



SalviaNews

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

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*There has been enough rain to ensure an excellent season for my salvias and for yours too I hope. Thank you for sending such great articles to Salvia News, please continue to do so. Every one loves to read them. Elly, due to increased business commitments has resigned as treasurer and Bevan Whelan has taken her place. Elly and Leon will remain closely involved with Salvia Study Group activities. We thank Elly for all her work . **Happy Christmas and good gardening weather. Trudi***

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December 4. Christmas Breakup at 'Lemon tree Cottage', Elly and Leon's home.

11.00 a.m. BYO Food to share. Come and see this garden - it seems to change every year. 59 Ferguson St, Upwey Melway 74 K9 Phone 9752 6712

February 11-12. Hampton Salvia Collection 21 Barnett St Hampton Melway 76 K4

Time: 10am to 4.30pm both days. Mark Dymiotis' garden at Hampton will be open as part of the Open Garden Scheme. The Salvia Study Group's OPCA registered Salvia Collection is located at this address and will be worth seeing. Plant sales and afternoon teas will be available.

Plans for 2006 are a propagation work shop, a working bee at Nobelius & several garden visits.

Apologies to everyone for the mix up of dates re the Earimill Garden outing, most people were contacted by phone to say that due to small numbers the outing was cancelled. This a good example of why we ask people to let us know if they are coming to an event—we then have a contact number. We are very sorry for any inconvenience caused. If you have changed your address, phone number or email address please let us know.

A Busy Year

2005 has been a very busy and successful year for the Victorian Salvia Study Group. Activities have included visits to gardens, shows and clubs. In April we were at the Rose Show in Waverley, a very successful undertaking. We visited the Melbourne Botanic Gardens for a demonstration and talk on propagation and in July we took part in the extremely successful inaugural Pakenham Expo. We visited the gardens of both Laurelle Willis and Pat Anderson too. The VSSG was at the Rare Plant Sale at Mt. Macedon in September, the Upwey Garden Club's Horticultural Show in October (where we had a display of salvias in terracotta pots) and the following day was Trudi's Open Garden.

November included the 10th Annual Open Rose Garden Weekend at John Nieuwesteeg's Rose Nursery at Coldstream in aid of the Road Trauma Support Team.

Members of the VSSG have been invited to speak on salvias at Garden and Horticultural Clubs both in the suburbs and around country Victoria, proving enjoyable and informative for everyone.

The building of garden structures and solid work, including a watering system, has been carried out at Hampton (look forward to an Open Garden there 11/12 February 06). Forward planning for the reconstruction, planting and fencing of the Nobelius Garden, to take place in 2006 is moving ahead.

Lemon Tree Cottage.

The good news is daylight saving is here again, which means Leon and I can now spend 12 hours a day gardening, not all of them in our own garden of course. In our garden design business, the most frequent request we have is for a low maintenance garden, hence not many salvias are used, as most regard them as a cottage plant. The fashion seems to be NZ flaxes, leafy foliage of various colours and hedging of Pittosporum or Lilly Pilly even camelias, but generally not cottage or native garden styles. Other good news is from a source in the Nursery industry, that the garden styles we are adopting here are being pulled out in America and Europe. There is a big turn around where Cottage Gardens are coming into fashion again. Lets see what happens in Australia over the next five years.

With our plant sales of late we have noticed an enormous interest in salvias. With each year of the Salvia Study Group, we see more and more people continuing to collect a wider variety of Salvias, maybe realising how fast growing, tough and dry tolerant most salvias are.

Over the past four months, Leon and I have taken out hundreds of salvias, roses and perennials, placed them all in pots and totally renovated the area around the Lemon Tree. A 10 metre long rock wall has been built with an entrance through a new arbour over another floor mosaic and red brick staircase with pillars and pots on either side to enhance our new garden area. We have worked really hard to have it ready for replanting in spring before the potted plants start sprouting their new foliage. We are now reaping the rewards as it is an absolute picture.

