



SalviaNews

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

SUMMER DECEMBER 04 JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2005

C/- Trudi Fry, 39 Temple Rd. Selby 3159
Telephone (03) 9754 4041
Email: trudifry@iprimus.com.au

Our Salvia News has subscribers all over Australia and in New Zealand. We all enjoy reading the interesting and informative articles from you. Keep on sending news please. Deadline for next year is mid- January. Have a happy Christmas and good Salvia weather!!The Ancient Roman Forum was a place of assembly for discussion, to express opinions and to share news, I reckon those Romans would have included salvias too. Look for New Feature in this News.
Trudi

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

November 28th 2004 Sunday OPCA Collections. Meg Bentley's garden at 3 Fords Rd.Gruyere Mel 285 E 2 at 10am. OPCA members, and anyone else who wishes, may visit the 'Collections.'

Because there will be three garden collections open on that day, time will be limited, BYO lunch is at John Nieuwesteeg's Rose Nursery in Coldstream aprox 10 min drive and starts at 12.30pm where tea and coffee will be provided.After seeing John's Alister Clarke and Early Australian cvr Roses, the group will drive on to Wandin Nth to visit 'Katandra Gardens' and the Correa Collection of Dot and Bob O'Neil.Arriving at around 3pm, afternoon tea will be supplied.

Starting here in Gruyere at 10am. see the Salvia Collection. The OPCA have a charge of \$10. for members & \$12. for visitors for the three gardens NOTE: In this instance the Salvia Study Group are classed as members and will only need to pay \$10. There will be a map of the gardens available at the gate, on request, areas will be signposted and the salvias will be labelled which will assist in identification for the novice. Flat shoes are recommended... we are rather hilly and the terrain can be rather rough in places.

February 20th 2005 Plant Identification at Lyndi Garnett's Garden
Time 11am Barbeque bring Food to share
Place 844 Highbury St.
Glen Waverly
RSVP Lyndi 9803 4534 Bring plant material for ID

April 3&4 At The Rose ShowSalvia SalesDetails next issue

April 24th Visit the Anderson Garden
Time 11am Bring food to share
Place 98 Bradleys Lane Warrandyte

May 11th Propagation at The Botanic Gardens Limited to 10 people
\$20 dollars will be charged to cover costs Booking necessary

There are exciting things planned for next year. More details later

A Visit to Pat Anderson's Garden in Warrandyte

The design of this garden is very interesting because the plants have been placed in climatic regions & countries. A plaque placed in one garden area called 'Gondwana' is beautifully carved by Pat and John's son Tom who does some amazing stone work. It is in this area that Pat has planted *Salvia runcinata*. We are investigating this species since we found out that what we thought was *S.runcinata* is really *S.namaensis*. This originally came in as seed from Lyndi Garnett via Ernst von Jarsveld in South Africa. (Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens). I found it interesting to see how different plant species performed in the Warrandyte area. *Salvia patens* grows very well for Pat as do the herbaceous perennials like *S. pratensis* (one with pale lilac flowers) and *S.superba* 'Rose Queen' & 'Blue Queen'. *S. taraxifolia* was so lush that it was only through the flowers that I could recognize the species, the leaves were large and green compared to those in my garden in Gruyere.

Meg Bentley

Contribution for Salvia News – John Daniels Tasmania

With the restful sounds of rain gently dripping, I am looking over the first bud spikes of *S. 'Indigo Spires'* and *S. involucrata 'Bethelii'*. The drizzle soaked range of the Eastern Shore and the stilled grey Derwent beyond, present the varied spring hues of Gleditsia, Ash, Elm and Poplar framed with the Palm collection to the north and the Cork Oak to the south. I am at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens in Hobart and Trudi has asked me to share with the Salvia Study Group some of the details of our Salvia collection.

After the opening in 1999 of our new Visitor Centre, an addition to the restaurant, raised beds, retained by sandstone blocks, were constructed to the north of the building providing a warm micro-climate with shelter from blustery southerly, south-westerly and westerly winds! At my suggestion, these beds were planted with a foreground of penstemon species and cultivars, and salvias (approximately 30 species and cultivars) predominantly as a background. The salvias were accessed from Tasmanian and Victorian nurseries as live plants, seed from the N.Z. Alpine Society and cuttings from my own garden. So this will be the fifth summer of growing salvias and the fact that I have the use of reticulated town water on tap has made me realise how privileged I am compared to those of you struggling through the recent drought years on tank water.

While mostly trouble free, I have failed with some of the herbaceous salvias such as *S. interrupta*, *S. candelabrum* and *S. przewalskii* possibly because of too much moisture although *S. argentea*, *S. forskaohlei*, *S. glutinosa*, *S. sclarea*, and *S. transylvanica* thrive, perhaps because they were planted higher up the sloping bed.

