



SalviaNews

Victorian Salvia Study Group
A Branch of the Herb Society of Victoria
June/July/August 2004

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With the help of some terrific people this Salvia News has a new look. A better look we hope. As always there is news of salvias in gardens in widely diverse regions with diverse soils, diverse conditions and ...dare I say it...diverse gardeners! We all share a passion for these obliging plants and we share our views and experience generously. We know that we are a Study Group and observing just how a salvia shapes up under different conditions is valuable indeed.

Trudi Fry

CALENDER OF EVENTS

- ❖ September 18th & 19th Rare plant Fair Mt Macedon District Horticultural Society Hall Mt Macedon Rd Mt Macedon 10am to 4pm
We will have salvias for sale, The Salvia Growers Manual for sale & salvia group members for you to meet.
- ❖ SEPTEMBER 30TH OCTOBER 1ST 2ND & 3RD at CAULFIELD RACECOURSE
GARDENING AUSTRALIA LIVE.....WE WILL BE THERE
- ❖ OCTOBER 17th NOBELIUS WORK SHOP, HANDS ON LEARNING
TIME 11am, bring your own lunch to share & tools to use
This garden has part of our salvia collection so there is plenty to see & learn.
Where Nobelius Park Off Creighton Rd Emerald Mel. 127 G4
All salvia lovers welcome. This is an OPCA Collection
- ❖ OCTOBER 30th & 31st FERNY CREEK Floral Festival
Ferny Creek Horticultural Hall Hilton Rd Ferny Creek Mel 66 C 11
1pm to 5pm Saturday 10am to 5pm Sunday SALVIAS FOR SALE
- ❖ October 31st Cockatoo Market.....Start of Daylight Saving
- ❖ NOVEMBER 21st Xmas Gathering at LEMONTREE COTTAGE
Time 11am BYO food to sharecome and see salvias in Elly's garden
All welcome59 Ferguson St Upwey Mel.74 k9

South Australia Spring Salvia Show at Urrbrae House on the Waite Campus on Sunday 28th November starting at 10 a.m. and finishing at 3 p.m. There is also the Annual Herb Day on Sunday 7th November at the Fullarton Community Centre from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. where salvias will be available for sale.

Salvias by the Sea

When I moved to Lakes Entrance 7 years ago I created a Cottage Garden along the driveway at the front of the house and filled the back yard with natives. The cottage Garden flourished but sadly the natives died at an alarming rate, especially members of the Proteaceae family. The soil is infertile black sand that has no bottom, water just disappears. I am slowly putting humus into the soil with Permaculture practices. The natives were planted to attract birds to my garden. The birds were spending their time in the Cottage Garden where I had a few salvias, e.g. *S.leucantha*, *S.involucrata* 'Bethelii', *S. microphylla* 'Huntington' and *S. microphylla* var *neurepia* (syn *Salvia* *Grahamii*). During the recent winters I have been dividing these salvias and growing them in the backyard too. I find salvias hard to source in local nurseries, only occasionally adding to my collection.

In January I attended Lemon Tree Cottage Open Day. I was just blown away by Elly's garden. This was a garden the same size as mine just packed with bird attracting plants. I purchased 12 salvias, as this was all I could carry home on the train.

Back home with my treasures I walked around my backyard making islands around the remnant shrubs and creating paths between them. I have planted salvias as well as some of my favourite cottage types, like lupins, foxgloves and delphiniums etc.

I brought another dozen salvias home from the *Salvia* Spectacular in April. In the last week I have cleared the Cottage Garden along the driveway and filled it with 20 different salvias. This bed has a Northerly aspect and is backed with a 2metre high fence giving it protection from cold South-Westerlies.

I am very enthusiastic and hoping for great things, but I realize I am a novice and will make mistakes. But with advice from experts like Trudi, Ray and Elly and all the great articles in the *Salvia* News I am sure the local birdlife will be happy to visit my garden despite its lack of natives.

Coral Kennedy

Mid-Winter's Day 22 June 04 in Selby Victoria

On the Winter Solstice, after the drought broke with gales, rain, hail, storms and sleet, these salvias are flowering in my battered garden and pushing the weeds aside.