Leon and I are looking forward to sharing our new garden area for all to see at the Salvia Group's X-mas get together. If you are a subscriber, have never been to any of our gatherings, please feel welcome to make this your first and meet many other salvia enthusiasts. It's a great time and place to share our love of gardens and plants and best of all meet some really great people.

We wish everyone a very safe and happy Christmas, a prosperous New Year and most of all lots of happy gardening.

Elly Roos.

An update on the Salvia Collection at Hampton.

[For those who don't know about Mark Dymiotis at Hampton and the Salvia Collection in his garden; years ago Mark offered his front garden to allow the Herb Society to grow a collection of salvias] Nobelius is of course where the second part of the collection is held.

Much work has been carried out at Hampton with areas being re-designed, planting out more salvias, mulching, paving, brickwork and the addition of a pergola archway at the entrance to the collection etc. This has all been taking shape for the big event in February 11th & 12th 2006, when Marks garden will be open to the public for the first time through the Open Garden Scheme from 10 until 4.30 both days.

The salvias are looking marvelous at the moment and the warm weather along with periods of rain has made things grow in leaps and bounds, at this rate plants will have to be pruned instead of nipping to keep them compact.

There will be so much to see apart from the salvia collection.

Marks interests lie in Greek vegetable gardening including his interesting amaranth plants, olives trees and processing of the olives, bread baking and building a conventional brick oven. All of which he has taught through the Council of Adult Education. Mark has also included grape vines to his extensive garden and he has some very interesting tomatoes too, grafted onto tall stock of Egg Plant or Aubergine which is in the same Solanaceae family.

On the open day, there will be sales of salvias by the Salvia Study Group, afternoon teas and fresh fruit salad by the Herb Society of Victoria and some of Marks amaranth seed, common name is 'Love-lies-bleeding'

Many thanks are due to the tremendous efforts of the few who have been able to assist in this large project. More work still needs to be carried out and assistance will be needed on the big day.

Put this date in your calendar now February 11th and 12th 2006. Come along and see this remarkable garden. **Meg Bentley**

Making salvias flower on cue

Those of us who grow salvias for "Expos" would love to be able to control our little plants so that they look their best for a particular event. Without doubt, all nursery owners would like to have this level of control as well. The discovery of the chemical nature of a hormone to stimulate flowering, however, continues to be the "Holy grail" of horticulturalists.

The timing of flowering of a plant is ultimately timed by genetic programming. However, the environment in which a plant is growing can promote or delay flowering. The commonest factor involved appears to be **day, or rather night, length** (known as "**photoperiod**"). Plants are programmed to flower in different ways. For example, "Short Day Plants", such as chrysanthemums, only flower when the day length is shorter than a critical day length for that species (usually in Autumn). Conversely, "Long Day Plants", such as spinach and coriander, flower when day length exceeds a critical value. Other plants are Day Neutral. So, what about salvias? Given the diverse geographical origins of salvias, it is probable that the various species will embrace the full spectrum from Short to Long Day Plants. Richard Dufresne recently confirmed this supposition for me on the Yahoo internet discussion site, while pointing out that other environmental factors, such as **temperature and fertility of the growing medium**, can also play their part. Richard has observed different bloom periods on similar stock plants if they are inside, outside, in cold frames or in a greenhouse and that this changes from year to year. I would also add that **stress** is an environmental factor that can induce flowering. Any plant threatened with death will automatically try to reproduce itself and hence flower prematurely. So, letting plants get pot bound might be a way of stimulating flowering, but then the resulting display might not be optimal! Regardless of day/night length, a plant is only able to flower when it has obtained a minimal vegetative size to support the weight of flowers.