The control of whitefly is a perennial problem even in winter. During the summer of 2001-2002, I trialled the biological agent *Encarsia formosa*, a predatory wasp, but with little effect, the cause of which is probably being too low an average temperature in such an open environment. Those plants particularly prone to be hosts to whitefly have been: *S. karwinskii x involucrata*, *S. 'Indigo Spires'*, *S. canariensis*, *S. forskaohlei*, *S. glutinosa*, *S. sclarea* and *S. transylvanica*. The following subjects seem immune to the attentions of whitefly: *S. argentea*, *S. agnes*, *S. azurea*, *S. 'Black Night'*, *S. chiapensis*, *S. gesneraeflora*, 'Tequila', *S. leucantha*, *S. guaranitica*, *S. involucrata 'Bethelii'*, *S. microphylla 'Huntington'*, *S. patens*, and *S. sinaloensis 'Aztec Blue'*.

A few observations which I would appreciate confirmation or correction on:

- A cultivar that we sourced as *S. 'Purple Spires'* is really *S. 'Indigo Spires'* but volunteers seedlings although I have read that it was infertile;
- This autumn our clump of *S. guaranitica* has revealed a 'black and blue' specimen, with 'black' calyces and violet blue flowers.
- Special to Tasmania, at least, is the ability of bumble bees (arrived in Hobart circa 1991), to access the nectary by incising the base of the corolla on certain species. Further, that the Crescent Honey Eater, actually utilises these incisions to gain access to the nectar. Can it be so?

The bird and insect attracting qualities of salvias add to the delight, spectacle and interest that a bed of these plants create – the Eastern Spinebill “humming” on *S. involucrata* ‘Bethelii’, the Crescent Honey Eater on *S. gesneriiflora* ‘Tequila’, the busy sweep through of Silver Eyes, and the occasional Wattle Birds.

The first summer blooms of *S. argentea*, *S. 'Black Night'*, *S. chiapensis*, *S. 'Indigo Spires'*, *S. mexicana*, green calyx form, and *S. transylvanica* are about to carry on the display from the winter flowerers. I am also eagerly anticipating the growth after planting of a generous donation by Geelong Botanic Gardens that will boost our collection by fifty per cent. This was a result of my attendance at the Salvia Spectacular at Ferny Creek where I met Trudi, Lyndi and Meg –who created a magnificent display! Trudi inspired me to visit Geelong Botanic Gardens where I was fortunate to meet Des Lawrence and John Arnott and the consequent exchange of Salvia material.

John Daniels

SALVIA EIGII

The plant we are growing which has been identified as *Salvia eigii* is a stunning plant in many ways. I consider it an asset to any collection in spite of its relatively short flowering time.

Attributes to recommend it are:

Easy to grow. Base rosette type of growth habit.

Very hardy.

Relatively drought tolerant and loves a sunny spot.

Perennial.

Flowers in spring with large flowers on a large upright branched spike to about 700mm high.

Leaves are huge and showy.

Dormancy period in winter, therefore frost tolerant.

The leaves can be up to 500mm in length and 250mm wide, with the petiole taking about one third of the length being about 150-200mm long. The leaves are mid green with a slight sheen on the upper surface and a textured network of pale green veins on the underside with little or no sheen and no visible hairs.

The flower spike might have as many as 200 flowers but is at its best for only about one month in late September to October. Flowers are relatively large with the corolla approximately 30mm long and 10-20mm wide. Flowers are pale mauvish pink with white or very pale pink “labellum” and a deep pink throat. There are three longitudinal stripes on the upper surface of the labellum. These are deep pink to mauve in colour and about 2-3mm long by half mm wide. (Getting technical here!) The “hood” is upright to 20mm and mauvish pink in colour. It is quite narrow from front view, only about 3mm, and about 7mm deep. A thin prominent stigma protrudes from the top of the hood and there are two stamens with pale pink stems and deep pink to burgundy tips inside the hood.

The calyx is light green and hairy with hairs about 1mm all over it. The calyx measures about 10-15mm long. All parts of the flower stems and branches are covered in the same sort of fine hairs and this makes them feel a bit sticky to touch.

Seeds are large (to 4mm), mid brown nutlets with up to 4 per calyx. *S. iegggii* can be grown easily from seed but not from cuttings. It may be possible to divide it but I have not tried that.

Sprinkle seeds on top of normal seed raising mix, cover thinly with vermiculite or leave uncovered so that light can get to the seeds as they need light to germinate. Dampen thoroughly.

Cover container with clear plastic or clingwrap to hold moisture in. Stand in a well lit area but not full sun. Can cover with a little more mix after two or three days as that is enough access to light to promote germination. Seedlings should appear after 6-10 days.

Best time to sow seeds is early to mid autumn. Pot up after true leaves appear and keep in well ventilated area especially over winter. Keep snails at bay.