Trudi Fry

AFRICANA CAERULEA	ELEGANS HONEY MELON	LONGISPICATA
AFRICANA LUTEA	EIGGI	MINIATA
ANTHONY PARKER	FULGENS	MUIRRII
AGNES	GLECHOMIFOLIA	MARINE BLUE
BLUE BIRD	GUARANITICA LGE.FORM	MEXICANA LIME
BLUE RIBBONS	GESNERIIFLORA	MEXICANA MAJOR
BLEPHAROPHYLLA	GREGGII SPP.	MEXICANA LOLLY
BLACK KNIGHT	HARMONY	MICROPHYLLA SPP.
CACAEIFOLIA	ICICLES	PURPLE MAJESTY
CONCOLOR	INDIGO SPIRES	PHYLLIS FANCY
CONFERTIFLORA	INVOLUCRATA	PULCHELLA
CHIAPENSIS	JOAN	RED DRAGON
COSTA RICA BLUE	KATHIE	PURPUREA

Salvias In Our Ringwood Garden

Up until August/September 2003 salvias were a plant species of which we had little knowledge about or awareness of. It was sometime during this period just as our interest in these plants was dawning (for a combination of reasons), that unexpectedly we had the good fortune to be given some large (name unknown) salvia cuttings. These we cut into pieces approx. 15 cms. in length, dipped some in a rooting liquid and then planted all of them into the only part of our garden that has a sandy loam type of soil (the rest being clay). To our surprise and delight virtually all of these cuttings struck during the next few weeks, and by the end of 2003 had become firmly established. Then over the period from late summer to mid autumn this year they were removed and planted out into other areas of our garden, from which new positions they have continued to grow and prosper, with many coming into flower during the recent winter months. With the improvement in our salvia knowledge, from observations of salvias growing in other gardens, and with the benefit of advice given by fellow salvia study group members on the basis of descriptions provided by us, we now believe these plants to be *Salvia gesneriiflora* and *S.gesneriiflora* 'Tequila'.

In late autumn and continuing on into the winter months of this year we have also planted several additional varieties of salvias in our garden i.e. from pots which we had either purchased or been given, including but not limited to the following *S.corrugata*, *S.rubiginosa*, *S. 'Phyllis Fancy'*, *S. 'Anthony Parker'*, *S. leucantha*, *S. 'ChristineYeo'*, *S. hirtella*, *S.scabra*, *S.officinalis*, *S.patens*, *S.dolomitica*, *S.dorisiana*. All of these plants (with the exception of *S.officinalis* and *S.patens*) have now become firmly established, however we do not expect any significant growth to occur until the weather and soil starts to warm up in spring. We have noticed that the *S.officinalis* looks a bit sick, and that the *S.patens* has completely disappeared, and are wondering whether in each case this is due to a natural seasonal phenomenon or some other cause e.g snails or other insect pests.

Geoff & Jennifer Ellis

(*Salvia patens* is herbaceous & needs to be protected from snails. Ed.)

Stop the Munchies at Night

So often I have sown salvia seed (seed which needs to be sown on top of the seed raising mix and not covered---it needs light) only to find some beastie came along during the night and ate the seed as is or when the seed has germinated, has had a gourmet feast. Well I've found a way to stop that by placing fly screen over the pots.

If you are sowing seed in a square pot cut the wire exactly to the size of the outer edge of the pot, this folds in snugly. With a circular pot cut the wire slightly larger than the pot, this fits like a dome into the pot. When the plants grow too big for the wire, cut a larger piece of wire, cutting into the 4 corners to form a taller dome to accommodate the growing plants and continue to frustrate the snails and slugs.

This idea works well for herbaceous needing protection as they grow out of the soil to the snails waiting to say hello to such delicious items as *Salvia patens*, *S.East Friesland* and others. *Lyndi Garnett*

Geelong News

Geelong News

It is now mid-August as I write and I can feel the approaching spring with pleasure. I consider our departing winter has been particularly cold, but our salvias are such dependable plants, that the weather and growing conditions in the Geelong area have not bothered them too much.

I do not regard all salvias as herbs, nevertheless I do regard them as wonderful plants to grow and enjoy. As a longtime herb grower, I treat common sage *Salvia officinalis* and all its cultivars, as being among my favourite herbal salvias. Whilst these are not the most spectacular of the salvias, they do receive a prominent place in my garden. One of its cultivars, *S.officinalis* 'Rosea', with its pink flowers is a strong grower over many years, and always plenteous with its seeds. On the other hand, *S.officinalis* 'Alba', with its white flowers, is very short lived and I don't possess one at present. (Does anyone have it? Please let us know. Ed.) I do have *S. officinalis* 'Tricolor', which has very attractive and colorful foliage, and this is usually short lived also in my garden. When young, its grey leaves have cream margins with an attractive pink to purple flush, although this gradually fades with age. I was given *S.officinalis* 'Berggarten' some months ago, and I look forward to seeing its blue flowers for the first time this coming summer. The upper surface of its green leaves offer a whitish tinge from the covering of tiny hairs. Its broad leaves have rounded tips quite unlike the more pointed ones of common sage.

Some 13 years ago, I purchased a pinkish-red flowered *S.greggii* when salvias were relatively unknown in nurseries. It has flowered beautifully throughout these years, but recently has shown signs of dying. I pruned it fairly hard leaving only the central main stem untouched. For the first time in its long life, I also gave it a dose of liquid and solid type fertilizers. It now seems to have a new lease of life which will give me the opportunity of taking some cuttings later on.