Back to the main factor – **photoperiod** – plant scientists believe that the biochemical system that responds to day/night length is located in the cells of mature leaves and that, upon receipt of a specific cue, this stimulates the synthesis of a "flowering hormone" that moves from the leaves to the flowering sites. This has been demonstrated in controlled experiments involving grafts. This elusive hormone has been named "Florigen". It appears to be very difficult to detect because it is present in very low concentrations and/or because it may well be a combination of particular amounts of several hormones –gibberellin, auxin and cytokinin – all of which occur naturally in plants. Taking gibberellin alone, application of a synthetic form of this hormone to leaves has been shown to stimulate carrot plants to flower while preventing flowering in other plants like strawberry and fuchsia. So this is may not be the answer to our needs for salvias. Another contributor to the Yahoo site tells me that the nursery industry in the USA does use some sort of

spray to induce flowering, but he didn't know the name, nor, more particularly, the ingredients. Nor have I seen a report showing that unsprayed plants did not respond in the same way.

Returning to another factor – fertility of the growth medium – a plant will continue to grow without producing flowers while it has a good supply of nitrogen and other goodies. So it is argued that feeding potted plants with a low-nitrogen fertiliser might be expected to induce flowering. There are certainly commercial products, such as “Bloom Booster” made by Manutec that claim to produce bigger and better flowers and I am aware of various people who use it for this purpose. To establish what effect this, and other treatments have, I have germinated some batches of 2 or 3 species of salvia and I will conduct some trials this summer, at different stages of development, and I will compare these with untreated plants kept as a control. The results should be interesting.

I believe that the horticulture industry here relies primarily on controlling photoperiod for timing of chrysanthemums in flower for Mothers Day and poinsettias for Christmas etc. For this they need large scale glass houses where they can control day length with heavy duty blinds to shorten day length and/or powerful lights to extend the day length, all computer driven. I think this is a bit beyond our scope for our small scale “Expos”.

For anyone interested, here is some further reading:

Capon, B. 1990, “Botany for Gardeners”, pp 133-136

Atwell, B., Kriedemann, P. and Turnbull, C. 1999, “Plants in Action: Adaptation in Nature, Performance in Cultivation”, Chaps 8 and 9

... and a few web sites:

www.news.cornell.edu/releases/Sept04/Florigen.snd.chron.html

www.adonline.id.au/flowers/hormones.shtml

www.madsci.org/posts/archives/apr2002/1019775732.Btr.html

Pat Anderson 5/03/19

Notes from Gruyere: Spring.

The salvias flowering this season have been marvellous particularly *S. taraxacifolia* which has been in flower since September (this one is in a container) and yet the one in the ground has been very slow off the mark with no sign of flowers. Salvia ‘Costa Rica Blue’ has been flowering non-stop since last spring-summer, others like *Salvia gesneraeflora* ‘Tequila’, *S. gesneraeflora* ‘Red Rambler’, *S. chiapensis* and *S. ‘Blue Bird’* have continued to put on a wonderful show.

Winter flowering salvias are always a delight to see and it's amazing how long they continue flowering. *Salvia scutellarioides* has been growing faster than it has flowered and what a beautiful blue it is too. It has done exactly what I wanted it to do and that is as a groundcover on the southeast side of the garden where not much else would grow. It has been very happy wandering through the base of tall species fuchsias and *Cornus capitata* all of which grow under the canopy of a *Pittosporum undulatum*. It does take root at the nodes and spreads in this manner, faster if the area is moist, slower if dry but it is not a problem plant and the runners can easily be removed where you don't want it to grow.

Another salvia doing well is the low growing *S. blancoana* with flowers a soft powder blue that fit perfectly with light grey foliage. This looks particularly nice mingling through the Prince of Orange geranium with flowers of bright pink.

Meg Bentley

Salvias on Tamborine Mountain Oct. 05

Well, we are still watching the skies and scanning our weather reports hopefully but, really, we haven't had any significant falls of rain in these parts since late June 05. So how are the *Salvias* going? Still alive and gasping I have to say.

Salvia 'Waverley', *S. chiapensis*, S. 'Anthony Parker', S. 'Phyllis Fancy' and *S. buechananii* were cut low several months ago and now show slow strong revival. I'm sure a good storm downpour will make a huge difference.