Plant out into garden in early spring in a sunny position. Each plant will grow to 500mm by 500mm and flower spike reaches about 600 or 700mm. The spent flower stem can be unattractive and you may wish to cut this off, however, if seeds are required you must leave them to mature.

Velda Ellis

Salvias at Peter and Ruth Tucker's home in Renmark South Australia

(as at September 12th 2004)

I started Salvias in 2002 with several given as a present from sister Jillian Barkell. With all garden beds in use I decided to clear-out part of a bed on the south-south/west side of the house. The house would give some protection from hot northerly winds and with a high shade cloth fence giving protection from cold southerly winds.

The soil is river flood plain and would normally be heavy grey clay (type 6 in local language) but, this part has had sand added over the years and also has benefited from sand blown in from the Mallee by dust storms over hundreds of years. It would now be a clay loam we call Type 3 or 5. This is quite rich normally and can support many species of plants with little extra build-up.

Before planting my new "gifts" however I dug deep several times (about 300mm) then put on a good layer of rotted plant-matter from under my stone fruit trees (I had a rash of peach seedlings coming up for a while). This was well dug in and planted straight into. The resulting *Salvia* growth was quite amazing.

Several plants from the first planting disappeared under luxuriant growth with two gone completely and three more to be rescued soon and put elsewhere, these are *Salvias longispicata*, *dorisiana*, & Purple Majesty.

Being in a very hot area and an area where we also get some frosts, I assumed some plants would eventually be burnt one way or another. This winter we have had several -2 and -3 degrees with one - 4 degree night really making a mess. The Salvias are now recovering well; however as we may also get late spring frosts this regrowth may be cut back again soon.

To help reduce frost damage I like to keep the ground damp in Spring and, as bare as possible. In the vineyard alongside the house I weedicide under the vine rows, and use a tractor mulcher, to cut the grass (Clover and several volunteer grasses) as close to the ground as possible. Some of our frosts are of the inverted type where the cold air descends and may only touch the tops of some plants but with no sign of ground frost. Some fruit growers rely on big fans to keep the air moving and will start them if their frost alarm goes off or turn on overhead sprinklers to help keep the

temperature up. Some mornings the grape vines may have icicles hanging from them and as a result have little frost damage.

The *Salvia gesneriiflora* and the *S. involucrata karwinskii* X are a mass of flowers as of about a month ago having recovered from the frosting.

I am considering putting some Salvias along the drive as some of the existing plants are becoming tired. The wind will be a problem however in selection. Very occasionally a local nursery will have a Salvia or two for sale; usually rescued and propagated from local plants.

Peter Tucker

Werri Beach NSW

We are having a strange Spring here with extreme winds, torrential rain (in one day), storms, hot days and quite cool days as well. The sea has been huge for a few days with some welcome seaweed washed up our lagoon to be collected and stored for future use.

Of course Spring in the garden didn't last long in these conditions and we are now in the in-between season with many summer flowers coming on. I am really thrilled with my two new beds of Salvias. I only lost one and that was *S. 'Tangerine'* and I think it was my fault, too much water! I was using my grey water in the general area and must have given it too much. I think I have another coming on though.

Unfortunately, *S. semi atrata*, has gone to God but a friend has offered a cutting. The herbaceous Salvia clumps are growing and I have three blue ones in flower but as yet nothing from the pink. Could be that I moved it a bit late so it may be later flowering.

Salvia azurea is really slow in my garden. This is its second year and the original plant has not grown much at all. Three new ones I propagated have grown a bit more but I'm disappointed in it so far. It shouldn't need any particular attention should it? I've tried it in four different spots.

I lost my original *S. lanceolata* (again too much water, I think) but happily I've had a couple seed in the same spot and although small, about 10in, they have flowers already. Position is everything. I persevered with *S. cacaliaefolia* on one side of the front garden having to give it too much water. I decided to try it on the other side of the front in my new bed with my new soil and no competition from tree roots and it has really taken off.

Although most salvias 'survive' with not too much water, I find they really respond if you have the water to give them. I find that salt affects some more than others. Surprisingly, the larger leaves, don't seem to be too bad but *S. "Black Knight"* does burn but I guess it is in quite an exposed spot. For the first time I've had some little grubs eating holes in some of the larger leaves like those of *S. broussonetii*. I don't use sprays but I did buy some Pyrethrum to try and discourage them.

I have had *S. sclarea* growing beautiful large hairy leaves for two years now. It had one flower spike on it when I got it. I'm hoping it's going to do something soon. It looks so good but I'm dying to see it flower as it's right near the back steps.

I'm actually looking forward to February as some of the best Salvias flower then in my garden. Meanwhile it's a very busy time, lots of mulching to do in preparation for the summer. Who knows what that will be like.

I was inspired to buy salvia seed when I realized my lack of spring flowerers by the salvia list. I haven't tried seed before. Will keep you informed of my success/failure in my seed raising ventures.

