



SalviaNews

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

Number 21

WINTER JUNE JULY AUGUST 2005

C/- Trudi Fry, 39 Temple Rd. Selby 3159
Telephone (03) 9754 4041

Email: trudifry@iprimus.com.au

*Once again Salvia News is being edited in our WA office. This branch of my family lives among the grass trees in Lesmurdie on the outskirts of Perth. The countryside, the soil & the weather are all unfamiliar. Endless mild balmy days and then real rain. I can quite see why they love it. Apart from SALVIA NEWS my days are salvia free. Strange. However I have seen a few salvias on sale in nurseries this year. I have brought with me the articles you sent and on an unfamiliar computer am doing my best to get this ready for the printer because, shortly after my return, I am off to QLD to more family. **Trudi***

Events

Saturday June 18th The Sale and District Garden Club will be holding a salvia workshop by Trudi & Jillian of the Salvia Study Group of the Herb Society of Victoria at the Gwen Webb Centre, 116 Market St, Sale 10am till 4pm.

Propagation. Question and Answer Session. Salvia Plants and Books for Sale
Morning Tea and a Light Luncheon will be supplied at a cost of only \$2.
Jane Lee Ph 51458276 or Margaret Scott Ph 51472361

Sunday June 19. Get-together at Nobelius.

Time: 11.00 am.

Place: Nobelius Park off Creighton Rd. Emerald. Melway 127 G4

Bring lunch to share and tools (spade, rake, secateurs etc) to work up an appetite, or to work off what we have eaten!! Tea and coffee provided.

If you enjoy salvias you will love this OPCA Collection.

Monday JUNE 20TH **KNOX HOME GARDEN CLUB Inc** Trudi & Jillian will speak on Winter. Salvias at 8pm in the Knoxfield Church of Christ Hall, Scoresby Rd. Ferntree Gully, Melways map 73 D2. Salvia plants & books for sale.

Tuesday July 5. Plant Sales at Pakenham Garden Club Garden Expo.

Time: 10.00 - 4.00 Place: Pakenham Public Hall, John St. Pakenham Mel. 317 E8
Volunteers needed to help with sales & advice. Ph Jillian 9756 6361

Sunday July 17. Visit the garden of Laurelle Willis Time: 11am

Place: 17 Nickols Crt., Boronia (Melway 64 D8) Phone: 9884 0264

Bring "finger food" to share

Thursday July 28th Leongatha Horticulture Soc. Trudi & Jillian will speak on winter salvias in the meeting room of the Memorial Hall Leongatha at 8pm. Salvia plants & books for sale. Ph Josie Rutherford 03 56573292

Sunday August 21. Hands on at Hampton

Time: 11.00 am.

Place: 21 Barnett St. Melway 76 K4 Tools and food to share. More info - contact Elly 9752 6712

Events continued

September 17/18. Rare Plant Fair at Mt Macedon District Horticultural Society Hall, Mt Macedon Rd, Mt Macedon.

Time: 10.00 - 4.00.

The Salvia Study Group will have some excellent plants for sale. Plant I.D. & advice will be available. This will be a great opportunity. Plants priced from \$3.00

Tuesday September 27th Bannockburn & District Garden Club Inc. Trudi & Jillian will speak at the Bannockburn Public Hall at 1.30 pm. Salvia plants & books for sale. Mel. 527 C6

**Sunday October 23 Trudi's garden is open from 11.30 am
39 Temple Rd Selby Melway 84 J2 Phone 9754 4041.**

This is a very interesting garden and there will be plants for sale. Ample parking, with food/drink to be provided by the Salvia Group.

(This is several months away but put it in the diary now.)

A REMINDER to those readers who have forgotten to renew their subscription to Salvia News. An additional subscription form has been included. This will be the last issue sent to those who haven't renewed their subscription.

A LETTER FROM MEERLIEU

I've missed seeing you all lately, this news -letter is always a great way of catching up. Well the paddocks are dry at Meerlieu. Thankfully our household and garden bore is holding out, although most salvias don't need much water.

We have a lot of colorful flowers out now. They seem to have been flowering for so long. *Salvia leucantha* is interesting because I think I may have three varieties of this salvia, white, cerise purple and purple purple, they put on such a show. *S. microphyllas* in many different colors and *S. greggii* too. *S. guarantica* is looking blue and lovely, *S. involucrata* 'Bethelii' with sugar pink flowers looks stunning right now, although it is still in a pot. *S. iodantha* is flowering in a pot too with much smaller flowers than it should have. *Salvia* 'Christine Yeo', *S. coahuilensis*, *S. chiapensis*, *S. 'Grahamii'*, *S. muiirii*, *S. miniata*, *S. 'Waverley'* and blue salvias I need to identify are flowering well right now.

Alas things don't always go to plan do they. You know *Salvia corrugata*, the lovely salvia Ken Gillanders introduced from Equador. Well I have heard, via the web, that it no longer has a home in Equador!! I have several not doing too well. I sprayed with 'stress guard' to protect from frost last winter, they did very well then. But over summer got very thirsty, leaves went limp, had a drink, looked good again. (Maybe the bore water.) This went on and on for quite a while then they decided to disappear altogether. Mind you plants do have to be natural survivors to last with me. My *S. corrugata* now have four feet long dead stalks and lush green growth coming up from the base. Maybe they don't like the sun. They certainly deserve a second chance.

Another salvia which is fascinating is *Salvia Hot Lips*, so gorgeous with bright pink flowers, then pink and white then white, not always in that order. I have quite a few and they flower differently all the time. Are they forecasting the weather? Or does the weather rule their behaviour?

Good gardening every one.

Cheers, **Flo McMahon**

Autumn Notes from Gruyere '05.

At daybreak, I go off on an early morning 'mission', I just love to see the neighbouring countryside. Soft clouds drifting over the valley and between the mountain folds and especially the 'Will-o-the-wisp' vapours lifting and drifting across the dams and streams.

Autumn is a beautiful season, soft and gentle yet alive with the vivid reds, orange and golds of autumn foliage. Blooms of the Japanese Wind Flower in shades of pink and white stand tall, roses with their second blooming and many salvias giving their last display before the cold of winter comes. The morning fragrances are simply beautiful as the air fills with the perfume of *Abeliox grandiflora* and then *Gardenia thunbergii* with its buds that stand like green sentinels, until they open their flat, snowy white flowers and emit their delicious, heady fragrance.

Admittedly, we have had it very dry, apart from the early rain at the beginning of February, summer seems to have come in autumn. Watering the plants in containers has become a major concern. Going away and leaving your plants at any time of the year can be a daunting thought but leaving them when it is so dry is surely courting disaster. It is worse than having 'pets!' (or is it? Garry is always saying we don't need pets with so many plants to look after!)

With the thought of going away to check on plant collections for the Ornamental Plants Conservation Association, I was concerned as to how best to minimise the plants' need for water. Having gathered as many poly boxes as we could muster, each lined with layers of newspaper, we packed all the contained plants then gave them a thorough watering. The fact that the paper temporarily blocked the water from running away, gave the plants an extra 'dunk' so to speak and re absorbed the moisture. This procedure has proven quite successful as most plants while starting to dry out on the top, were still damp around the base when we returned after nine days. The only chore to do now is to remove all the fallen Claret Ash leaves that have lodged in the pots and are weighing the foliage down and to give the plants a light watering.

Meg Bentley

Salvia News from Hobart

John Daniels—Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens

Well, it has turned into a prolonged dry spell since September 2004. With rainfall of 40mm in the first week of November providing a third of the total for the spring months and the first week in February supplying 90mm, almost two thirds of the rain for summer, we are approaching the end of autumn with only four falls larger than 10mm!