This year my *S. fallax* has been a showy mist of purple despite the dry and metres away on the verge *Salvia involucrata* on long canes has flowered beautifully.

Salvia karwinskii in the same part of the garden, appears to self-seed and becomes a dominating influence there. I rather suspect that a seedling that has appeared with karwinskii coloured flowers, burgundy bracts, foliage not unlike splendens and flowering well in winter and now into spring, is an involuntary addition to the lower garden. Likewise a lavender pink flowering, rather leggy plant has also appeared.

In the north facing beds a small S. 'Indigo Spires' has started to take off. *S. chamelaeagnea* is proving a quiet achiever. *S. africana-lutea* is in full swing and nearby the green shoots of *S. azurea* are pushing up in the most parched garden bed of all, (I must fling some blood and bone plus a good quantity of potash around there SOON if I expect colourful, upright spires at the end of summer.)

Salvia lanceolata also enjoys the north garden, and is several years old. It never ceases to amaze me with its unusual grey foliage and dusky pink flowers. Behind *S. lanceolata* I have seriously culled *S. mexicana* lime bracts and the regrowth shows promise for summer flowering.

Salvia melissodora is a favourite of mine. It flowers nearly all year, has small mauve blooms, and a delicate fragrance when brushed. (Haven't had much luck when propagating it).

Salvia madrensis, *S. purpurea* and *S. iodantha* were particularly showy in autumn. *S. purpurea* has the shortest flowering period of the three in my garden.

A great performer for a winter border is *S. runcinata*, sending up 50cm spikes of small lavender flowers with burgundy calyces.

There are at least six *salvia* plants doing quite well but because they came to me as a cutting from a friend on a quick last minute whip around her garden their names now escape me. Some more research is called for.

Guess what! I can hear lots of rumbling as a welcome storm approaches.

Elwyn Paton

Se Queensland

Perennial Poppies Group

(PS Mt Tamborine does not have a mains water supply)

Stop press There has been lots of lovely rain and Tamborine Mountain is beautifully green!!!! 20/11/05

Geelong News

As I wrote this near the end of September, I glanced at my *Salvia africana lutea* and was delighted to see the brightly glowing yellow tips of the flowers starting to emerge from their large grayish green calyces. This proved to me why it deserved the epithet *lutea*, the Latin term for yellow. Because my plant had not flowered for a number of seasons, I could only remember their color as being rusty brown. Earlier this year, I realized this plant's lack of flowering may have been due to insufficient sunshine, because of its location beneath a large shrub. I responded by giving this shrub a heavy prune. Now I am rewarded with emerging *S. africana lutea* flowers.

Our speaker & demonstrator at the recent Geelong Herb Society meeting was Judi Forrester of Otway Herbs. During the afternoon she visited our home and presented me with a healthy *Salvia officinalis* 'Alba', the white flowered common sage cultivar. Amongst my salvias, common sage and its cultivars receive pride of place, and this particular cultivar is quite rare.

After looking at my salvia collection she took those cuttings that interested her. On looking at my so called *S.thymoides*, she told me it was incorrectly named. She said it was actually *teucrium marum*, which is commonly called cat thyme. Growing salvias is always a learning experience, particularly when it includes their correct identification. Meeting other interested growers, offers the opportunity of securing confirmation of a plants identity.

Bill Whitehead

THE NOBELIUS PLOT REVISITED

The original objective of The Herb Society of Victoria in establishing test plots for *Salvia* collections was to observe and record the growth habits, blooms and vitality of plants in different soils and climatic conditions.

The Hampton section of the collection is planted in the front garden of a private home, so it has developed as a 'show garden' and the owner (as well as the *Salvia* Study Group) were delighted to learn that this garden has been chosen to be part of Australia's Open Garden Scheme, to be opened in early February next year. The back garden of this property is an excellent example of a self-sufficient organic fruit and vegetable garden..