Maureen Cox

A Garden in Tyabb

After spending a week at the end of September in Bowral, visiting what must be some of Australia's great gardens, returning home has been somewhat deflating. However we were greeted by the Mt Fuji cherries whose blossom lasted three weeks, followed almost immediately by the white and pink Robinias (unifolia and Idaho). These are most attractive to the birds which surgically remove the flowers. The roses, now in full flush will keep flowering for months. There are banksias in flower throughout the year. Not one of the great gardens but certainly nice to live in.

The salvias, what mixed results. A return to normal rainfall after several dry years has seen the small dam fill for the first time since 1995 and the salvia garden become waterlogged. Although most of the beds are slightly raised I still needed to dig drains. In spite of this there were few casualties. Several *Salvia greggii* and two favorites, *S.muellerii* and *S. 'Black Knight'* have departed. Many of the *S. microphylla* were not happy but appear to be recovering. A couple of *S. africana-lutea* departed and an *S.elegans* purple may be on the way out.

S. gesneriiflora Tequila has been magnificent. It flowered sparingly throughout the warmer months and then almost exploded into flower. It has been quite spectacular for months now, growing very vigorously and receiving quite heavy cutting as it encroached on other plants. *S.karwinskii x involucrata* Romantic Rose; I had been told it was very vigorous. I thought this meant that it grew quickly and needed space but I did not realize how quickly and how much space. The one I started with was planted in April last year and has been continually cut back. I have dug out and transplanted four large clumps which are now well established and will have to remove the original when I identify a more demanding spot for it. In spite of its aggressiveness it is a lovely plant. *S. elegans* 'Honey Melon', *S. corrugata*, *S. Marine Blue* and *S. Costa Rica Blue* just keep flowering as usual. I tend to take them for granted.

S. Blue Bird has performed for the first time this year and I can now see why people grow it. Until this year it has been very disappointing with only a few very tiny insignificant flowers. *S. fallax* has for the first time had flowers large enough to be seen so I guess I will give it another year.

On the way back from Bowral we called at Sue Templeton's nursery and collected, among others, *S. dombeyi*. I will keep this in a pot until I have some cuttings as I am not sure it will thrive in the conditions I can offer.

With water in the ground and heavy mulch on top, I don't expect to need to water at all this summer but I do have the luxury of a full dam if needed. Life is good!

Bevan Whelan

Notes from Gruyere

The salvias flowering through September/ October and now November, have been a delight, so too have the many old world roses and the flush of new spring growth on the deciduous trees has been just beautiful.

I would have to say we have had the best spring rains since 1992 & '93 and before that was 1983. With such good rains, we can now see the full benefits throughout all the gardens here in Gruyere,

even the old gully has started to run. But we all know, with this much rain it always brings its troubles.

There have been quite a few trees uprooted and weakened branches have dropped, creating havoc through the bush, excess water runoff flows through sheds and other places and holes dug ready to fill with plants have been swamped with water but these troubles are out-weighed by thoughts of the ground getting a good soaking before summer... the first time in many years!

The roses are blooming at their best and have never looked better, wonderful fragrances that are just so heavenly. I don't believe in growing roses just for looks, they must have a good perfume to earn their stay in the garden and the 'old world' and David Austin roses do this admirably.

There are favourites of course, as in any garden, mine are the Bourbon roses, especially *Mm. Isaac Pereire* and *Mme Ernest Calvat*, David Austin's '*Wenloch*' and '*Evelyn*', with others like *Zephirine Drouhin*, *Reine des Violettes*, and the heavenly fragrant *Roseraie de l'Hay*. Last but not least is *Rosa Trigtintipetala* 'The Rose of Kazanlik', which dates back to 1689 and used for the distillation of attar of roses, this I can believe as its perfume drifts through the whole garden in the early mornings and evenings.

I guess my garden is literally filled with amazing perfumes that are emitted at some time of the day and through certain seasons, some examples are:

Sarcococca ruscifolia, *Buddleja alata*, *B. alternifolia*, *B. auriculata*, *B. salvifolia*, *Philadelphus sp.*, *Syringa*, *Jasminum*, *Lonicera*, certain *Salvia* species, *Artemisia sp.*, *Viburnum burkwoodii*, *Prostanthera ovalifolia*, *P. melissifolia*, *Hedychium gardenerianum*, *Murraya paniculata*, *Gardenia augusta*, *Daphne odora*, *Datura suaveolens*, *Abelia x grandiflora*, *Acacia sp* and so many other shrubs and plants including roses of course.

The species and cultivar salvias that are flowering at the moment are so numerous (over 83) that I am limited with space to include them individually but the gardens look a treat with so many blooms, especially *Salvia Costa Rica Blue*.