The salvia collection, nevertheless flourishes, appreciating the moderate temperatures and winds as well as the weekly to fortnightly watering and mulch of pea straw. Pruned in early January to 90cm, a third of its size, one specimen of *Salvia gesneraeflora* 'Tequila', in full sun, has put on 1.5m in growth and has started to reveal its large, dazzling, widely-spaced red corollas. The *Salvia corrugata* shrub, similarly reduced, is a flush of vigorous growth with its first flowers of deep blue on compact spikes, up to 17cm long, on shoots of 1.5 m. Unpruned specimens of *S.gesneraeflora* 'Tequila' have 2m long, arching stems that form a 4m wide shrub while unpruned *S.corrugata* has flowers on vertical growth reaching 2.7m. *Salvia iodantha* has soared to 3.7m and has just started to burst into bloom with many dense terminal spikes of small 3cm long cerise flowers. It took three weeks from the first appearance of the inflorescence bud of *S.madrensis* for bright yellow corollas to appear in mid-April on stems of over 2.6 m in height. The contrast of adjacent yellow and cerise, backlit with low angled sunlight is a vivid and stimulating combination. The terminal buds of the obscurely aromatic *S.involucrata x karwinskii* are swelling with the promise of winter colour atop 3m hollow stems from the base of plants transplanted last winter to a shadier position with more space for a salvia of such vigour.

The prolonged highlight of the autumn display, however, has been the *S. mexicana* cultivar with many yellowish green calyces clustered on up to 40cm long branching flower stems that glow brightly

against the foil of the dark grey-green ovate leaves. The beautiful but less abundant, violet corollas, 5cm in length, are eclipsed by the persisting radiant calyces that attract attention, from a distance, to the spectacle of a rounded shrub that is 1.6m high and 2m broad. This form provides contrast with the adjacent, sturdy vertical growth of *S.involucrata* 'Bethellii' and the open lax habit of *S.* 'Indigo Spires', both of which have flowered continually since January.

The white flowered *S. leucantha* and its mauve cultivar, with compact 40cm long spikes that weigh heavily on the thin, weak, but many stems, has assumed the form of a low shrub, profusely coloured with many inflorescences, at an almost horizontal angle. It has flowered for nearly four months. Of even longer flowering has been *S.* 'Black Knight' with 5cm long corollas of dark purple, and of similar but flatter hue, borne terminally on the many delicate twiggy shoots of an open slender shrub 2m high and 3m broad.

While the stoloniferous *S.uliginosa*, with its sky blue flowers, was a feature in March, *S.azurea*, of similar colour, also with white marks inside the corolla, peaked in April, with its small but delightful flowers, and broad lower lips that feature much more than the much reduced upper lip or 'hood'. Next summer, however I must reduce more the latter mid-season in an attempt to get this salvia, which can collapse into a tangle of 1.5m stems, to assume a more presentable habit that does justice to, and better presents, the beauty of its flowers.

One exciting aspect of the collection in autumn 2004 was the appearance of a seedling that appears to be a hybrid of *S. gesneraeflora* 'Tequila' and *S. guaranitica*. Transplanted last winter, it has grown to 3m high and 2.5 m broad, with flowers in spikes 30cm long. It has almost black calyces and deep violet corollas that match the R.H.S. Colour Chart card N88A in the Red- Blue range. The plant does not appear to have tubers like *S. guaranitica*. It is a vigorous, beautiful shrub but, being thinly branched, broken stems reveal the attention of wattle birds.

The generous donation last July of salvia seeds and cutting material by Des Lawrence and John Abbot at Geelong Botanic Gardens has resulted the establishment at the Royal Tasmanian Botanic Gardens, of *S.* 'Costa Rican Blue', *S.confertiflora*, *S.mexicana* 'Major', *S.* Waverly', *S. chamelaeagnea*, *S. mellifera*, *S.lavanduloides*, *S.miniata*, *S.roemeriana* and *S.scabra*. The first three attaining growth of more than a metre. All have been flowering for months, apart from *S. confertiflora* with its short tubular orange flowers that emerged late April, and *S. mexicana* 'Major', the corollas of which did not emerge until May. *Salvia* 'Costa Rican Blue' has just suffered the depredation of an inconsiderate possum!

The growth of these species and cultivars, as with the rest of our collection, in more southerly latitudes, will provide additional evidence as to their performance in environments with different climatic conditions and the challenges of particular micro-climates.

I trust that these detailed observations are of interest to members and will stimulate some comparisons as to the growth rates and flowering periods with timing of and pruning techniques used.

Forum Questions

- Is 'Black Knight' sterile? Further to the supposed sterility of the hybrid 'Indigo Spires', accessed as *S.* 'Purple Spires', the collected seed has germinated.
- Have other members had their own *S. gesneraeflora* 'Tequila' and *S. guaranitica* hybrid seeds develop? A second has just flowered with black calyces and purple corollas, quite a beauty!
- From members experience, are there particular salvias attractive to possums or other wildlife?

A Thank you Note

An open invitation was extended to the Salvia Association of Australia and the Salvia Study Group members for Sat 5th March 2005, to visit Lyn and Bevan's garden. Being the same day as the rare plant sale at "The Vineyard" garden, Leon and I took the opportunity to visit not only a Salvia group member but also our assistant Secretary's garden.

Having heard of Bevan's wind, heat and drought beaten garden, we had no idea what to expect. At the end of a very long driveway, we were greeted by a large circular garden encased with healthy specimens of Mt Fuji cherry trees, that were surrounded by Roses of Penelope and the inner circle planted with the Rose "Cousin Essie".

Their beautifully designed home has been built with floor to ceiling windows on the northern side of the house taking full advantage of the winter sun. The view from inside looks to the collection of pink, purple, white and apricot roses and is enhanced even more by the most gorgeous lavender trim (Lyn's favourite colour) painted in and around the house. I absolutely adored the colour.

We began to wonder however where all the Salvias were that Bevan had been collecting and talking about. Without realising, we casually walked through a very tall conifer hedge that totally enclosed a parquetry of salvia flowerbeds and other perennials. *S. mexicana* "Lolly" and *S. mexicana* "Limelight" *S. involucrata* "Bethelii" and "Joan" *S. "Phyllis Fancy"* *S. "Waverly"* *S. semiatrata*, *S. africa-lutea*, *S. "Costa Rican Blue"* were all surviving on natural rainfall only. In such circumstances I was amazed at the amount of salvias that made it through the dry summer months. A much enjoyed visit and a big thank you to Lyn and Bevan for sharing their special place with all the members. Elly Roos

SALVIAS AND HYBRIDISATION

What is a hybrid?

A hybrid is an individual (plant or animal) produced from genetically different parents. In plants, a hybrid may come about through either artificial or natural processes.

1. In horticulture, plant breeders may remove the anthers from 1 isolated plant and transfer pollen artificially from another plant to create a third plant combining the desirable characteristics of both.
2. In the laboratory, single genes or combinations of genes can be targeted more accurately.
3. In nature, a variable series of hybrids (a hybrid swarm) can result from 2 original parental forms where a former barrier to reproduction between 2 distinct species has broken down. Land clearing, for example may bring together 2 species that were formerly separated geographically. Is this how *Salvia x jamensis* arose I wonder? But if so, then why is it not more widespread?
4. Similarly, in the garden, closely related species are artificially planted close together and may result in hybrid forms. *Salvia* 'Violet Eyes' has come about this way in Meg's garden. Forms of the same species will hybridise even more readily. Hence the proliferation of different coloured and two-coloured forms of the *Salvia greggii*.

In general, however, the two parent species will need to be sufficiently genetically related (at the sub-genus level) for hybridisation to take place.