The Nobelius collection has remained a trial garden—it was planned with mainly narrow beds in order to display and observe plants without having to trample over larger planting areas. Gardening tasks are also made simpler by the use of narrow beds, no trampling over large beds is necessary. The several pathways also make observation access easier, and form an interesting labyrinth type garden when viewed from the bank on the museum side of the plot.

I have used some perennials and annuals unrelated to *salvia* as companion plants with color contrast in mind; for example pink species *aquelegia* planted with *Salvia officinalis* 'Purpurescens' and *S. officinalis* 'Icterina' make for striking color contrasts, as do foxgloves with *S. sclarea*, *S. pratensis* and *S. argentea*. Forget me nots (as long as they are weeded out before setting seed) are effective with low growing varieties of *S. greggii*.

These 'companions' have been in bloom for several weeks giving the plot a very showy appearance. The *S. pratensis* (Meadow Sage) bed is beautiful at the moment. This is a larger bed, and the salvias have been allowed to self seed together with *S. sclarea*, *S. verticillata* and other rosette or mat forming varieties.

The rambling salvias, *S. forskaolei*, *S.spathacea*, *S.pratensis*, Pineapple Sage (*S. elegans*), *S.uliginosa* and *S. puberula* would like to take over the entire plot and I have to keep a careful watch over them. Each of these provides much color and interest during their flowering period but are cut back when their blooms are finished. One 'rambler' I have been very heavy handed with is *S. cinnabarina* which is definitely a fast spreading weed.

This informal 'wild' garden still serves its original purpose of trialling the many *salvia* we now have in the collection We have discovered that many of the above mentioned plants enjoy the cooler climate and heavier soil of the Emerald plot rather than the sandy loam predominant at Hampton.

Plans are afoot for an extension to the Nobelius Trial Plot—The Park Committee of Management and its Curator have approved my submitted extension plan, which would extend up the hillside from the

existing plot. A steep section of the new garden could be used to trial rockery and ground cover salvia. The Study Group is investigating various types of fencing for the entire plot and we will have quotes from a fencing contractor shortly.

One of the most successful plants has been *Salvia fruticosa*, which was one of the original salvia planted about 14 years ago. This plant is notorious for its die-back habit, but survives the year with occasional pruning of spent flower heads and some minor shaping. Each year its masses of pale mauve flowers attract the bees to the garden and perhaps like the palm tree at the Padua Botanic Gardens (planted in 1583) should be preserved in a glass case to show it off for years to come!

In mid October I was able to collect blooms of 20 varieties of salvia from the Nobelius Plot for a display at the Upwey Garden Club's Horticultural show. The vases looked fantastic and attracted much attention. The brown/bronze flowers of *Salvia africana lutea* caused interesting comments.

A useful tip if you wish to use cut salvia flowers for display or floral art is to cut the blooms 4 or 5 days before they are needed, immerse the stems in deep water and place the container in a dark cool place. Put a few drops of bleach and some raw sugar in the water [and later in your vase or show container]. If you follow this procedure the flowers should remain perfect for at least one week, though some individual florets may drop. Christmas is coming so why not use your salvias to assist with the festivities. The blooms look most effective for large buffet arrangements and colorful table displays.

Pot up some of the easier to propagate salvia such as *S. karvinskii* cultivars, *S. lavanduloides*, *S. gesneriiflora* etc as Christmas gifts.

Use finely chopped leaves of *Salvia dorisiana* to enhance the flavor of the fruit salad you are serving to counteract the richness of the plum pudding. Float a few crushed leaves of this salvia to decorate and flavour your fruit punch. The Pineapple Sage (*salvia elegans*) leaves can be used in the same manner. Also use this salvia as an accompaniment to a hot curry. Use the fresh young leaves with cucumber etc to provide a refreshing cooling side dish. *Salvia fruticosa* leaves used in stuffing poultry make a pleasant change from the usual cooking sage, *S. officinalis*.

