland".

The RHS database lists *S. nemerosa* "East Friesland", while Dufresne *notes S. x superba* "East Friesland" as a hybrid of *S. pratensis* x *nemerosa*, in other words, hedging his bets either way. John Sutton (pp60 - 62) gives a very clear account, listing "East Friesland" as a cultivar of *S. nemerosa*, but sensibly says that *S. nemerosa*, *S. x superba* and *S. x sylvestris* are so closely related that he describes them together. But what about *S. pratensis*?

Question? Is "East Friesland" a *nemerosa* or a *superba* or doesn't it matter?

S. lycoides* and *S. coahuilensis

Sue Templeton describes *S. lycoides* as having bright blue flowers and being winter dormant. Betsy Clebsch also describes the flowers as bright, cornflower blue. Unfortunately, in Australia, confusion has arisen because a commercial wholesale nursery has, until recently, been selling the purple flowered *S. coahuilensis* as *S. lycoides* "Blue Lightning". This has led to many other retail nurseries making the same mistake.

Comment: I thought I had this one sorted out, until..... I consulted Yeo (vol II, p 32)..... where I read, about *S. lycoides*, that, "This species sets seed but propagation should be by cuttings as it hybridises readily with *S. greggii*. Indeed, the hybrid *S. greggii*

x lycoides, described in Vol I, is more common in cultivation. *S. lycoides* has deeper purple flowers and a more bushy habit. Many nurseries are offering this hybrid as *S. lycoides* or *S. moelleri* which is incorrect. *S. lycoides* has also been introduced from the USA as *S. coahuilensis*!!!! In contrast, Dufresne describes *S. lycoides* as blue and notes that *S. coahuilensis* and *S. muelleri* being sold in the trade in the USA may well be natural hybrids of these forms with *S. greggii*. Indeed, the RHS database lists *S. lycoides* as a hort. (trade) synonym for *S. greggii x lycoides*. And what about *S. "Christine Yeo"*? This must be another hybrid of something similar.

And now for the most confusing group of the lot!

***S. greggii*, *S. microphylla*, *S. grahamii*, *S. neurepia*, *S. lemmonii*, *S. wislizeni*,**

There is enormous confusion among these plants. The various forms of *S. greggii* and *S. microphylla* have hybridised naturally, as described above. Betsy Clebsch reports that Carl Epling has studied the plant from many collections and contends that *S. microphylla* embraces a great variety of forms, distinguishable chiefly by foliage, and that it appears to be a species in which three races are emerging as different from the type: *S. microphylla* var. *wislizeni*, *S. microphylla* (*grahami*) and *S. microphylla* var. *neurepia*.

Let's start with *S. grahamii*. My understanding from the VSSG is that this is now called *S. microphylla* var. *neurepia*. Maybe I am wrong, because Betsy Clebsch clearly thinks otherwise and Christine Yeo describes *Salvia microphylla* as named by HBK in 1817 (syn. *S. grahamii*), while the RHS database lists *S. grahamii* as a synonym of *S. microphylla* var. *microphylla*. Lyndi Garnett's excellent article in Feb/Mar 2002, lists this as something else, with *S. microphylla* subsp. *Baby sage* as being similar, but smaller. Oh, and what about the *S. grahamii* "Purple" that Sue Templeton sells?

To complicate things further, Lyndi describes *S. microphylla* var. *wislizenii* as synonymous with *S. lemmonii* (red flowers, often twiggy), as do both the RHS database, the former being the original name. Dufresne says the same and so does Betsy Clebsch. So I think I can at least forget the name *S. lemmonii*. However, how much smaller is baby sage than *S. microphylla* var. *microphylla*? Don't environmental conditions affect size?

I think I've asked enough questions. Obviously I need to read more, including a more recent version of Sue's list and the second edition of Betsy's book. The sources I have consulted are:

1. A World of Salvias Placard Books,
2. Clebsch, Betsy, 1997, A Book of Salvias: Sages for Every Garden
3. Dufresne, Richard, 1995, "Sage Advice", American Nurseryman, Aug, pp 55 - 66
4. Flora Euopaea, 1972, Vol 3; Diapensiaceae to Myoporaceae
5. From, www.electasy.com/gallery_of_salvias/placard1.htm
6. RHS (Royal Horticultural Society) from, www.rhs.org.uk/databases.....
7. Sutton, John, 1999, The Gardeners' Guide to Growing Salvias
8. Templeton, Sue, 2002, March 2002 Mail Order Salvia List, with descriptions.
9. Yeo, Christine, 1995, Salvias
10. Yeo, Christine, 1997, Salvias II

Pat Anderson, Warrandyte

Preparing The Garden For a Public Viewing

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Hopefully we'll see you soon.

Happy gardening Elly & Leon Roos

Salvias at Rosebud.

What wonderful plants salvias are! They come in almost every imaginable colour and shapes from spreading groundcovers to large shrubby types, and continue to flower throughout the hottest weather with a minimum of attention. Most are coping very well here with the dry sandy conditions, although we are lucky enough to have bore water. Some, particularly those with large leaves such as *S. gesneriiflora*, are suffering some foliage damage from both wind and bore water which I use on all the gardens

I wonder if anyone has any ideas on how to discourage some very territorial wattlebirds from taking up residence in my garden?