What are some of the consequences of hybridisation?

1. In the first place, we get a whole lot of new plants. We all love and want to collect hybrids like *Salvia* 'Black Knight', *S. 'Waverly'* and *S. 'Indigo Spires'*. This is exciting for collectors of a genus like *Salvia*, that is, until our gardens become too small to contain them all!!!!
2. But the proliferation of new plants can also cause naming problems without some form of central registration. There is enough naming confusion already from nurseries slapping on names like 'Aztec Blue' to a species like *Salvia sinaloensis*. If someone in Queensland were to discover a form of *S. greggii* in his/her garden with red and white stripes and call it *S. greggii* 'Barbers Pole', and someone else in Victoria were to find a similar occurrence and call it *S. greggii* 'Striped Lolly', and someone else

again called it *S. greggii* 'Freddie', the rest of us would be very confused and not know what we had. If new forms are going to be passed around, and most of us want them to be, there should be some sort of central register.

The names of new cultivars should be formed in accordance with the *International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants* (*Cultivated Code* for short). The *Cultivated Code* recommends that a new cultivar name be accompanied by a full description and the name(s) of people who originated and described the plant. The plant description should include details of parentage and the particular characteristics that distinguish it from related cultivars. The National Herbarium of Victoria keeps a record of registration authority addresses for various genera. But with salvias, there are already far too many forms of eg *S. greggii* around the nurseries in different parts of the world. It is for this reason that Barbara Wickes proposed a central register with the Salvia Association of Victoria two years ago. If we have a register, at least let's make it national and let's use it.

Plant Variety Rights

The *Plant Variety Registration Act* of 1988 provides for a Statutory Registration Authority to register the names of deliberately-bred varieties of plants and provides for the originators to receive royalties for up to 20 years. There is nothing to stop a plant breeder from buying a registered plant and using it in a breeding programme. Similarly, there is nothing to stop one of us from propagating a registered plant in our own garden. However, it would be illegal to sell such a plant. Similarly, if a salvia enthusiast discovers a natural hybrid in his/her garden (such as Meg's *S.* 'Violet Eyes'), and so long as this cultivar is not registered with the appropriate authority, there is nothing illegal about propagating it. In this particular case, Meg has, I believe, registered the plant with the Herbarium in Victoria, but there are many other whose origin we should respect, such as *S.* 'Margaret Arnold', *S. involucrata* 'Joan', *S.* 'Kathe', to name just a few.

3. The need to reproduce hybrids vegetatively. If we like a new form, and want to perpetuate it, we cannot rely on seed. Indeed, most, although not all, hybrids are sterile. For those of you wanting to know why this is, look for the next exciting instalment on hybridisation in the next issue of the newsletter. Meanwhile, stick to cuttings or division. This leads to another point, namely:
4. The reliability of seed in general for reproducing salvias. In Australia, most *Salvia* species have been introduced by seed. *Salvia* seed is generally accepted by Australia's quarantine authorities, whereas bringing plant material through quarantine is complicated and very costly and would generally not be commercially viable for a nursery, given the relatively limited demand.

Sue Templeton explained in the Jan/Feb 2002 issue of this newsletter that she had given up fighting mistakes in the naming of some salvias. She originally acquired some seed of *Salvia gesneriiflora* 'Mole Poblano' which was a selection of 'Tequila'. She continued to explain that seed-grown plants should not carry the variety name unless they can be positively identified as an exact match – chromosomes included. Sue, when she was, 'Younger and ignorant', distributed seedlings, some of which turned out to have a green calyx and some had black. After Betsy's book came out in 1997, someone saw the picture of *gesneriiflora* with the black calyx and put the name 'Tequila' on it. The same thing happened with *Salvia mexicana* 'Limelight', the seed of which Sue introduced before 'Limelight' was invented.

I too may have been foolish. I have grown plants of *Salvia serpyllifolia* from seed, and while I am not in the business of selling plants, I have given seedlings to friends, probably prematurely, for I now see that the flowers vary in colour with shades of pinky purple – AND, they are not unlike the hybrid, *S.* 'Christine Yeo', although this has specified parentage. It is most likely that these plants are not actually *Salvia serpyllifolia*, but something that has hybridised in the garden of the source of the seeds. The leaves should be much smaller I believe. So if I have given you a plant, please remove the label forthwith.

Which salvias hybridise readily and what are the parents of some well known hybrids?

The *nemerosa/pratenis/sylvestris* group is a minefield. According to John Sutton, *S. x superba* is believed to be a hybrid between *S. sylvestris* and *S. amplexicaulis*. Christine Yeo, who holds one of the NCCPG collections in England, describes the parentage of *S. x superba* as *S. nemerosa* and *S. virgata*, with *S. x sylvestris* in turn being a hybrid of *S. pratensis* and *S. nemerosa*. How do we mortals decide?

The occurrence of various forms of *S. x jamensis* in the wild, named by James Compton after the village ‘Jame’ have been mentioned before as crosses between *S. greggii* and *S. microphylla*. Other species that hybridise easily, according to Betsy Clebsch, are *S. apiana* with *S. leucophylla* and *S. clevelandii*, all of Californian origin, and the Mexican species of *S. involucrata* and *S. karwinskii* with each other, as well as the Mexican species *S. coahuilensis* with other species.

It appears that some of the Asian species will hybridise too – species such as *S. flava* and *S. bulleyana*. Another tricky plant is *S. hians*. I gather from the Internet that seed has been purchased from various sources and the resulting plants have turned out to be either *S. forskahlei* or *S. przwalskii*.

Some of the hybrids we have in Australia are:

hybrid	parents	Source of information	Sterile?
<i>S.</i> ‘Indigo Spires’	<i>longispicata</i> (male) & <i>farinacea</i> (female)	Betsy Clebsch p. 151	? Sterile**
<i>S.</i> ‘Anthony Parker’	<i>leucantha</i> ‘Midnight’ & <i>elegans</i>	?	?
<i>S.</i> ‘Waverly’	<i>leucantha</i> & ? <i>chiapensis</i>	Internet, 6/7/04	Sterile
<i>S.</i> ‘Phyllis’ Fancy’	<i>leucantha</i> & ?El Cielo Blue (syn caudata)	ditto	?
<i>S.</i> ‘Christine Yeo’	<i>microphylla</i> & <i>chamaedryoides</i> (where <i>chamaedryoides</i> means something different in England – ‘Cookie’ in fact)	Ditto 19/9/04	Sets seed
<i>S.</i> ‘Purple Majesty’	<i>gesneriiflora</i> & <i>guaranitica</i>	Betsy Clebsch p.234	?sterile
<i>S.</i> ‘Southern Belle’	<i>Officinalis</i> & <i>recognita</i>	Sue Templeton	?

** but John Daniels in Tasmania has collected seed from *S.* ‘Indigo Spires’ (see last newsletter)

Now, what about the following? Do we have any ideas? From your observations, can you suggest possible parentage of the following:

hybrid	parents	Source of information	Sterile?
<i>S.</i> ‘Black Knight’	<i>guaranitica</i> & ?		?sterile
<i>S.</i> ‘Costa Rican Blue’	<i>guaranitica</i> & ?		?sterile
<i>S.</i> ‘Black & Blue’	<i>guaranitica</i> & ?		Sets seed
<i>S.</i> ‘Argentine Skies’	<i>guaranitica</i> & ?		?
<i>S.</i> ‘Blue Ribbon’			Sets seed
<i>S.</i> ‘Violet Eyes’			?
<i>S.</i> ‘Blue Bird’			?
<i>S.</i> ‘Harmony’			Sets seed
<i>S.</i> ‘Kathe’			?
<i>S.</i> ‘Margaret Arnold’	<i>microphylla</i> Huntington & ?		?
<i>S.</i> ‘Marine Blue’	<i>chamaedryoides</i> & ?		Sets seeds
<i>S.</i> ‘Romantic Rose’	<i>involucrata</i> & <i>karwinskii</i>		?
<i>S.</i> ‘Winter Red’	<i>karwinskii</i> & <i>involucrata</i>		?
<i>S. involucrata</i> ‘Joan’	<i>involucrata</i> & ?		?