The small decorative, fragrant leaves of *S. semi-atrata* or *S. elegans* 'Honey Melon' together with their flowers provide a wonderful and, if you wish, tasty garnish for 'before Christmas Dinner' canapés and nibbles.

And to help you relax after frantic Christmas shopping sprees or when it is all over on Boxing Day try a soothing smudge stick. Use leaves of *S. apiana* and *S. clevelandii* and/or other fragrant Californian salvias rolled into a cigar shape. Burn them slowly and savor the wonderful aroma.

Happy Christmas Ray Boatman Curator Nobelius Garden

Salvia cardinalis

I'm a member of an internet Salvia forum and back in May a member posted information on a website he found of the Torner collection at The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation at Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh PA, USA. I immediately clicked on the link he provided and spent hours perusing botanical drawings of salvia species, some whose name I'd never heard. The member had mentioned that there were three species that looked like *S. fulgens* but had different names attributed to them. One of the botanical drawings looked exactly like *S. Red Dragon* but had the name *Salvia mecrantha* written on it.

I posted to the forum noting that *S. mecrantha* looked exactly like what we call Red Dragon and asked if anyone thought the same. There was a reply and I found out that it was introduced to NZ through a mail order nursery. Unfortunately the nursery had changed hands some years ago, records were lost, and no further information was available. I do not know when it was introduced to Australia. Those in the know can offer that information.

Now I've never been happy calling this beautiful, small shrub 'Red Dragon' and wanted to know its Latin name. I had been informed that it was *S. fulgens*, but I couldn't figure out why we (the Salvia Study Group) didn't call it that. So I began my research.

I emailed Charlotte Tancin, the head librarian at the Hunt Institute, and asked if there was any literature that referenced the botanical drawings. I explained that the drawing of *S. mecrantha* resembled what we call Red Dragon. She replied the next day and in a very helpful email suggested several people who might be able to help me and even included their email addresses. I wrote to one of them, explained about my research, and included photos I'd taken of Red Dragon. This person also responded the next day saying it

looked like *S. fulgens* but that I should check with someone else who happens to be another member of the same internet *Salvia* forum. I contacted him next. Several informative email exchanges ensued.

Web searching also led me to find out that *Salvia cardinalis* was described by Karl S. Kunth in 1818 and its description entered in a publication entitled *Nova Genera et Species Plantarum*, a work written in Latin. Maybe I'm greedy, but having found out where I could actually read the description, I wanted it. I just had to contact Charlotte Tancin again and ask if and how I could obtain the description. And once again, when I got up the next morning and checked my emails, her reply was waiting for me. She informed me that the library has the book, that the description is found on pages 300-301, and, in a second email, she sent the description. I was and still am thrilled.

Some of the description is as follows (I'll do my best to translate):

SALVIA cardinalis.

S. caule herbaceo, erecto, ramoso, hirtio; foliis ovatis, acuminatis, cordatis, serratis, supra pilosiusculis, subtus pubescentibus; verticillis quadri- aut sexfloris, distantibus; calycibus pilosiusculis; corollis elongatis.

The above is a general description stating that *Salvia cardinalis* is: herbaceous, stems erect, branched, hairy; leaf-blade ovate, apex acuminate, base cordate, margins serrate, pilose (referring to the hairs) above, pubescent below; verticels 4-6 flowered, spaced; calyx pilose; corolla long.

Crescit frequentissime locis frigidis in montibus Mexicanorum inter Toluca et Tianguillo, alt. 1570 hex. [symbol for herbaceous plant] Floret Septembri.

The above says that it is found in a cold/cool, mountainous area in Mexico between Toluca and Tianguillo at an altitude of 1570 and that it flowers in autumn, northern hemisphere September.

What I found interesting was that the description lacked measurements except for the leaf blade which was recorded as being 2 ½ - 2 ¾, I'm assuming inches, long. I also found the description of the corolla color interesting; it is described as being 'coccinea' or scarlet. Being somewhat artistic, I describe the color as cadmium red light, though I agree with Betsy Clebsch who says it's fire-engine red.