I particularly like the *greggii* species because they are easy for me to grow, and flower profusely each year. They are relatively low growing, perhaps up to about half a metre, in my garden, hence don't occupy much space. Of this species I also possess the other cultivars with flower colors yellow, white and purple. Because *S. greggiis* have so freely hybridized with *S. microphyllas* over the years, and I have several of these, salvia growers have ample opportunity to possess and enjoy these species and their hybrids.

Bill Whitehead

A MANUAL FOR SALVIA GROWERS BY MEG BENTLEY

Yes, finally the Manual has been completed !

It covers approximately 214 entries of Cultural Notes regarding salvia species.

TOPICS COVERED

Pruning, Propagating, Shade Lovers, Hardy Salvias, Botany of a Salvia. And including Flowers of the Four Seasons, other notes and some Illustrations.

In the manual I chose not to include the common names of salvias for a particular reason i.e. to encourage you to know salvias by the correct botanical name and stop the confusion created by using only common names. This not only applies to the layman but to plant nurseries and growers who may eliminate the botanical name altogether for the sake of a fancy name in its place

Copies can be obtained direct from Meg Bentley or through the Salvia Study Group of Victoria.

Phone Meg. 03 5964 9372 or Mobile 0431 240 971

or contact Lyndi Garnett 03 9803 4534.

Priced at \$30-00 per copy, plus mailing cost of \$2.50 for post and handling.

I seem to be always talking about rain or the lack of, and of course, just when my garden water tanks were almost dry, we were very lucky to get just on an inch over the last few days including an odd storm . So the tanks are full and the garden will survive again. It was just this week that the garden looked its winter worst with no rain for a month and very drying westerly winds. Now it's fresh and sparkling in the winter sun.

Of course the salvias survived even though several were stripped of their flowers and foliage by the force of the wind. The worst affected were the *Salvia involucrata bethelii* and *S.involucrata x karwinskii* as they were both flowering and *S. 'Waverly'* to a lesser extent. Even though they still have some flowers, they look a bit odd without their leaves.

I'm crossing my fingers for *S.semi-atrata* which I moved. It had been completely covered over by an Echium and I thought I might lose it anyway. Most of the leaves that were left turned brown and dropped but there are a couple of green bits still so I'm hopeful.

I have a blue flowering salvia whose name I don't know but which dies back in winter. I have previously pulled off rooting bits and replanted them but I was surprised to find that when I actually dug up a clump it had a tuber like base which I hadn't noticed before. I assume it's a *S.patens*. Are there others that do this?

All the Salvias in my new spot on the south western side of our garden have settled in although there hasn't been huge growth as it is winter. I felt like a butcher the other day as I attacked the clumps of both *S.iodantha* and *S.purpurea* with a spade endeavoring to chop off a smaller clump of both to put in another part of the garden. I had already taken some bits for propagating but I thought that as both were

so big I could probably get a big enough section with a root to plant out straight away. It was an effort but I succeeded and planted each bit out with some seaweed solution to help them cope with the shock.

My biggest excitement of the week was winning a prize at the Garden School in Wollongong of a tonne of premium garden soil!!! I am waiting until some decent rain before spring to claim my prize as I didn't see much point in putting it on the garden while it's still the windy season and might all blow away on me.

On reading the Salvia News, I realise that there are still lots that sound so interesting that I don't have and I can see a lifetime of hunting them down.

Maureen Cox

Congratulations Maureen!!!

(If your blue flowering salvia is 1.5 metres tall and has tubers it is most likely *Salvia guaranitica*. Ed.)

Thank you for these interesting articles. You are the people making Salvia News. The next News is due out in December so I would like to hear from you in Mid- November. Please, please!!

SALVIAS AT PANTON HILL AND HERBS & COTTAGE PLANTS NURSERY

By Arja Toivanen

I live at Pantan Hill, a semi rural area, about 45 minutes north of CBD, Melbourne. It's a glorious place to live, with lots of birds and other wildlife, and at present the wattles are looking brilliant.

As much as I love the area, I have nothing much positive to say about the soil. When I first moved here ten years ago, I wondered why even the indigenous plants were so slow to grow. Then I tested the soil and found out the 'bad' news. It's mostly subsoil, not really soil - a yellowish, water repellent, clay, with hardly any nutrients, minimal organic matter, and requires a crowbar to dig it... I don't believe in buying soil, so it's a slow process adding compost/manure etc to most plantings, if I want plants to grow well.

This soil improvement makes a big difference. Two years ago I planted *Salvia* 'Marine Blue' a grey foliated charmer with blue flowers, and *Salvia involucrata* in unimproved local soil that only gets watered 1 x per month in summer. Six months ago I planted a another 'Marine Blue in improved soil, where it gets a bit more water during dry periods. The first is still alive but has hardly grown in 2 years, the second is about 50 cm tall. With *Salvia involucrata*, I started to think my information about it growing to 2 metres tall was wrong. My plant struggled to reach 1 metre. Then I saw one in a friends garden - at least 2 metres, and had to revise my thinking yet again. There's a saying like '80% of successful gardening is about getting the soil right.'. To me that means adding humus to most soils, as then any watering (&feeding) actually gets to the plants.