I love birds in the garden and have many plants, other than salvias, which attract them. Small birds are only occasional visitors to the garden until spotted by the wattlebirds! We have several large gum trees in and adjoining our garden which are home to the wattlebirds. Apart from frightening away the smaller birds the wattlebirds love my salvias too! As soon as most salvias begin to flower, the wattlebirds discover them and break the brittle stems and even whole branches as they seek nectar. *Salvia madrensis*, *S. mexicana* "Lime Bracts", *S. involucrata* "Bethellii", *S. Costa Rican Blue* and *S. gesneriiflora* are favoured targets and look a mess.

Any ideas?

Happy gardening!

Wendy Smith.

NOTES FROM GRUYERE : **SUMMER AND THE SUBJECT OF WATERING.**

This summer has not been a very kind one to my garden, the plants have suffered badly in the heat and the dry. The water tanks are going down and one with only four rungs left in it, we can't afford to let the tanks get too low before it rains again because the water coming in stirs up the sediment in the bottom and can clog up the filter and even clog up the outlet pipe.

The main watering has been to keep all the salvias growing strong for the Salvia Spectacular in April... and they are looking good. The evening ritual of hand watering the plants usually goes on for hours, mostly after tea but unfortunately the mossies are at their hungriest and swarm on you in droves.

Watering can be a problem here in as much as everything sits on varying degrees of hillside slopes, consequently everything has to be propped up. The slightly flatter areas are more on the topside but this is usually above the water tanks and there would be very little water flow. Of course you can carry full watering cans up the hill to water the plants, which I did for many years but heat with the full sun scorched the leaves and dried out the pots (it also put a lot of strain on the back) so I decided to move everything down the hill. At least the hose works better and even when the tanks are low (which they are at the moment) the water will still run, albeit quite slow and the plants are a little more protected in the filtered sunlight.

The filtered light is a great help for the larger leaved tropical and sub-tropical plants and the grey leaved plants that so like the dryer conditions prefer to be out in more sunlight. This applies more to the African - South African, Mediterranean, Californian and some other areas like Peru and the Canary Islands. The garden itself is in a very bad state and desperately needs a really good downpour... or two but I must say however that these extremely dry conditions really show how well the dry climate salvias cope.

One can't afford to think about the sad state of the Central and South American salvias and even some of the Mexican species but I know that as soon as the Autumn rains come they will pick up again, providing that they make it through to Autumn.

Watering in itself is an interesting subject, some plants do not like over head watering in the summer, that is of course until it has rained and the elements are most favourable, then the plants really buck up no end.

But on the whole it's the grey leaved plants with a few of the others, that don't take too well to over head watering, especially if they are coping with tough conditions. I guess this would apply to any small-leaved plants that have a surface covering of fine hairs. Some good examples would be *S. officinalis* and all their varieties, *S. blancoana*, *S. lavandulifolia*, *S. pomifera* and *S. leucophylla*, even *S. clevelandii* can have problems if the soil is on the dry side and it gets an over-head watering. Glossy foliage on the other hand, is more able to take surface water and that would also apply to most salvias with broader type leaves which includes species like *Salvia tubifera*, *S. curtiflora*, *S. mexicana* and their varieties, *S. gesneraeflora*, *S. gesneraeflora* 'Tequila', *S. elegans*, *S. confertiflora*, *S. dorisiana* and *S. karwinskii*.

When to water is another problem. Personally I prefer to do the watering in the evening because the moisture has a greater time to work on my plants rather than the mornings when the sun hits the plants all too quickly and we go through another day of heat and dry.

Contained plants will dry out much quicker than plants in the ground so their water requirements are much greater. One has to be particularly careful the over head watering doesn't just wet the first few millimeters of soil while the rest of the pots stay dry, as can happen. There have been many occasions when we have dunked the pots and plants into buckets of water and leaving them there until the bubbles stop. This can be quite a massive job when hundreds of pots need dunking.

This problem was solved by digging a very large hole in one of the propagating troughs, large enough to sink a poly box in, then we lined it with plastic and put boards around the edges, holding them firm so they would act as a draining board. Batches of plants were placed in poly boxes, then dunked into the water and placed up on the draining boards when the job was completed. This is also another good way to liquid fertilise the plants, en masse.

Because we don't have mains pressure, all the plants have to be hand watered and when one is on tanks there is no other option but to use water sparingly, which we do. It makes one more cautious and look for better ways to use this precious commodity more wisely, that's why this water saving dunking trough was quite a good brainwave and will remain part of the watering / propagating / growing area... in our garden anyway!

By the time April 3rd and 4th arrive we should all have some great looking salvias for our Salvia Spectacular... both in sales and in the displays but it would be lovely to have just a good drop of rain every now and again.