S. cardinalis was initially considered to be synonymous with *S. fulgens*, a *salvia* described 27 years earlier in 1791 by Antonio Jose Cavanilles. But a paper written in the 80s or 90s by Ian Hedge and a grad student recognized that *cardinalis* was a form of *fulgens*. A form is a stable variation of a species that is able to replicate itself but will cross with other forms to develop intermediate forms. Even with the definition I don't quite understand what a 'form' is. DNA studies being done on Latin American *Salvias* may clarify relationships even further.

From what I've been able to ascertain, *S. fulgens* is a larger shrub than *S. cardinalis*. The leaves of *S. fulgens* are broad ovate and when in bud the bracts are closed. *S. cardinalis* has smaller, narrower leaves that are lighter in color than *S. fulgens*, and has a very distinctive bud with bracts that curl outward at the apices giving it a dragon-like appearance.

The name 'Red Dragon' was most probably given by a nursery. Some years ago I purchased *Salvia chamelaeagnea* and it was labeled *Salvia lilac and cream*. I asked the seller for its botanical name but he didn't know it. I had a heck of a time finding out what it was. This was, of course, before I joined this wonderful group of *Salvia* people.

I've concluded that *S. Red Dragon* is actually *S. cardinalis* and until it's definitively proven to be something else I will call it such. As a member of the *Salvia* Study Group I feel it correct to refrain from using nursery names and we should use botanical names only.

I would again like to thank Charlotte Tancin for all her time and help. For those interested in viewing the Torner Collection website, you can find it at <http://serv.ul.cs.cmu.edu/zoom/record.html?id=14256>

Cait Hoogenbosch

A Gardeners's Letter

In mid- October before the roses were overwhelming, although who could resist *rosa moresii* 'Geranium', and before the Elm and Oak were in full leaf, this garden was open to the local community of Knox.

Perhaps the plants that earned the most interest, other than the perennial *haloragis* 'Bronze Wellington', were the salvias, particularly *Salvia semi-atrata* and *S. sagittata*. Almost everyone appeared to grow, or be familiar with *S. involucrata*, in one form or another, so at some stage in the past there may have been a concentrated effort to 'get it out there'.

My personal favourites alter many times a day and I find myself in the one sided conversations we gardeners indulge in, assuring all plants they fit the bill!!

Thanks Trudi for a delightful day among your salvias and your macadamia tree in full blossom last month.

Laurelle Willis

A Garden in Tyabb

Work has continued with the remaking of the perimeter of our herb garden, removing much of what had accumulated over the past years and replanting with salvias. Only the western border remains a jungle and that will have to wait until next winter as I don't have the water to sustain newly planted material over summer.

Salvia nipponica, planted out last autumn fared badly over the winter, almost disappearing but is slowly recovering in the warmer weather. It has interesting green foliage edged with white and the flowers are yellow. I am waiting for two *S. canariensis*, also planted last autumn to flower, one a white form and the other *S. canariensis candidissima*. This appears to be very strong growing and similar to *S. canariensis* but with much paler, almost white furry leaves and stem. At this stage it is slightly less than a meter high but looks as if it will develop into a very striking bush.

S. purpurea, which flowered so well for us last year seems to have disappeared over winter. There must be something about the conditions here that cause a problem as several attempts at growing this have been unsuccessful, last season being the only time it has lived long enough to flower. It is a lovely plant so I will probably continue trying. The large winter flowering salvias have provided color for months. *S. gesneriiflora* has provided large splashes of red while *S. gesneriiflora* 'Tequila' has been even more impressive. Old favourites, *S. 'Black Knight'* and *S. 'Costa Rican Blue'* continue to do what they always do and the large *S. involucrate/karwinskii X*'s try to dominate anything nearby. Some of these really do need a lot of room but are worth growing if you can spare the space, as they can be quite spectacular. If you do not have a lot of space why not try *S. dolomitica*? This lovely plant with grey leaves and lavender flowers blooms almost all the year round for me. It is in full sun, never watered and is happy to be cut to shape (about 1m x 1m).