One special, flowering for the first time, is *Salvia ?bertowii* and awaiting a flower is a salvia plant from 'Monte Sicular' in Sicily, both brought back to Australia as seeds by Judi Forrester of Otway Herbs and another one, *Salvia evansiana*, also from Judi, is in bud.

I only hope that by the end of November (Sunday 28th) there will be something left in flower for folk to see when the OPCA members, and anyone else who wishes, visit the 'Collections' on that day.

Starting at 10am, here in Gruyere to see the *Salvia* Collection, the OPCA have a charge of \$10. for members & \$12. for visitors for the three gardens (see Calender of Events) NOTE: In this instance the *Salvia* Study Group are classed as members and will only need to pay \$10.

There will be a map of the gardens available at the gate, on request, areas will be signposted and the salvias will be labelled which will assist in identification for the novice. Flat shoes are recommended... we are rather hilly and the terrain can be rather rough in places.

Because there will be three garden collections open on that day, time will be limited, BYO lunch is at John Nieuwesteeg's Rose Nursery in Coldstream(aprox 10 min drive) and starts at 12.30pm where tea and coffee will be provided.

Then, after seeing John's Alister Clarke and Early Australian cvr Roses, the group will drive on to Wandin Nth to visit 'Katandra Gardens' and the Correa Collection of Dot and Bob O'Neil.

Arriving at around 3pm, afternoon tea will be supplied.

We all hope that the weather will be a little bit drier.

Meg Bentley

Some Thoughts on Writing about Salvias

We all love salvias and we all love reading about them in *Salvia News* and about the experiences of our fellow salvia-lovers. Sometimes, though, there is some confusion and ambiguity about when to use the various terms, ‘Salvia’, ‘salvia’ and ‘*Salvia*’.

‘Salvia’ is an English word that is used to refer to salvias in general. It has a capital letter, S, when it begins a sentence and it has a small s when it is in the body of a sentence. When writing about more than one salvia, as I did in my first sentence, the plural form follows the first rule in English which is just to add an s to the end of the word.

An apostrophe is used only to indicate possession, eg “My favourite salvia’s leaves have all dropped off” or “Help! All of my salvias’ leaves have all dropped off!”

When referring to a particular salvia, we give it its correct botanical name and this is not an English term but a Latin one. So now we use italics if we are typing or underlining if we are hand-writing, eg “I love *Salvia leucantha*” and “ I have five *Salvia leucantha* plants and I love them all.” When referring to several particular salvias in the one article, there is no need to spell out *Salvia* in full each time since it is customary to abbreviate to *S.*, eg “My favourites are *Salvia leucantha*, *S. greggii* and *S. microphylla*.”

Finally (for now), there are the cultivars. Their names usually begin with the two part botanical name in italics and then have an English word or words added and shown in single quotation marks, eg *Salvia guarantica* ‘Black and Blue’.

More can be said but that is probably enough for now (I think I can see some eyes glazing over). We love our salvias. So let’s be particular about how we refer to them and give them the respect we know they deserve.

Sheila Fox

Salvias in the Springtime in Ringwood

Since the onset of spring many of our salvias have shown significant growth, however some appear to be too busy growing to flower as expected, or maybe we are a little impatient and the flowers will appear late spring or early summer e.g. *Salvia corrugata*, *mexicana major*. Our *S. chiapensis* which we planted in a large earthenware pot approx. three months ago has been in flower over the past several weeks, it is a lovely colour and we are both very pleased with it. We also planted a *S. semiatrata* together with a *S. discolor* in another large earthenware pot at about the same time, both of which have certainly grown but are yet to flower. Several *S. gesneriiflora* ‘Tequila’ which were first planted in our garden in late 2003 and early 2004 have now been in flower for several months, they have certainly put on a show for quite a long period. Unfortunately however it appears that neither the *S. officinalis* or *S. patens* have survived, the former has shown no signs of activity and looks as if the end has come whilst the latter has completely disappeared.

We have recently noticed that snails have developed quite an appetite for several of our salvias particularly *S. coccinea* and *S. hirtella*, as a result of which we are periodically placing some snail pellets around the plants so as to provide the invaders with an alternative food source. After a year of dormancy a salvia which we think to be a *S. africana lutea* has finally put on a spurt of growth, and we are now hoping for some flowers for a more positive identification. The two *S. disjunctas* (planted about a year ago) and the *S. dolomitica* (planted approx. 6 months ago) have all grown tall and lanky, and we are now wondering whether to prune each of the plants to encourage them to bush out

Geoff and Jennifer Ellis

Salvias by the Sea.

You will remember the new bed of Salvias I told you about in September, while weeding those plants in early October I discovered the new shoots of *Salvia involucrata* 'Bethelii' are considered a delicacy in the snail world. There are more than 20 *Salvia* species in this bed and this was the only one under attack. Then I wondered what other gourmet delights there may be in other parts of the garden. To my dismay I discovered the first flower stalk which I had been watching in great anticipation, on my precious *Salvia semi-atrata* had been stripped and lopped at the base. I am still waiting. *Salvia van houtteii* was also being attacked as was *Salvia sylvestris* 'Rose Queen' I found in a local nursery. It seems these pests have their favourite food preferences just like us. All the Salvias have been protected and are recovering.