There are Salvias that grow on well with minimal, if any, soil improvement. Amazing really! I found some of the toughest for full to part sun include: Huntingdons, and the many other *Salvia microphyllas*, *Salvia africana caerulea* and *lutea*, *S. apiana*, *S. muirii*, the *S.greggis*, *S. chamelaegnea*, *coahuilensis*, *dolomitica*, *lanceolata* and many others. I guess this is one of the reasons it's easy to be smitten by this genus.

Additional challenges in my garden, are shade and root competition from the many gums and other native trees. It's untrue that 'you can't grow anything under gum trees'. All the *Salvia mexicanas* do well and look good with purple, pink and white *Plectranthus ecklonii*. Bethels Sage does well, as does *Salvia madrensis*, *S. Chiapas spp*, *S.cinnabarina*, and *S. cacaliaefolia*. *Salvia chiapensins* is my favorite for these tough conditions, because it still flowers all year even with so much shade.

I do have over 100 different Salvias planted in my garden, and mother stock of about 200 varieties, from which I propagate for my Herbs & Cottage Plants Nursery, in Hurstbridge, (5 minutes from where I live). Usually, I have a quite a large collection for sale, and take orders as well. As the name suggests, I also carry a big range of herbs and other perennials. The nursery is open Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 10 .am. to 5 p.m., and I can be contacted on 9718 2249. *Salvia corrugata* has flowered for me for the first time. I find it needs a bit more care than other Salvias, but the blue of those flowers is divine. Warm regards to everyone. Arja

Books for Sale

We have the 2 books of Christine Yeo for sale at \$20 each to members. Christine has a NCCPG Salvia collection in South Devon and has been collecting and growing salvias since 1978. She is generous with her knowledge, as we discovered when she visited several of our gardens a few years ago.

Enquiries Lyndi Garnett 9803 4534 or available at our Salvia Gatherings

Eltham News

Everything looks lovely and green here in Eltham, nothing growing very quickly, of course, but it has been wonderful to have some fairly good rain. The winds have come as well, more than I can ever remember in the wintertime and not so pleasant in the garden.

I have only a small collection of salvias but almost all of them are doing well. A few casualties; the second *Salvia sagittata* I have acquired has turned its toes up. Do I try again?(**Yes !!**) Also a small plant of *S. patens* has been eaten by something to within an inch of its life. It may come back. I had to remove *S. african-lutea* having placed in the wrong position where it grew beautifully but blocked the path! As I think it is a very worth -while plant I bought another one, very small, and put it in a more suitable position.

Some that I bought at the Salvia Spectacular are doing very well; *S. scutellarioides* which I have out in a large, blue glazed pot with a very unusual verdigris small trellis behind it, is just magic. The lovely blue of the flowers with the glossy foliage is a picture to behold. From the Salvia Spectacular I bought *S. officinalis* `Icterina' and `Berggarten'. As `Icterina' was a very small plant it hasn't grown but appears to be hanging in there but `Berggarten' looks very sick. Too wet, do you think?(yes I think so too .Ed.)

A number of plants have grown but not bloomed yet: *S. apiana* is a lovely plant , looking strong and straight but I have had it for two years and not seen it bloom. *S. rubescens* `Venezuelan Beauty', *S. dolomitica* and *S. disjuncta* also haven't flowered so I guess those are treats in store for me. *S. regla* did flower and what a beauty that is, I have pruned it as it looked as if it would get quite

`leggy'. One of my delights has been *S. madrensis*. I have it sitting in a high bed outside my bedroom window and every morning when I get up there it is in all its glory. Should be even better next year when it thickens up a little. I hear most salvia enthusiast extol the virtues of *S. Waverley*' and with good reason, it just sits there doing its own thing without a word of complaint. Aren't plants annoying, though, you put them where you think will be the right spot for them and they do nothing (even shrink!), move them 10 feet to one side and away they go as if they had been growing there for ever. This is what happened to *S. miniata* that my friend Liz gave me. I planted *S. van houttii* in its place and that has done very well there. *S. `Costa Rican Blue*', `Limelight' and *S. gesneriiflora* `Tequila' have performed very well for me as well as *S. leucantha*, the mauve one and `Argentine Skies'.