Some of these set seed, some are sterile and some that we think of as sterile will occasionally set seed. There is an explanation. Read the next issue of this newsletter. Meanwhile please share your thoughts about the gaps in the tables and add to the list. **Pat Anderson 23 May 2005**

Salvias by the Sea.

My Salvias are all looking very healthy and are providing me with much pleasure, it is exciting to find new flowers for the first time. Some of these I have yet to identify as they were grown from cuttings that I had failed to label. I am learning facts about my Salvias by experience. Firstly they are sun lovers but some will tolerate a little shade.

My Salvias respond to rain, they love this chemical free drink. Wind is not a problem, if a branch gets broken it just means another plant or 2 or 3 new plants depending on how many cuttings I can obtain. The same applies when a large Wattle bird settles on a small plant. The New Holland Honeyeaters have discovered my salvias, these are new birds to my garden. Frosts are a rarity so I don't expect any problems, but I will be vigilant when the time comes. The only pests I have had to deal with so far are snails and as yet I have not encountered any diseases.

I am very puzzled by *Salvia lyrata* this small plant has several spikes of green bracts with four seeds inside but no flowers. The bracts turn brown and the seeds turn black. I am very curious to know how these plants can produce fertile seeds without flower parts for fertilization to take place. I planted some of these seeds and to my surprise they have come up and are growing well. (*It is called cleistogamy. See p15 in SN 20*).

When I arrived home in the New Year my *Salvia sclarea* was a beautiful mauve/pink pyramid about 1 metre high just demanding I get the camera out. Sadly this short lived plant has since died but I have saved some seeds. (A note from Trudi. I find that *S. sclarea* dies down after flowering but resumes growth and even puts out new shoots from the base. The neglected one in the old vegetable patch is into its third year. More comment from the rest of you please). I will need to shift a large *S. Indigo Spires* this winter as its sprawling habit has completely blocked one of my pathways all summer even though I picked large bunches to take indoors it quickly grew back.

Our mild summer and now unseasonably warm autumn has the plants puzzled. I think my autumn/winter pruning will be much later this year. I think I will just be treating individual needs as they arise, which will spread the load.

Coral Kennedy

Hot Lips Fascination

Though there are many beautiful salvias, choosing one as your favourite is almost impossible. Various factors influence us as when we make that choice; because of their beautiful flower colour, interesting leaf form, their all round hardiness, their fragrance or their ability to adapt to special or difficult areas in the garden.

One salvia that has me totally spellbound is *Salvia* "Hot Lips". In all the years of growing this wonderful salvia, there have been only three unfavourable comments. One remarked that it was such a 70s plant because of its psychedelic colouring, another basically didn't like the two tone variation and the third just didn't fancy its colour.

Wandering around the nurseries nothing can be found that has such a distinct colour combination as *S* "Hot Lips". Therefore I'd call it a real gem and a great eye catcher for any garden. Blending its colour with the right mix of salvias or other plants could make or break the effect you want to create. Looking out from our kitchen door down the staircase is *S. melissadora* (mauvy blue) on the right, *S* "Hot Lips" on the left and in the background, the intense pink of *S. involucrata* "Bethelii".

S. "Hot Lips" has many variables, either pure white, pure pinky red in colour, or any combination of these colours. In my hunt for how many different combinations, I collected 15 variations of flowers. Each flower varies slightly with the red working its way up from the lower lip till the whole flower

is pure red. There are times when an all red flower has a fine white stripe on each side of the upper lip. Sometimes the first flush will be pure white, other times it will be pure red, but as the plant matures, the variations begin and continue throughout the whole season. By season I mean basically all year. In our garden it flowers 12 months of the year. Prune every second branch down for continual fresh growth. Every now and then the hedge shears are brought out to clear the pathway, but within a matter of weeks, new growth with flowering buds appear. The great part about S “Hot Lips” is, if you look deep into the bush, young green shoots are always growing from the base.

It has a very rapid rate of growth, almost doubling its size in a matter of weeks. A few months ago Leon and I potted up three plants, three stems on each plant, on average 30cm in height into a clay pot of 50cm width by 35cm high. The plants are now 60cm in height and 70cm in width, there are 35 flowering stems and believe it or not, Leon tip pruned it about six weeks ago, taking all the flowering buds off. I was pretty annoyed with him, but within a matter of weeks, it was in flower again. “Hot Lips” is a totally amazing plant, if you want a fast growing, eye catching and hardy salvia that is very dry tolerant, this has to be the ultimate plant. We have become totally engrossed by its amazing growing and flowering power. *Happy Gardening, Elly Roos*

PS each new plant put into our garden is watered in with a solution of Charlie Carp and mulched with sugar cane mulch.

THE NOBELIUS SALVIA PLOT

I apologize for the delay on reporting on the Salvia Collection at Emerald. I have had one knee replacement and this, with a rapidly deteriorating second knee, has kept me out of gardening action for two or three months, so my Salvia Plot contact has consisted of ‘viewing only’ during this time. I did not attend to any summer watering, although periodic good rainfall has made watering not so necessary for most of the summer.

I have appreciated the attention given to the plot during my absence by other members of the Salvia Study Group who spent several hard working hours (during two working bees) pruning back and spreading a layer of cane straw mulch over the garden beds. I had a couple of enthusiastic helpers recently and we weeded, pruned dead wood, planted a couple of replacement plants and generally tidied up the plot in preparation for winter. The mowing and attention by John and Jenny de Groot is much appreciated.

Growth has been phenomenal during the spring and summer; the hardy South Africans, and tall growing plants such as the *Salvia karvinskii* hybrids, *S. involucrata*, and *S. gesneriiflora* are thriving. After almost 14 years of trialling we have now reached the stage where we realise that in this plot which only receives casual attention, unlike those in home gardens salvias such as *S. glutinosa*, *S. munzii*, *S. hians*, *S. rugosa*, *S. discolor*, *S. tomentosa*, *S. interrupta*, *S. officinalis* ‘Tricolor’ and *S. taraxifolia* do not survive.

When the plot was first started we realised that our small hillside garden was actually a wind tunnel, which did not help many of the many of the more tender plants, so a hedge of tall growing salvias was planted at the Eastern boundary to create a wind-break. This improved the plot’s growing capacity considerably, but cold winter conditions; frosts, snow, hail etc. made growing conditions very difficult for several of the frost sensitive varieties. Very dry periods during some summers also resulted in casualties.

We are now beginning to realise that there are many salvias which will not tolerate these conditions so we are planting accordingly and trialling new plants as they come into circulation amongst our group. To counter the failures mentioned above, I must point out that our success rate in this collection has been tremendous. The great majority of plants established during the early years of the plot have flourished. Salvias such as *S. fruticosa*, *S. puberula*, *S. leucophylla*, and all the species from South Africa; *S. dolomitica*, *S. africana lutea*, *S. africana caerulea*, *S. lanceolata* and from the Canary Islands *S. canariensis* and many others are thriving in spite of neglect.

To complete these random notes I must make mention of my own rather limited collection and the delight some salvias have given me. During my convalescence my gardening has consisted of building up a potted garden on a decking adjacent to our kitchen door. Many of these pots contain vegetables and herbs for kitchen use, as well as certain medicinal herbs to(hasten my recovery!). Some treasured salvias are also included in this mini-garden. *Salvia dombeyii* is clambering up the hand rails of the steps and currently boasting about 10 flowering stems, each crowned with a lavish head of huge, brilliant red, pendulous florets.