Spring has burst upon us in Lakes Entrance. Majestic Pelicans are soaring in circles on thermals above the Lake. Families of fluffy grey Cygnets are paddling in pursuit of their parents. A Black Bird is nesting in my Elk Horn, and the Goldfish are joining in the spirit of the season in their pond. Salvias are bursting forth too. Small plants from 2" pots in August are now nearly a metre high and showing colour. I am looking forward to great things from these plants In Summer/Autumn.

Yesterday I planted out the cuttings I collected from the table after Trudi's informative talk at The Herb Society meeting in July. I hope that in the New Year I will be able to report these plants are flourishing too. Incidentally my Cottage Garden favourites are providing a kaleidoscope of colour in the backyard at present.

It is raining as I write there is 25mm. in the rain gauge and the snails are in a feeding frenzy.

Coral Kennedy

**Christine Yeo books reduced to \$15.95. Only one copy of Book 1 is left and 3 of book 2. Get in fast while stocks last . We wont be able to re-order so this is your last chance to get these useful books.
Contact Lyndi Garnett Ph 9 803 4534**

Salvias seen In England this year 2004

I make an annual trip to England in July or August to visit my aging (95) mother and my brother who is on dialysis, but this year, making the trip with my husband, I was able to get away and do a few salvia/garden related things.

We had a day in Kew library which was fantastic. There was so much information there that a day was far too short. I wanted to know too many things and ended up not really learning anything, except ordering some photocopying and discovering what was there and how to find things. The copying we have ordered was mainly technical stuff that may help us understand some taxonomic things at the molecular level. But it's a start.

Following Trudi's suggestion, I had contacted Robin Middleton who writes regularly on the yahoo discussion site. This was brilliant. Sue Templeton had also suggested the same as she had stayed with Robin on her last visit. Robin is a most friendly, welcoming person and obviously enjoyed showing us his collection. I was bowled over by it – so many salvias that I hadn't seen before. I think his collection is as big, if not bigger than most in England, but he is not interested in registering it. Some of the unusual-to-me species were from South America and some were not yet in flower. I was surprised at how many were in flower when I think of March/April being the peak month in Victoria. By this reckoning, September ought to be the peak in England, or even early Oct, although by then it could be getting too cold. Many tender salvias have to be over-wintered in the glass house there. The other thing that struck me was how healthy and lush the plants looked. I think of many salvias as drought tolerant plants and expected them to be small and

woody. Nothing had prepared me for a clump of *Salvia semi atrata* standing well over a metre high, with fairly dense foliage and covered in flowers.

Some of the new to me species were:

Salvia oxyphora (Bolivia), *blepharophylla* ‘Painted Lady’ – a lush cultivar, ‘Gloomy’, a hybrid of *bulleyana* and *hians*, *meyeri* (tall, blue and hardy), *regeliana*, *haenkii* (1.5m, red), *splendens*, the species (about a metre tall and gorgeous), ‘Valle de Bravo’ (Bolivia), *carnea* (foliage dark red underneath), *clinopodiodes* (drought tolerant), *castanea*, *heldreichiana*, *amarissima*, *praeclara* (Sue has this I think – an annual from Bolivia) *macrophylla*, *divinorum* (saw foliage only), *tarayensis* (like *azurea* but smaller), *carduacea*, and various *microphyllas* etc, including a variegated one.

There are obviously naming problems there too. The nurseries have put out something they call *Salvia coccinea* ‘Indigo’, which looks for all the world like a form of *guaranitica*, and I believe Robin said it had tubers! If only I had been able to stay until September. They were having their first UK-wide salvia meeting, where they hope to sort some of these things out.

From Robin’s, we went to Wisley – the holy grail of horticultural centres as opposed to salvia collections – a fantastic garden. I also visited Hidcote Manor in Gloucestershire – very lovely with about 20 salvias scattered about. Also I was lucky to visit the private garden of a nursery owner in the Midlands. I managed this by quoting Robin’s name. This garden was beautiful, and as Robin had said, his salvia bed was lovely, with superb placement. Once again, the plants were so lush and healthy – more photos. I regret now that I didn’t invest in a quality digital camera before we left, as I had considered.

To smoke or not to smoke.....?

I continue to experiment with salvia seeds.....

When we visited the Glasshouses at the Botanical Gardens in Melbourne last year, various methods for overcoming dormancy in seed germination were discussed. One of these was the use of smoked water, a method that has proved invaluable with certain Australian and South African plant species as a survival adaptation of plants in bush fire prone areas. The recommended method was to sow the seeds in the normal way and then to spray with the smoked water, then leave for 48 hours before watering again.