Although I have a few more salvias than I have recorded here, I don't know the names of them so to give you an idea of what is blooming in Eltham I went a 100 yards up the road to my friend Liz Damaschi's garden. As well as those I have already mentioned as blooming she also has a number of others still going strong. Her *S. corrugata* is tall and in flower. I pruned mine down (too much?) and though mine looks lush and healthy it has not grown very tall and hasn't flowered. Liz has *S. `Indigo Spires*, *S. cacaliaefolia*, *S. iodantha*, *S. `Marine Blue*' and *S. sagittata*, looking good. When I was there a few weeks ago, also looking just gorgeous was *S. involucrata* `Pink Icicles', what a beauty this is. Her *S. involucrata* `Joan' is in bloom, too. *S. discolor*, *S. chiapensis*, *S. mellisadora* and *S. elegans* `Honeymelon' are still flowering. There were a number of others in Liz's garden blooming but she didn't know the names of them, the birds had removed the labels, thank you very much. A lovely red one looked like *S. oppositiflora* to me but she wasn't sure either.

So there you have the news from Eltham. I'm learning about salvias all the time and enjoying the journey.

PADDY CHILDS GREEN

Note *Salvia regia* is deciduous and should be pruned only when new growth is visible. Take the opportunity to use the cuttings for propagation!!

Salvia Argentea

Salvia argentea is a silver leaf, rosette forming salvia that comes from Southern Europe, the Mediterranean and North West Africa. It is often grown by councils in their annual bedding planting. In actual fact it is biennial, making the rosette in the first year and forming a flowering stalk the next year. But it rarely does well after flowering. Often if the flowering stalk is cut down quickly, (unless seed is to be collected), and if the plant is in good health and not too stressed it will send out a few 'pups'. These can be taken off as cuttings and grown on. But most plants are grown from seed.

Having large silky/felty leaves that feel like "lambs ears" (*stachys byzantine*) this plant likes a warm, open, sunny position, that is not crowded by other plants that might smother it or cause over shadowing. Although frost hardy in most parts of Australia, in colder areas it might die down in winter. In warm humid areas the plant may rot easily.

Having a rosette, it will send up a flowering stalk in spring/summer for a mid-summer flowering, often reaching 90cms. with whorls of white flowers. The flowers are large with the hood having short violet hairs on the tip.

This plant needs plenty of sun, it also requires good drainage. A lot of people have trouble keeping this plant over winter as it rots so easily so they often grow them in pots with a very good draining mix, and put the pots in a dryish area around the house or under tall trees. I've been extremely lucky. I planted *Salvia argentea* outside in my roadside strip where it is hot dry and windy. The soil is clay that I have dug & dug & dug again with only a handful of grass clippings compost to break it down. So the drainage is as you would expect. But being such an exposed site the clay dries out quickly enough for these plants to survive. Although they are very flat at the moment, they are in good health and hopefully I will see a flower spike this year.

Salvia argentea plants are readily available from most general nurseries during the warmer months. It is best grown from seed collected from your own plants or from friends. Try it out. It is worth while trying different spots with different soil conditions.

A similar salvia is *Salvia aethopsis*, which enjoys the same general growing conditions. This not so readily available unless you can find some seed.

Lyndi Garnett

A Winter Garden in Upwey

It doesn't matter how many daffodils, camellias, hellebores, rhododendrons or flowering salvias you have, the garden still takes on a scene of stark contrast to the lushness of spring and summer. Yet amazingly I see, like an artist's penciled drawing, the outline of deciduous trees in their various shapes and forms standing out so proudly in my winter garden.

Their presence is that of a prima ballerina with slender bare branches spread out wide bowing in the cold wind with slim trunks parading a magnificent skirt of colourful bark. A gracefully tall and aged Liquid Amber, like other deciduous trees, is a majestic sight in any garden and watching the disrobing of seasonal foliage becomes more and more fascinating with every year I observe the garden. There is such an array of unusual trees available, but I love the ones with a spreading canopy. *Tilia cordata*, Japanese maples, birches (especially the split leaf variety), beeches (the smaller leaf variety), Crepe Myrtle, cornus, some magnolias, gleditsia, and the evergreen Butter Knife Bush (the new foliage resembles a butter knife).

So you may ask where does this all fit in with the growing of salvias? Finding the right salvia to plant in my winter garden takes some trial and error. Most of the autumn/winter flowering salvias are tall, with some medium and only a few smaller varieties. By tall I mean 2-3 metres in height so they really need to be placed as a backdrop in a flower bed. Some large flowering winter salvias are *Salvia* 'Blue Bird', *S. curtiflora*, *S. elegans* 'Purple', *S. fallax*, *S. gesneriiflora*, *S. gesneriiflora* 'Tequila', *S. karvinskii* (a beautiful and unusual salmon coloured flower with great grey/green foliage), *S. iodantha*, *S. madrensis*, *S. wagneriana*, *S. purpurea*, and *S. sprucei*. Bear in mind that pruning in spring will take them down in size so you will lose the height gained over the previous year. This must be taken into account if they were planted to shade or protect other plants.