The large pot of salvia semi-atrata has flourished in its sunny warm position and is rewarding me with a mass of buds which will shortly open into beautiful bicoloured flowers. A balcony garden can be a perfect setting for salvias and certainly enhances ones power of observation!

Ray Boatman

Salvia Snippets

Cloudehill Nursery (Olinda Vic) is selling *Salvia* "Phyllis" "Fancy" and *S leucantha* "Santa Barbara" – a new release. According to Betsy Glebsch's book, it's a more compact plant than *S. leucantha* "Midnight" but has the same flowering capacity. It is apparently a cultivar found in the garden of Kathy Ann Brown of Santa Barbara.

NEW NAMES *SALVIA OPPOSITIFLORA* IS *S. TUBIFLORA*
SALVIA FALLAX IS *S. ROSCIDA*

A WORD OF CAUTION ON NAMING SALVIAS

It is interesting to note how many so called 'new' salvia cultivar names are popping up lately. Ever on the lookout for something new or different in the salvia world, I often come across a plant with a new name, (we all have at some time), so it has to be checked out.

Salvia microphylla and *Salvia greggii* can, and very often do, produce mixed batches of seedlings when grown from ones own seed bank. The flower colours can vary and so too the leaves. The offspring of these 'mixed' batches with a different colour to the parent **should not** be given a name at random.

A pot of *Salvia lyrata*, grown from seed, was being sold as the 'purple-leaf lyrata'. Obviously it had been grown from seed but it showed no sign of purple anywhere on the plant. My own young seedlings of the purple-leaf form of *S. lyrata* show a definite purple colouration all over the leaves and you know that those particular seeds have come fairly 'true'. Admittedly the species we are talking about do have purple veining but this is more noticeable at a later stage.

When you think of the work that horticulturalist / plant breeders and hybridisers do to perfect a new cultivar; a batch of seedlings is grown on, then the spindly or sickly 'off-spring' are pricked out and thrown away, are not used, and never potted up and sold off just because the flower has a slightly different colour! In a series of eliminations the best of what is left is then grown on for a year or so to observe their behaviour. The best of these are then selected. The 'backyard grower' is rather put to shame, especially when these 'new off-spring' have not been **'road tested'**.

New cultivars have to be trialled in every way before releasing to the public. They have to show 'merit' in performance, behaviour, looks, leaf shape and foliage density, flower shape and colour and length of flowering period. Then checked for any signs of 'weediness' and whether or not it might turn out to be a pest. This is the only way to find the best performers and it is the only way good plant breeders operate. On a recent visit to plant collections of the OPCAA in the western district, it was interesting to hear all collection holders comment on any 'new' cultivars that came up in their gardens saying, "you can't give a plant a name until it is properly checked out and trialled and that can take years"!

These days, with new rules regarding pest potential within the plant world, one has to be very careful with any plant released to the public. Salvias are really just getting started as a great genus of plants to grow in tough situations, some of course hardier than others but if we want to continue promoting the name Salvia, and the Salvia Study Group, then we all have to watch what is named and released for sales.

Meg Bentley

Marion's thank you to Meg Bentley

The fact that bees are particularly attracted to blue is one, perhaps the main, reason that began my salvia collecting. On several occasions Trudi Fry has comforted me by stating that when she knew about four salvias, she felt she knew all there was to know. However, I wish to thank Meg Bentley for her wonderful working study "A Manual for Salvias Growers" which I have had since the Salvia Study Group's meeting in August last year. I refer to this all the time. Meg has notes on names, maintenance, propagation, height/widths, pruning, indeed all we need to know for a jump start into the growing of salvias. I commend it to all salvia growers. My capacity to remember the salvia names has increased and the aspect that each likes is gradually sinking in. I wasn't as advanced with cuttings for the Cockatoo market this year, but hopefully next year. Meanwhile, so many salvias are planted and thriving at Surrey Hills. Visitors to the garden are most curious about these wonderful plants, amazed as we all are, that there are so many salvias/sages in the Lamiaceae family. *Salvia splendens* "van Houtii", *S.* "Black Knight" and *S. discolor* have flowered since spring last year and *S. corrugata* has flowered for months right through winter, although not so prolifically. *S. mexicana* "Limelight" is thriving and back into flowering prolifically.

Marion Bond

Geelong News

In the Dec.2004 Salvia News the Editor in her introductory notes at the top of page1 discusses 'The Ancient Roman Forum', She concludes this discussion stating, ' Look for the New Feature in this edition'. A brief search revealed this new forum on page 11. I was pleased to find this segment re-appearing March 2005 issue, where Pat Anderson, under the forum heading, raises the question why her *Salvia officinalis* succumbed to sudden death. Because this plant is known world wide as common sage, and has been grown for many centuries as a valuable herb, it is easily obtained from most nurseries. I have grown it for many years and find that unless it is pruned regularly it becomes quite woody. Occasionally one dies but is easily replaced.

With respect to its cultivar with pink flowers, *Salvia officinalis* "Rosea", I have had the same plant for about 15 years, profusely flowering each year and producing copious seeds. I introduced a plant to the Salvia Study Group at its inception. Perhaps its seeds were not collected for distribution to members.

Pat Anderson's comment on *Salvia officinalis* 'Alba' are similar to my experiences with it. Several times in the past years I have tried to grow it, without success. I believe other growers must also have similar problems, because it is hard to obtain.

Occasionally I'm able to collect the cultivar *S.officinalis* 'Tricolor' usually when it is a young plant. In that early stage, I really enjoy the vibrancy of its tri-colored leaves, but as it ages these gradually fade. I have never succeeded in growing these for more than 12 months.

My *Salvia officinalis* 'Berggarten' with its grey, oval shaped leaves and rugose surfaced leaves, is a strong grower, and forms a prostrate clump. It is now 18 months old and has never flowered. When speaking to Ray Boatman recently about it, he assures me that this cultivar located in our Nobelius Garden, recently flowered beautifully. Its flowers were a paler blue and larger than its parent. Perhaps I will tempt my plant with some potash to seek its flowers.

I have found that the common sage cultivars 'Tricolor' and 'Icterina' with its gold and green leaves are always flowerless. Whilst 'Berggarten', in my case, is also flowerless. I wonder if other readers have similar results?

Another salvia in my possession and quite new to me, is *S. microphylla* 'Mystique'. It has been in flower for several weeks, and it seems to have its own shade of red. It has a very open structure with a height of 1m. The stems are very strong with light green, ovate leaves.

Bill Whitehead

Forum I found a poly box of pots of *Salvia officinalis* dating back to the 'trees falling on shade house' episode of 2003. They were tucked away behind the polyhouse. Out of sight out of mind. Anyway they are healthy and have been apologised to and re-potted into t'cotta. One appears to be 'Berggarten'. Maybe having their pots squashed down to a few inches high helped their survival. I will report on whether tender loving care destroys them or not. **Trudi**

Werri Beach NSW

Thanks for all the helpful information in the last issue. I've identified my plant as *Salvia africana caerulea* but have found I also have *S. chamelaeagnea*. I also identified the dormant plant as *S. atrocyanea* but I think I'm going to move it as it has required too much watering in its present position. At our April Garden Club meeting, I presented a vase of all the salvias flowering at that time. Members were most impressed with one asking could she take the whole lot home. However she had so many requests for "bits" that the bunch was greatly reduced by the time she got out the door.