Meg Bentley

A Garden in Tyabb

Our Salvia garden has now survived its first full year (most of it has) and is now beginning to look a little more like things are growing in it rather than tiny plants just stuck in the ground. It has been a challenging time with several plants not surviving winter; due to the heavy ground rather than cold I would think as the garden is virtually frost free. In addition, I lost a couple of months from the garden due to illness and was later than I intended with mulching. Something I will try to avoid in future as mulch does not add moisture. It only helps retain what is already there.

Salvia Kathe didn't survive anywhere in the garden so I would guess it was just too wet. The one example of *S. mellifera* didn't look happy right from the time the ground became really wet and has long since departed. Another casualty was *S. mexicana* 'Lolly' although planted right beside it *S. mexicana* 'Limelight' has thrived.

Here at Tyabb, we missed the couple of storms which drenched parts of Melbourne, so this summer has been almost as tough as last. I try not to water at all but in the last few days (end of February), with several days of mid 30s heat forecast, I have had to risk watering with water from our dam; the dam which was saline last summer. I guess it was a choice of letting things die or risk killing them. I have an anxious few weeks ahead.

Despite all the doom and gloom there is plenty to be happy about with the striking brightness of *S. gesneraeflora* 'Tequila', the blues and dark purple of *S.* 'Costa Rica Blue' and *S.* 'Black Knight', the dainty blues of *S. arizonica*, *S. marine blue*, the blue/white and very long flowering *S. chamelaeagnea*

which started flowering in October and is still going strong. The purple *S. coahuilensis* has been flowering for almost as long.

S. x jamensis 'La Luna' (one Bill Whithead has written about a couple of times recently) seems to enjoy the heat and dryness. Various *S. greggii* and *S. microphylla* have thrived. One, labeled when bought and I can't remember where, *s. greggii* 'Navajo' Dark Purple, I can't find in any of my books and it doesn't appear on Trudi's list, really is sensational. Another I have *S. leucantha* 'Midnight' is listed by Clebsch and the flowers are certainly much deeper in colour and more striking than any other of our *leucanthas*. It is interesting that Clebsch lists this plant as a parent of 'Anthony Parker' which quite coincidentally I have planted immediately alongside.

I could go on but I remember writing about a year ago, shortly after our first planting of the new salvia garden that it would take the full four seasons before we would be confident that the conditions we have were suitable for salvias. I should have been more confident that some would thrive, given they have been collected from such a variety of different geographic locations and climatic conditions. However I do find it quite amazing so many do well in what should be hostile environments eg. *S. karwinskii* from moist mountain forest areas of central America and growing 1200-2500 m. above sea level (Clebsch), happily growing under full sun, in heavy soil, less than 100 m. above sea level here at Tyabb. There are many other examples and I guess that is one of the interesting things about *salvias*.

Bevan Whelan

LEMON & CREAM SALVIAS

In the previous Salvia Newsletter, the question was raised about three yellow salvias. Here are a few items of information that may help to clarify any mis- understanding relating to Salvias' Iced Lemon, La Luna and *greggii* yellow.

1. *Salvia* 'La Luna'... or to call it by its full name *Salvia x jamensis* 'La Luna' was released in Australia by Larkman Nurseries. According to information gathered... a naturally occurring hybrid between *Salvia greggii* and *S. microphylla* was discovered by James Compton, John d'Arcy and Martyn Rix near a town in Mexico called Jame (hence the name *jamensis*, pronounced *hamensis*).

They collected seed from thirty different forms and eventually released seven named cultivars. 'La Luna' was chosen as the type for this hybrid and is becoming popular in the UK. Lyn Passey from Larkman Nurseries saw it in a small Welsh nursery and brought it back to Australia.

Note: If one looks closely at the corolla of *Salvia* 'La Luna' under the upper hood, at the throat, you can see a light covering of small pale reddish / buff hairs. These small coloured hairs help to distinguish this plant from others and another observation, the lower lip appears to lift up towards the upper hood and not downwards like other salvias of the *greggii* / *microphylla* varieties.

2. *Salvia* 'Iced Lemon'... called by its full name *Salvia microphylla* 'Iced Lemon'. An invaluable introduction into Australia by Sue Templeton, coming in at a time when there were no other pale salvias of this colouring. A soft lemon colour which doesn't seem to fade in the sun.

Note: This salvia seems to grow stronger, has stems darker in colour than the fore mentioned and the leaves have a slight gloss to them.

3. *Salvia x jamensis* yellow was grown from seed which I imported from B&T World Seeds in March 2000.

The particular cultivar I propagate and have distributed has been called *Salvia x jamensis* 'Buttermilk' because it opens butter yellow and fades to a creamy yellow as it ages.

The plant seems to be a good strong grower and quite hardy here in Gruyere where it copes well with very little watering and has continued flowering right through from spring, summer and may well go into autumn. There could be other yellowish *greggii* around and they might just go under the name of *S. greggii* yellow... this I can't be sure of. While they might look similar to *S. x jamensis* 'Buttermilk', the flower colour may be slightly paler, then again, the seed when distributed could have all come from the same batch at

B&T World Seeds. *Meg Bentley*

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