Medium sizes salvias such as *S. chiapensis*, *S. chiapas*, *S. 'Anthony Parker'*, *S. elegans* 'Honey Melon' and *S. 'Waverly'*, could be alternated with other medium sized spring/summer flowering plants. Likewise with the smaller varieties such as *S. lavanduloides*, *S. 'Agnes'*, *S. rubiginosa* and *S. spathacea*. My favourite in the large forms would be *S. purpurea*, medium *S. 'Anthony Parker'* and in small, *S. lavanduloides* and *S. 'Agnes'*.

Aside from planning some new garden beds, it is time to start taking good cutting material for propagation. Hardwood cuttings of the *salvia greggii* now, and in summer I'll try tip cuttings. Time now to get back into the garden for more pruning and collecting.

Happy salvia gardening to you all! Make a special note of the Christmas get together in November. It will be a great opportunity to talk and to meet other salvia growers and to see lots of salvias plus lots of perennials and roses.

Elly Roos

Queensland News

Writing this just on the cusp of spring, we are saying 'goodbye' to our big winter flowering salvias, some of which are very reluctant to leave and let others take the floor. *Salvia karwinskii*, *S. iodantha*, *S. purpurea* and various *S. involucratas* have been absolutely marvellous all through the cooler months. Still blazing away is a very big *S. gesneriiflora* 'Tequila', its colours look particularly bright growing in with the huge blue and black spikes of *S. 'Costa Rican Blue'*; these two large specimens seem to match each other very well in size, although the latter blooms nearly all year round while 'Tequila' only does for about half that time. A bush of *S. 'Purple Majesty'* has some very large sprays on it at the moment - such a rich, royal colour this one. It looks almost startling next to the deep maroon flowers of *S. van houtteii*.

Two very popular, seemingly ever blooming species that look particularly harmonious growing in together are the rich carmine sprays of *S. 'Follett's Folly'* and the beautiful lavender-blue flower spikes of *S. 'Phyllis' Fancy*. Nearby there is a large bush of *S. fallax* blooming its head off - an absolute mass of long, thin sky-blue sprays. I find it interesting that a friend who has this same species of salvia growing in her garden at Mount Tamborine, shows flowers that are a much darker and brighter blue and has navy-blue stems, giving a very pleasing effect overall. I do believe it is the basalt in the soil up there that makes the difference, as it does with so many other plants.

I have been busy culling *S. madrensis* which has a strong tendency to sucker at an impressive rate in this part of the world! Oh yes! *S. 'Pink Icicle'* as always has been quite charming and a favourite with visitors, as is another never-ending flowering species (only ever having been grown in the same pot for ten years and totally neglected!) of *S. discolor*. The last two nearly always initiate the old, old question 'Please may I have....?' from these friends! *S. dorisiana* is making an impressive showing of its musk-stick pink flowers; it hangs over the edge of a little path where I pass it many times a day, never tiring of the rush of fruity scent that immediately comes from its velvety leaves.

Finally I *have* to mention the every-day *Salvia splendens* varieties that make such a colourful show, year in, year out in our garden. What the bees do to these plants is very clever - we have many two-tone varieties and a lot with smudged colours among them, most of them very attractive indeed; an increasing number of them now have spotted leaves as well, to add to the pleasant confusion. One tall plant started off years ago as a brilliant red and white with thin spindly flowers now has very thick, large flowered bunches with yellow spots on the leaves. Nearby is a large shrub of another mutation - one with spotted leaves and thick plain white sprays. This one is very good because the white flower doesn't 'yellow' at all on the bush as I've seen another variety do. A deep purple one with just a touch of white is very favoured also. I fertilise them and they grow from 120-150cms.

On a much smaller scale the little greggiis in many pleasing colours are thick with dainty little spires of blooms. All my plants have had a dose of potash recently, they really seem to respond to this, obviously our soil is lacking in that element here.

Denise Horchner

The South Australian Study Group

The SA Salvia Study Group held its Autumn Show on April 25th at the Urrbrae Agricultural Complex Skills Centre. It was the first time the Autumn Show was held at this venue and judging by its success the Show will be held there next year. Once again the plant stocks ran low and more supplies had to be brought in. Over 1200 plants were sold on the day. The talks by Robyn Powell were popular.

The Group embarked on a series of information sessions for the general public, The first one was a seminar held at the Fullarton Community Centre on Friday evening 21st May. About 60 people attended. Slides were shown of salvias grouped according to the geographical areas of origin. This was followed by a demonstration of pruning techniques. At the end of the pruning session there was a mad rush for the discarded plant material by people wanting to take cuttings. There was also a display of salvia flowers which proved to be popular. It is planned to hold another Salvia Seminar next Autumn.

On Saturday the 28th of August a talk on salvias was given at the Hindmarsh Library and on Sunday the 26th of September there will be a talk on herbs and salvias at the Henley Beach Library.

For the second year we have embarked on a salvia propagation program in an effort to increase the supply of plants at the Salvia Shows. Cuttings are taken and are looked after at Tupelo Grove Nursery until they take root. The plants are then distributed to members of the Salvia Group to pot on and look after. Judging by the demand for plants we need to increase our propagating efforts.