Many of our members are reduced to small gardens in the Retirement Village or in Town Houses and it got me thinking about suitable salvias for pots. I will be taking a few along to the next meeting. I guess even some of the larger ones could still be grown in pots if given plenty of pruning.

I had the bright idea of hedging *S. africana lutea* as it was planted on the side of a path and was continually blocking the way. However, it is becoming a never ending job of cutting back and I don't think it's going to work. It's a bit of a monster, but I love it so I'll just have to take some cuttings and move it to a more suitable position, NOT near a path. I would probably have lost lots of flowers anyway with constant pruning.

My seed propagating efforts haven't produced much so far. *S. reptans* popped up almost straight away, but not much else. I have taken note of all the advice and will keep trying.

At the moment *S. iodantha* and *S. purpurea* are flowering madly as is *S. madrensis*. The honey-eaters are having a wonderful time. I accidentally planted another *S. iodantha* in the footpath garden which hasn't grown as high, probably because of the wind, but is flowering really well. Could someone remind me when should I start reducing the height so that by the time of flowering, the plant isn't quite so leggy and thus not as affected by the wind. The salt wind burns the leaves, but if I can keep both salvias lower, the wind will not matter so much.

S "Anthony Parker" is vigorous to say the least, but doesn't seem to be worried by the salt wind. I planted it with several others as a small plant and since then I've had to climb under and remove the others to new places. One was *S. forskaohlei* which I almost lost, but seems okay in its new spot. It helps to read up on growth habits before you plant of course.

My great friend, the mulching machine, is on the blink at the moment and waiting for the mower man to do his magic. I really can't do without it. We've had it for about 12 years with very little trouble, using it at least once a week. I have a large pile awaiting its return. On my sandy soil I am constantly replacing the mulch it makes so if it dies we will have to buy a new one.

Meanwhile I'm enjoying my salvias and hoping for some cooler weather and some decent rain.

Maureen Cox

Salvia Study Group Gatherings

On Sunday 20 Feb. about 22 members of the Study Group met at Lyndi Garnett's home for a plant identification program. Thanks to Mike's expertise we enjoyed a BBQ lunch as we got to know our plants (and each other) a little better. These informal get-togethers provide a wonderful opportunity for us to exchange experiences and get a better understanding of the range of conditions in which salvias can thrive.

On the first weekend in March our garden at Tyabb was open to members of the Salvia Association. We invited our own Study Group friends to join us, particularly if they intended visiting the nearby Garden Vineyard, the venue for the rare plants sale. The heavy rain at the beginning of February meant the salvias (and most of the rest of the garden) survived the summer better than any other year since we came here. Even the grass was green; usually at this time of the year it has gone, leaving only dry dust!

Of course it rained on both days our garden was open, but not enough to cause too much concern and nearly 40 enthusiasts visited. For a few it seemed to be the first time they had seen some of the larger salvias given room to fully develop, one person suggesting that a very large *Salvia karwinskii/involuta* cross looked more like a big fruit tree than what she expected of a salvia. Others attracting considerable attention were *Salvia* 'Marine Blue', *S.* 'Cookie', *S.* 'Phyllis Fancy', *S.* 'Waverley', *S.* 'Costa Rica Blue', *S. chiapensis* and of course *S. semi atrata*, which always seems to generate comment.

Bevan Whelan.

The Botanist's Garden

Visiting the Anderson's garden is very deceiving. On arrival, you are given the impression from the surrounds and the drive that it's a bush block, but as you near the house, a greener, lush garden appears before you. Pat and John's son is a talented stonemason and his magnificent works have a special place in various spots of Pat's garden.

An interesting area that features his works has three sculptured plaques naming four garden areas. The designation of salvias has been done by their origin, the first being the North Americans, second the South African with Australian natives blended throughout, the third is the Roman Empire comprising of the Mediterranean, Middle East, North Africa and Europe, the fourth from Central and South America. The salvias are closely planted together, the tall ones supporting each other and giving a long succession of flowering between the spring/summer/autumn and winter. Pat waters only when absolutely necessary, letting the salvias survive as they would in their natural habitat. All her salvias look very lush and in good health.

S. dombeyi which is not a very common garden plant and then if grown, it is generally quite spindly, but in this garden it is an absolute gem. Trailing up an arbour surrounded by taller salvias, *S. splendens* "Van Houtei" (I remember seeing one), this and many other taller varieties protect it from the full sun. The flower bracts gave it the illusion of long red fingers, so large were the flowers. At least 10 to 20 blooms adorned the bush, the most I've ever seen on a *S. dombeyi* plant.

Plans are always in the making, with John building a propagating and plants area to accommodate Pat's passion for seed raising and cuttings, which she generously shares with fellow salvia enthusiasts. Others are used to build up new garden beds or replace old or the odd dying salvia. Pat's knowledge and ability to retain so much information amazes me. She and John share a passion for books and the reading room is like a toy shop for grown ups, you just don't know which book to pick up first.

Thanks John and Pat for sharing your wonderful garden with the Salvia Study Group. As always, visiting another member's garden gives you enthusiasm to plant more salvias in areas or ways you normally wouldn't and the bug of wanting to grow more salvias intensifies.

SE Queensland Salvia News- 23/3/05

Finally we are having a glimpse of autumn, cooler nights and a little overnight dew. This Summer has certainly been very different from the norm as very little rain has fallen since mid January. I guess it has been good for plants such as lamb's ear! Our garden is due to open the second weekend in April so the few showers we have had over the past week have been very welcome. One can see the plants saying thank you and popping up heads to flower. It is usual that over the past 3 months heavy rainfall would have occurred, however we have not had a normal SE Queensland summer for some years!

Salvia leucantha 'Midnight' is the belle of the ball at the moment--quite a dazzler, and of course, we don't have any for sale for our open garden weekend! *S.* 'Phyllis Fancy' continues to perform (it never stops unless pruned and then only briefly). *S.* 'Anthony Parker' is just beginning to bloom along with *S.mexicana* 'Lime Calyx'. *Salvia* 'Waverley' and *S. muiirii* are two that never stop flowering. *Salvia melissadora* had a hard prune back in January and is benefiting from that with a mass of flowers.

At the risk of repeating myself I must say that *S.* 'Costa Rica Blue' is one that performs constantly in our climate. One of the members of our group keeps close control on this plant keeping it at a height of 1.5 metres and having it in bloom constantly—quite an achievement as given half a chance it can become a monster if one turns ones back.

Salvia 'Cookie' and *S.* 'Christine Yeo' will be at their peak in another week or two as will all the *S. greggii* & *S.microphylla*. Many of the seedlings from Althea Drew at Nanango (in the South Burnett region where winters are cold and often frosty and summers are not as humid as ours on the coast) are doing well, however we will need to grow them for 12 months to record their growth and flowering patterns. *Salvia* 'Josh'(one of Althea's seedlings) is thriving- masses of red flowers. Trudi Fry tells me it is performing well in Victoria.

I have a circular bed that has as a central planting a michelia—this is surrounded by old-fashioned roses interplanted with salvias. Amongst these are several *S. microphylla* 'San Carlos Festival', some *S.splendens* and a variety of *S.greggii* and seedlings from Althea Drew—quite a picture at the moment. A few cosmos are bobbing their heads throughout and Queensland's granny's bonnet (*angelonia*) adds a splash of white.

I have persevered with *S. microphylla* 'Margaret Arnold' and have decided it will just not perform as well In Queensland as it does in the south. I have seen it in Margaret's garden in Goolwa and it is stunning. However I think I will have to give up on it. *S.* 'Hot Lips' is a great little plant but I find that many of the flowers have reverted to plain pink with only an occasional one with the white in it. Has anyone else had this problem? Here in SEQ we love to grow old-fashioned roses however they do not put on the displays that can be seen in the southern states. I find that interplanting with salvias provides colour when there not masses of blooms on the roses. Cosmos, cleomes and *malva sylvestris* are some of my favourite annuals that pop up amongst the salvias and roses.