I tried this recently with four *Salvia* species (for which I had seed) from what I believe to be the hot, fire-prone areas of California, namely; *Salvia clevelandii*, *Salvia leucophylla*, *Salvia carduacea* and *Salvia mellifera*. Naturally, I had another set of punnets, with the same number of seeds, which were untreated. Interestingly, the only seeds to germinate were a few *S. clevelandii* and one *Salvia leucophylla*, from the punnets treated with smoke! Once again, the sample was not big enough to draw conclusions and I believe the temperature was not high enough to resemble fire conditions. So, I am trying again this week, but sadly I have no *Salvia carduacea* seeds left.

I am happy to report that I have had a few small successes with germinating some of the seed that Robin gave me while in England, and as long as I can nurture the seedlings to maturity, I will be able to share these around.

From Pots to Paradise

I have written before about the problems of maintaining salvias in pots; the need for regular watering, the need to shade and keep cool the black plastic pots through the heat of summer to prevent the roots from cooking, the need to “pot on”, especially the vigorous ones, and the possibility of poor drainage in winter if the medium used collapses a bit. Furthermore, while plants will flower in pots, and will flower if stressed, they will never give the same full show as a plant in the ground.

As my collection of salvias in pots grew, all these problems grew, and when I was away in England unexpectedly for 3 months last summer, when my brother was very sick, these problems became my husband’s problems. The outcome was a decision to extend the garden, and what a joy this has been from planning to completion.

Having created a garden area divided by winding paths into separate beds, I decided on a systematic approach to planting. If the literature had been clear on a division of the genus into sub-genera, I might have gone this way. But it is not, so I have settled for planting by continent of origin. In doing so, I have learnt a lot, and naturally I have made some mistakes. A fundamental problem too is that no continent is uniform in its growing conditions, unlike my beds, and there is nowhere in this new garden area to cater for the more drought and frost tender species. So there is an obvious solution..... I shall have to create yet another planting area. Pat Anderson



SALVIA FORUM

A place for Salvia discussion, questions, answers, informal or formal just like the Salvia Group pictured.

In reference to questions asked by John Daniels in Tasmania:

Re Bumble Bees incising the corolla: Yes, this has been a fault of bumble bees collecting nectar via the base of the corolla on some salvia species and I have also encountered an occasional Crescent Honeyeater bypassing the usual method of obtaining nectar via the throat and using the incision at the base of the flower.

Re clump of *Salvia guaranitica* and *S. 'Black and Blue'*. It seems that *S. guaranitica* has crossed with another salvia forming this cultivar, as yet we don't know what the other parent is. See Christine Yeo's book relating to *Salvia guaranitica* 'Black and Blue' (not to be confused with *S. 'Costa Rican Blue'*)

Re *S. 'Purple Spires'* and *Indigo Spires*... I thought that a hybrid was infertile and didn't produce seeds, can any one comment in this subject of a hybrid producing seedlings???

In reference to questions asked by Geoff & Jennifer

Re *S. patens* slugs and snails are the villains. Their constant feeding will kill the plant.

Re pruning .Tip prune plants early.

S. corrugata's main flush is in late spring to autumn & winter but it has some flowers continuously.

S. mexicana major flowers in late spring to autumn. *S. chiapensis* flowers all year, *S. semi atrata* & *S. discolor* are flowering now.

South Australian Salvia News

Despite dire warnings we have had good spring rains and the gardens are looking good.

At the time of writing we are preparing for the Spring Salvia Show to be held on Sunday 28th of November (this month) at the Urrbrae House Rose Garden. This year it finishes at 3 p.m. and not at 4 p.m. This is because in past Salvia Shows few plants were left by early afternoon despite extra plants being brought in during the day and despite the group's plant propagation program. We hope to expand this program in the future.

Next year both the Autumn and Spring Salvia Shows will be held at the Urrbrae Agricultural High School Skills Centre at Fullarton, the Autumn Salvia Show on Sunday 24th April and the Spring Salvia Show on Sunday 27th November.

After the popularity of the public Salvia Seminar in May this year, another one will be held on Thursday 10th March at the Fullarton Centre. The topics will be propagation, summer pruning and

salvias for small places. This year we gave a couple of talks on salvias at libraries in the Charles Sturt Council area and will do the same next year.

Talking about propagation, the group is investigating setting up a seed bank. There are a lot of things to consider including seed collection methods, documenting the origin, testing for seed viability and determining the best methods for germination, seed storage and seed life. We would be grateful for information on the best methods for growing salvias from seed and the setting up of a seed bank. Once a seed bank is established we can start swapping seeds with other salvia enthusiasts.