The next major event will be the Spring Salvia Show at Urrbrae House on the Waite Campus on Sunday 28th November starting at 10 a.m. and finishing at 3 p.m. There is also the Annual Herb Day on Sunday 7th November at the Fullarton Community Centre from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. where salvias will be available for sale.

The "Guide to Growing Salvias in South Australia" booklet continues to sell well and an information sheet on light requirements, waterwise salvias, shade tolerant salvias, salvias for containers and cold tolerant salvias has been produced to help answer queries about growing salvias.

Peter Love.

Notes from Gruyere.

Winter has been kind to Gruyere this year, the first really good winter for many years. We had some decent rain! It has been so wet in places out in the open that the ground squelched under foot, so I thought I would take advantage of the damp soil and do some planting. Much to my surprise I found that the clay loam was still dry on the topside of the sloping gardens and the mattock was needed (as usual) to dig a hole.

All the water tanks are over flowing but it hurts to see the run off going to waste,

at least we can console ourselves with the fact the excess water can be re-directed into other garden areas. We had contemplated installing a new tank to catch the overflow but that means yet another new tank to catch its overflow and so on... where would it end!

The vegetable garden has had a really good soaking this year and looks promising for the spring planting. Many salvias have started re-shooting from their bases, the winter dormant (herbaceous perennial) species are showing new shoots above ground so now is a good time to start dividing the clumps and re-position into other garden areas or into containers.

There are quite a number of winter flowering salvias that are performing well at the moment and are as happy as 'pigs in mud' with so much moisture around. The best performers have been *Salvia* 'Costa Rican Blue', *Salvia* 'Van Houttii', *Salvia* 'Pink Icicles', *Salvia wagneriana* including the pale form, *Salvia karwinskii*, *Salvia* 'Violet Eyes' and *Salvia corrugata*.

Others putting on a good show have been; *Salvia scutellarioides*, *S. agnes*, *S. microphylla* 'Mystique', *S. gesneriiflora* 'Tequila', *S. leucantha*, *S. 'Anthony Parker'*, *S. 'Red Dragon'*, *S. 'Waverly'*, *S. 'Phyllis Fancy'* *S. involucrata*, *S. lavanduloides*, *S. chiapensis*, *S. rugosa*, *S. elegans* 'Pineapple', *S. microphylla* var *neurepia*, *S. iodantha* *S. rubiginosa*, *S. discolor*, *S. 'Purple Majesty'*, *S. karwinskii* x 'Winter Red', *S. involucrata* x *karwinskii* 'Romantic Rose', *S. karwinskii* x *Timboon*, *S. melissodora*, *S. semiatrata*, *S. purpurea*, *S. 'Blue Bird'* & *Salvia pulchella*.

And it's goodbye to the last few flowers of *Salvia mexicana* 'Lolly', *S. oppositiflora*, *S. californica* and *S. mexicana* 'Limelight' until late spring or autumn.

One other salvia that is going to look magnificent is the pale pink form of *S. sprucei* which is only just beginning to open its buds, this beauty will flower now right through to late spring. Hopefully the blooming will coincide with the mauve-blue flowers of *Buddleija* 'Lochinch' growing alongside. Everything in containers has been at a standstill for some time but it won't be long before new leaves emerge and push off the older leaves.

If it hasn't been done already, now is a very good time to go around your contained plants with a plastic bag and pick off the old scruffy leaves especially those that may have had white fly on them. The white fly will have laid eggs... have a look for small creamy white dots on the back of the leaves. Don't throw them onto the ground once you have picked them off, they will only hatch and re-infest the plants...either burn them or put them in the rubbish!

I am looking forward to planting out more salvias and getting the garden into some resemblance of order but there's still a lot of pruning and clearing out to do and I guess every one else is itching to get things done in the garden too.

Meg Bentley

Have you ever noticed.....

how salvia flowers are formed? Usually zygomorphic, where one or more petals form a lip. The name Labiatae or Lamiaceae is derived from the corolla which has two lips, upper and lower and sometimes divided into four.

These lips are generally fused to form the inner tube that goes down inside the calyx, sometimes the upper hood can be divided into two just at the tip as in *S. fruticosa* or *S. iodantha*, others may have a split in the middle of the lower lip.

But, have you ever seen a salvia flower divided into seven flat petals ??

This happened one summer to a *Salvia coccinea* bicolor. All the other flowers along the stem were the usual hood and lower lip shape but I noticed at the tip of the flowering stem, something out of place. On further observation I saw that the very top flower was facing skywards and showing a flat head of five petals. What causes this and has it happened to anyone else?? Can anyone enlighten me??

I am awaiting an official explanation from a botanist, so I will let you all know in the next edition of the Salvia News.