Barb Wickes The Perennial Poppies Group

Salvia Observations from Warrandyte

It's amazing what you can observe when you have and take, the time (Isn't there a famous quotation about having time to pick more daisies...?)

Pollination of salvias

The main purpose of a flower is to attract an insect or other small animal by its colour, aroma, nectar etc in order that pollen from the anthers (male parts) may be transferred by the insect or animal to the stigmas (female parts) of other flowers. In their native habitat, there will be insects and hummingbirds

that are the right shape to achieve this. So, what are the pollinators in different parts of Australia and how is it done?

- The genus *Salvia* is noted for the **Staminal lever mechanism** of pollination. Watch a bee collecting pollen from *Salvia nemerosa* or *Salvia pratensis*. As the bee crawls into the corolla tube to collect nectar, the lever mechanism of the stamens causes the anther (the pollen-laden bit at the tip of the stamen) to deposit pollen on the bee's back. This will subsequently be deposited in the next flower that the bee visits and reach the stigma of that flower. Fascinating! You can copy this fascinating mechanism with a pencil.
- However, it isn't always that simple. Approximately one third of all *Salvia* species in the world are pollinated by birds in their native habitat. These are predominantly in the New World and pollinated by hummingbirds. *Salvia africana lutea* and *S. lanceolata* have been observed to be pollinated by birds in South Africa, but what about here? Certainly, many of our native birds enjoy a spot of nectar and I have seen these busy on *S.* 'Indigo Spires' and on *S.* 'Purple Majesty', but I don't know whether or not they are effective pollinators. Hummingbird moths are effective pollinators in Britain. I wonder what there is in Australia, if anything, that could tackle *Salvia dombeyi*?
- Then I have observed bees gathering pollen, not nectar, from *S. nubicola*, by hanging upside down from the outer edge of the corolla and stuffing pollen into the pollen sacs on their legs. This isn't an effective transfer mechanism for pollination.
- Honey bees aren't the only insects at it. I have seen bee flies, hover flies and moths as well as tiny native bees (or wasps). This morning, there were tiny bee-like creatures (2 sets of wings, not 1, as in flies) disappearing up the corolla tubes of my *S.* 'Black and Blue'. Honey bees flew around, but ignored the flowers in spite of the blue colour that normally attracts them.
- Then, look at the flowers of *S. greggii*, *S. microphylla* and *S.* 'Hot Lips'. By no means the smallest of salvia flowers, they have very little in the way of opening between upper and lower lips. Yesterday I noticed honey bees and bee flies alike helping themselves to nectar by puncturing the base of the corolla tube of these flowers, and always to the right hand side! But with tiny flowers like those of *S. verticillata*, the gap is open enough for bees to go in head first. The white cabbage moths were also busy on this species.

What else have people observed? I am very keen to collect and document this sort of information, so please keep your eyes open and send in your notes.

Use of stones to keep roots cool. Thank you Meg for suggesting this tip. In my new garden, in spite of trying to plant things out by continent of origin and individual requirements, some plants have ended up in the hottest, most exposed, driest spots in thin soil. Meg suggested placement of some rocks to keep the roots cool. This has been brilliant advice. The soil was mulched, but those plants with protective rocks are doing much better. I expect I will have to watch out for snails at some stage. Rocks make good hiding places too!

Self seeding salvia species I haven't enjoyed this phenomenon before. My plants used to be in pots and less suitable conditions. Now I shall have to be very careful next Spring to distinguish between the offspring of self-seeding plants and those plants that are emerging from winter dormancy.

Snippets from yahoo

- Species name for *S.* 'El Cielo Blue'. Evidently this is *Salvia caudata*. Richard Dufresne has promised to identify *S.* 'Chiquita Blue' in the N. hemisphere summer.
Pat Anderson 23:01: 05

Reflections about our Open Garden weekend at Panton Hill

On 23rd and 24th April this year, we had our garden open for the Australia's Open Garden Scheme. Being quite exhausted and run down, the lead up to it was not exactly fun, but the weekend was an absolute joy.

The weather was beautiful and our garden, the neatest in a long time, had lots of colour, thanks in particular to the many Salvias. Nearly 600 people came to visit and judging from their comments, most seemed to enjoy the experience, as well as gain ideas from meandering around the many beds and borders.

I must admit it was a surprise and a thrill to get so much positive feedback. To me, these compliments are more a commentary on the extraordinary beauty and diversity of nature than my husband's and my skills as gardeners. Of course, we, as all gardeners, play an important part in creating the individuality of our gardens, but it's nature - the continuous interaction of plants, soil, water, bird, animal and insect life - that does most of the 'work'.

Many visitors loved the number of bellbirds, Eastern Spinebills, wrens and other birds that have made our garden their home, thanks again, at least partly, to the many Salvias rich in nectar.

The Salvias did create a significant stir of interest. Those that looked fabulous included the long time favourites such as Bethel's, Indigo Spires, Pineapple Sage, Black Knight, Purple Majesty, Waverley, the *Salvia greggii*'s, the many forms of microphyllas, three different *Salvia leucantha*, 'Omaha Gold', 'Van Houttii', 'Marine Blue' and 'Costa Rican Blue'. The five different cultivars of *Salvia mexicana*, blended well with the large flowerheads of the purple, lilac, white, and the rare pink *Plectranthus ecklonii* in a large, raised, shady bed at the back of the garden.

Other Salvias in flower included *Salvia involucrata* 'Joan' (a real gem), *S. regla* (suberb in autumn), *S. mellisodora*, (always lovely), *S. puberula*, *S. 'Red Dragon'*, *S. confertiflora*, *S. buchananii*, *S. semiatrata*, *S. 'Anthony Parker'* (love it!), *S. villosa* in fact far too many to mention all of them. About a 100 different Salvias had at least some flowers. You can't beat the Salvias for flower colour in autumn, as well as at other times of the year. Lucky us, being introduced to this wonderful genus of plants.

The *Solanum rantonettii*, Perennial Ageratum, Lasiandra, Tagetes, Bidens, Plumbagos, Chrysanthemums and about a dozen different Abutilons also provided an exceptional show. For those with an appetite for the unusual, *Viburnum macrocephalum*, Iochromas, the huge Montanoa, Isoplexis and the Canadian Elderberry seemed to be winners.

Sure it involved a lot of work to get the garden ready - not that it ever is ready to one's own satisfaction. To do so for the Australia's Open Garden Scheme, spend 2 days chatting with wonderful people sharing a common interest, and get so many nice compliments, made the weekend a very rewarding experience. P.S.) I slept for most of the next two days afterwards. **Aria**

UPDATE ON 'Herbs & Cottage Plants Nursery' in Hurstbridge

New Address: 'Finngrove' 195 Church Rd, Panton Hill. Mel 263 H5

Phone: 9719 7660 or 0427 3255 76

Email: torkkola@netspace.net.au

As some of you already know, I have relocated my nursery from Hurstbridge to Panton Hill. After almost 7 years, I was very ready to reclaim my weekends for other than nursery oriented pursuits, such as, visiting friends and family, going on outings, gardening, even being able to get to Salvia Study Group meetings & activities etc. Overall, the idea is to have a more relaxing time, which the nursery, as it was, did not permit.