Peter Love, Salvia Study Group (SA) plove@picknowl.com.au

SE Queensland Salvia News - 1/11/04

SE Queensland has had a very strange winter with extremely dry conditions in most areas. Over the past weeks some regions have received good rainfall but more is needed as follow up. The plants have done some strange things under such abnormal conditions. Those dry loving perennials such as pink campion and lambs ear are flowering and looking wonderful – loving the dry! Most plants were struggling until the rain came in mid October although the roses put on a mass display early in October – since then my garden has become a mass of colour. The daylilies are flowering early as are some of the November lilies.

My favourite salvia at the moment is S. Phyllis Fancy – she is 6 feet tall and a mass of flowers and has been this way for months. At dusk this plant glows! This salvia along with S. Waverly, S. Indigo Spires, S. Purple Majesty and S. Muirri have to be the best performers in our climate. Others that are looking wonderful at the moment are all the microphylla's and greggii's. S. Microphylla San Carlos Festival is a great little plant. S. Hot Lips looks superb underplanted with catmint. S. Joan is rarely without a flower and really should be added to the best performer list.

Recently acquired S. leucantha Midnight is looking good and promises to be as special as its relatives. Most of the winter flowerers have finished except S. Pink Icicles that is still highlighting Duchesse de Brabant that it backs. Other roses that look fabulous grouped with salvias are Borderer, an Alister Clark rose and Spring Song and Gartendirektor otto linne – both Reithmuller roses.

Many of the seedling salvias that Debbie Follett obtained from Althea Drew in the South Burnett will be on view on 20th November at Debbie and Barry's open garden in Gympie. There are a number that appear to be worth reproducing – Martine, Josh and Grace fall into this category. I am concerned however, that we may end up with a lot of very similar looking salvias with only very slight variations.

My husband and I spent 5 weeks overseas in August and saw some wonderful gardens however I was amazed at how few salvias we saw growing in the gardens that are open to the public. It made me aware that we have a superb climate here for growing salvias as so many of them would die down over winter and probably have to be treated as annuals in UK. If anyone has visited gardens in UK and found good collections of salvias I would be pleased to hear of them for future trips.

Our cottage group has a trip to Armidale gardens coming up next weekend and we are all looking forward to seeing some great displays of perennials and roses. I am sure we will return with little treasures from the cold climate that we will endeavour to grow – it is rewarding to trial plants and find new species that will do well in our sub-tropical climate.

Brilliantaisia subulugurica or 'Giant Salvia' has only been growing in our area this year and it's flowering habit was unknown until now. It is looking a picture at the moment so is evidently a late spring flowerer. Mine is tumbling all over the place as it is about 7 feet high – I have now learnt that the time to cut this back is around early August to keep it under control.

Barb Wickes

A Rare Anomalous Formation

Now to follow up the query about the mal-formation of salvia flowers.

This was addressed in the last newsletter when I asked the question about having salvia flowers forming six or seven petals instead of the usual two lips. Well, information is at hand relating to this phenomenon According to my 'botanical advisor', the reason this had happened was due to a malformation at the embryo stage, with the result being a six or seven 'petalled' bloom instead of the normal fused two-lipped corolla much the same as perhaps with a human embryo when a new-born baby may have six toes or some other unusual malfunction, for no other known reason except that of a rare anomalous formation. **Meg Bentley**

**Wanted-----Carpenter/ Builder Volunteer/s to assist with the construction of
arbours in the Hampton Salvia CollectioGarden. Ph Lyndi 9803 4534**

A Manual For Salvia Growers by Meg Bentley

**Topics covered Pruning, Propagating, Shade Lovers, Hardy Salvias, Botany of a Salvia.
Flowers of the 4 Seasons, 214 entries of cultural notes.**

**I chose not to include the common names for salvias to avoid the confusion caused by the
use of incorrect names by those who eliminate the botanical for the sake of some fancy
name.**

**The supplement is now available, full of photos & illustrations. This retails at a higher cost
than expected due to the colour, price is \$48. The 2 books combined are for sale for \$65.**

Or the manual is \$30. Plus \$2.50 for postage

Copies available from Meg ph 03 5964 9372 or Mob.0431 240 971

Or contact Lyndi Garnett

ph 03 9803 4534 or Jillian Barkell ph 03 9756 6361

W.A. News

Dr Margaret Clema of Whistlepipe Gardens is a plant taxonomist who has turned her love of collecting into a nursery specializing in rare and unusual perennials and shrubs including salvias. The address of her garden and nursery is 281 Holmes Road, Forrestfield WA 6058

At the moment she is busy but we hope to have a Salvia article from such an enthusiast next Salvia News.

The Record your Salvias Chart, included with the previous Salvia News, is not a catalogue. The Salvia Study Group produces Salvias for sale, those available vary from time to time.

This is a great time to plant salvias and we have many varieties ready now.

Please ring Lyndi on 9803 4534 or Jillian on 9756 6361 to find out if your treasure is there. If not orders are taken.