Meg Bentley

FROST

Frost forms when the temperature at ground level drops below freezing and the water vapour in the atmosphere condenses and freezes into ice crystals. Most frosts in Australia are caused by heat loss from the soil by the radiation of heat away from the ground on clear still nights. Clouds tend to form a blanket in the atmosphere holding the remnants of daytime heat in. Black surfaces lose heat faster at night than light colored ones. Cold air is denser and heavier than warm air so that is why frost tends to flow to the valleys and why 'when the air is clear as crystal and the bright stars fairly blaze'(Read The Man from Snowy River again) that we get frost. Living on this bleak ridge I rarely have a frost, but because some of you have asked about frost and salvias I decided to investigate a bit.

There are some interesting things on the 'net'. A very interesting site is the Burnley College site. Various strategies are suggested elsewhere as well. However as Jane from Stratford has had success with a Yates product called 'Stressguard' I decided to seek information on that. Their information desk was very helpful but my computer refused to spit out the information emailed to me. However snailmail will bring it to me, but not in time for this News. I took dictation over the phone and gathered that it is an acrylic polymer concentrate that is intended for foliar application. A protective thin film formed by the application will;

1. Save water by reducing transpiration by up to 50%
2. Assist plants to maintain moisture equilibrium in cells during exposure to stressful conditions such as transplant shock, frost, drought, heat & drying winds.
3. Will reduce transplant shock (make a dramatic difference was what I heard) by limiting transpiration and giving young plants time to develop.
4. Serves as a sunscreen against damaging UV rays.

It dries to a clear transparent coating that remains soft and pliable on the leaf and will stretch up to 100% with plant growth. It doesn't interfere with normal photosynthesis and permits free exchange of gases. It allows water and foliar fertilizer entrance to the leaf surface through the semi-permeable water-soluble membrane. 'Stressguard' is bio-degradable, protecting foliage from 60 to 90 days depending on exposure to sunlight and is not subject to wash off from rain or sprinklers. Edible plants should be washed prior to eating.

Plants have various strategies to combat frost and I found the small amount of research I did interesting. Perhaps one of you could follow this up?

Trudi Fry

Stratford News

Last Salvia News advertised that Trudi would speak on salvias at Sale in East Gippsland, well it's all over and what a successful night we had. Trudi and Jillian drove up with a car full of salvia plants and Trudi certainly had everyone amazed with her knowledge of salvias and her sense of humour throughout her talk. Our president, who has a witty sense of humour met his match on that night, which was so funny.

A lot of our members, including myself, couldn't believe how many salvias were actually flowering in winter. Trudi and Jillian brought with them so many species and cultivars in various colors and had them all displayed in vases. Not ordinary vases but beautiful polished brass pots of all shapes and sizes. So you can picture how beautiful the display looked.

Trudi spoke about each salvia group telling us where each particular salvia came from, the history of its discovery and described the way it grew, size etc. and any special needs ---sun /shade and flowering habits. Some salvias, held up for the audience to see, only had a calyx as the corolla had fallen off, yet we all remarked what lovely flowers they were. One was such a deep blue it was nearly black. Most of us, even me, could hardly believe it was only the persistent calyx that so many salvias have. The flowers have such vibrant colors, deep blues, pinks and purples. Fabulous.

After the talk Trudi opened the floor to questions before the rush was on to buy those lovely plants. We had a very successful night and people have asked our treasurer and myself if our guests could come back in a different season. I said they would, then asked them next day. They agreed to demonstrate propagation next time. Our members will be ready. The display salvias were stripped apart for cuttings by people wanting to start their collection. I just hope I have in some way promoted salvias in our area and want to thank Jillian for bringing Trudi to Sale and a big thank you and a hug to Trudi for talking on salvias to our Garden Club members.

Next day they found their way to our farm and I was thrilled to show them around my garden, or jungle, as some of my friends call it.

Around the edge of some of my garden beds a few years ago, I had put wire netting held up with stakes to stop my 2 cocker spaniel puppies playing havoc in the garden. They'd leap into the garden and break my plants. As I have a lot of rare, unusual and different varieties of plants collected over the years I wasn't prepared to have them wrecked, so up went the fences.

Now 2 years later with only one cocker, I have started to pull the fences down, but in a few areas the plants, (not even climbers), have decided to climb the fence. It stops the plants from falling onto the path and now you can't even see the wire. I put it up to restrain the dogs yet the plants have made it beautiful.

Living on a farm, one is always re-cycling and I am certainly into that. Even motor bike tyres (big fat ones, perhaps from 4 wheelers Ed.) with high sides are great for plants. I have a lot of hollow logs too, I find them in the bush and put a piece of tin on one end to make a beautiful container of character. I am now putting them under trees, where the soil is too compacted to dig, and planting them with great success. The shade loving plectranthus loves the tyre it is in. Give it a try.

Happy salvia gardening.

Jane Lee

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