My nursery still operates, but in the new location and with sales days only ONCE a month, on the FIRST full Friday, Saturday and Sunday of each month. The dates for the rest of the year are:

- * Friday, 3rd to Sunday, 5th June , 2005
- * Friday, 1st to Sunday, 3rd July, 2005
- * Friday, 5th to Sunday 7th August 2005
- * Friday, 2nd to Sunday, 4th September, 2005
- * Friday, 7th to Sunday 9th October, 2005
- * Friday, 4th to Sunday, 6th November, 2005
- * Friday, 2nd to Sunday, 4th December, 2005

Opening times are 10 am to 4 pm. Plants can be pre ordered for pick up on sales days. Groups of 12 or more people can visit the nursery and/or tour our garden by appointment at times other than sales days. Eftpos is available for purchases. People who provide me with an email address will get a monthly newsletter and a reminder of sales days.

As well as over 200 varieties of Salvias, stocks include a huge range of other perennials, shrubs and herbs, many of which are uncommon to rare. My collections of Abutilons, Achilleas, Buddlejas, Campanulas, Species Geraniums, Kniphofias and Plectranthus may be of particular interest, especially as many combine well with Salvias in the garden.

Happy gardening to all! *Aria*

The Salvia Growers Manual, is priced at \$30 per copy or mailing cost of \$2.50 for post & packing. The supplement is now available, full of photos and illustrations. This retails at a higher cost than expected due to the cost of color printing. The price is \$48.00 but can be ordered with the Manual as a complete book for \$65. Copies can be obtained direct from Meg. 03 5964 9372 or Mobile 0431 240 971 or contact Lyndi 9803 4534

Terracotta Gardening

I have had a rough year. My back problem took five and a half months of intense physio to resolve. Meanwhile my frustration at not being able to even walk around and sympathise with the salvia plants waiting out another year to be planted made me worse. The solution was to transfer the lot to terracotta pots, placed on tiers formed from 'found objects' in front of the wall made to screen the tanks. This wall is 2.2m high and 9m long and faces North East, (the prevailing wind is N. West), slightly 'doglegged' in a pleasing way. There are roughly 5 tiers of pots on pallets, various bits of junk, old shelving etc. The pots have been bought from Northcote, salvaged, donated and even dug up.

So that is the framework of my terracotta garden. The other 2 acres is surviving away and I have lately employed help with mowing and other tasks.

There are over 200 salvias in terracotta. The largest pots are 34cm or 31cm and the rest are all sizes. *Salvia madrensis* is possibly the largest to be dumped into a 34cm pot. When I left it was coming into flower, possibly it is embarrassed, but the alternative was to be dead. Why there are so many salvia plants available for my experiment is that for far too long it has been impossible to plant as the soil is too dry. I had successfully struck cuttings for massed planting of my favourites. That is why I have 5 pots of *Salvia semi-atrata*, 3 pots of S. 'Joan' and multiples of many others too. So the 'over 200' doesn't mean that it is all just 'collection salvias'. However this is a great way to observe the ability of these plants to grow, and indeed flower vigorously, in a convenient place for me, and my inconvenient body. Also the salvia wall is adjacent to the polyhouse (which is aligned North South) so cuttings can be taken and in propagating mix before they know they have left the mother plant. Now all I have to do is **label** these cuttings as I go. As you all know I am very neglectful about this!

It was very hot when I began planting the terracotta pots. The plants were busy dying of neglect and lack of water in the black plastic pots. Root bound and, in general, in a horrible condition. Jillian helped with the massive plant rescue. We took many well rooted side shoots from *Salvia lanceolata*, *S. africana caerulea*, *S. glechomifolia* and *S. blepharophylla*. These will be available soon. The terracotta pots were soaked before planting. The potting mix used was 'Hortico', leavened with some medium grain size perlite. I find the perlite suits my particular situation. It lightens the pot for lifting purposes and also helps with both moisture retention and drainage. (I expect some of you to work out how this can be so.) Anyway it works for me and, as I always hasten to say I am an enthusiast not an expert. The plants were watered and soaked until bubbles stopped rising. Later the lot were fertilised with Osmocote Plus. None of them suffered at all, have been easily watered and have needed less water, than the ones still in plastic. The soil level in the pots has been left low enough to allow for a good amount of water to be applied easily.

The result after more than a year will be interesting. I intend to open my garden to the Salvia Study Group and The HSOV on 23rd October 05. I believe that salvias are a 'no worries' group of plants for containers. They must have good drainage, cool roots (hence the 'Coolgardie Safe' factor of terracotta) and with less water than most, plus a little fertiliser will give both interest and pleasure.

Trudi Fry

STOP PRESS

A GARDEN IN TYABB

I remember writing a couple of months ago, after the early February rain, that our garden, which is usually not given any extra water, was really thriving. I also reflected on how good life was with water in the soil and a full dam for the first time in nearly 10 years. The garden is still thriving but only because I have watered it 3-4 times - who would have expected to be watering here on the Mornington Peninsula in late May?

Those who have visited our garden may remember that the beds around the perimeter of the salvia garden contain a mixture of herbs, bulbs and roses, anything in fact which had no other home. We have started the task of removing much of this to make way for more salvias. (Thanks to the generosity of members, our still quite new collection has grown to something over 120 examples.) It may be some time before I can replant as the soil is as dry as talcum powder once the top surface is removed.

Top performers over the last couple of months have been *S. Phyllis' Fancy*, *S. Anthony Parker*, *S. Waverly*, *S. dolomitica*, *S. marine blue* and *S. cookie*. One surprise has been *S purpurea*. I have made two or three attempts to grow this but until this year none have survived to flower. It has certainly been worth persevering as it is a most spectacular plant with the flowers appearing in full brushes for almost the full length of the stem.

Now as we approach the beginning of winter it is the turn of the big salvias. The powerful growth of *S. madrensis*, carrying yellow flowers draws attention, *S. Romantic Rose* and another unidentified *S. involucrate* x begin to dominate their surroundings with both their vigorous growth and profuse large flower display. *S. gesneriflora* 'Tequila' has had some flowers throughout the summer but is now approaching its best. The display is quite spectacular with my largest example now more than 2m x 2m and covered with bright red flowers and the contrasting black calyces. Unfortunately most people think it too big for a small suburban garden but if that is where I lived I am sure I would make room. It certainly surprises people who know salvias only as a herb used in cooking and probably Pineapple Sage and possibly Indigo Spires!

S. dombeyi has been flowering under shade and I now have a couple of cuttings to plant out. I will probably plant at least one of these where it will grow through something else to provide support and protection as it looks quite fragile. Two recent purchases have been *S. nipponica* 'Fuji Snow' (bought at Cloudehill) and a white form of *S. canariensis* (from Sue Templeton). Neither of these is yet in the ground.

Whenever I look at trees and shrubs in the garden suffering distress through lack of water I need to remind myself that this is only a garden, and much as I love it, it is not my livelihood, it is my pleasure. When things are tough in the garden spare a thought for those who work the land.

Bevan Whelan

Seeds

**To purchase salvia seeds contact Lyndi Garnett 844 Highbury Rd. Glen Waverly 3150
Ph 9803 4534**

LATE NOTICES

Saturday 21st October from 10 am

Upwey Garden Club Show .

The Victorian Salvia Study Group will be showing & selling. There is a container competition !

November Gathering.

Lyndi has arranged a visit to Earimill Garden at 33a Koornalla Crs. Mt Eliza on 11 November. This really is a magnificent garden and one which has raised some \$500,000 for children's cancer charities.

There is a charge (\$12.00 which includes admission, tea/coffee etc) and we need a minimum of 20 people so put this in your diary now! Bookings should be made through Lyndi and if transport is needed contact Lyndi or Jillian. More information will be available at a later date.

A REMINDER to those readers who have forgotten to renew their subscription to Salvia News. An additional subscription form has been included. This will be the last issue sent to those who haven't renewed their subscription.