The unusual *S. spathacea* thrives here to the extent that creeps out under the garden edging and establishes itself in the grassed pathways where the mower deals with it. I have heard that in some places it is hard to establish but that is not the experience here. I have a couple of *S. dorisiana* which are large and flower well but never look really healthy - I would be interested to know someone else's experience with this. Bevan Whelan

Some Big, Blue Salvias

I first met *Salvia* 'Costa Rican Blue' in autumn, 2004, when a member of the garden club that I belong to brought in a piece for the monthly display table. She had labelled it "blue salvia" but I was able to track down a more knowledgeable member who confirmed, as I had suspected, that it was *S.* 'Costa Rican Blue'. Of course, I wanted the piece and I was able to acquire it for the princely sum of 20 cents in the club's coffers. I then took it home and put it in cutting mix and it soon became a happy plant.

Just a few weeks later, I met an even lovelier specimen. This happened at a wonderful street market that, once a year, takes over nearly the whole of a small country town called Burrawang not far from Kiama. A young woman was selling her home-made cakes and her mother had decorated the stall with a vase of mixed flowers that included a magnificent blue salvia that looked very like, but not exactly the same as, *S.* 'Costa Rican Blue'. When I admired the salvia flowers, the stall-holder's mother asked would we like to see it growing in her garden that was just a short walk away. We said we would, of course, and were treated to a visit to a lovely, rambling country garden. Her salvia plant was about six feet high and the same wide, flopping against a nearby shed, with some stems a least an inch and a half thick. The owner, whose name we never found out, said she was afraid she had lost it one winter as Burrawang has a fairly high altitude and has winter frosts; but from the thickness of those stems, I would say that the plant would be safe from any frost.

We left the Burrawang garden with cutting material, of course, and then I puzzled over the identification since the pieces from the two different sources seemed similar but not identical. I made a phone call to my best means of identification, Trudi Fry, and she could only conclude from my description that they were both *S.* 'Costa Rican Blue' but that one was superior to the other. Both plants have been in the garden now since at least April 2005 and they have hardly stopped flowering since then. For most of that time, though, one plant has been noticeably superior to the other: a bigger, stronger plant, bigger flower spikes and bigger leaves. I am writing this in mid-November 2005, as we head into summer, and it seems that the less superior (I can't call anything so lovely "inferior") one is finally catching up with the other.

I must say a word, too, about *Salvia* 'Omaha Gold' which I have had about six month longer than *S.* 'Costa Rican Blue' after buying it labelled and all from a nursery. I can't say that I am very impressed with its gold edging, that one would hardly notice if one did not know that it was supposed to be there, but still I am very fond of it. I mistakenly thought that it was a form of *Salvia guaranitica* and so I planted it in a large pot. It has grown to about six feet high, has a central trunk at least two inches in diameter and flowers beautifully almost all year with watering only from the skies and absolutely no attention. Some day soon I am going to take it out of its pot and give it the place in the garden that it deserves. Besides, I need the pot for my *S. guaranitica* which, after much digging out and poisoning, I will never again grow in the garden.

Finally, I understand that there is some debate about the correct name of *S.* 'Costa Rican Blue'. Should it be *S.* 'Costa Rica Blue'? Trudi once told me that it should be the latter but I see that Meg Bentley in her *Manual for Salvia Growers* favours the former. I have decided to follow Meg this time, Trudi, but I am quite prepared to swing back with enough persuasion. Whatever its name, I think it is worth growing and so is its close relation, *S.* 'Omaha Gold'.

Sheila Fox Kiama, NSW

STRATFORD NEWS.

Can't believe its Salvia News time- where does time go. Don't tell me Xmas is next month!!

It seems ages ago, but only August when my husband and I went for a 2 week break, from the farm here in East Gippsland to Queensland to catch up with friends at Gympie on the Sunshine Coast and, guess what - we visited two superb salvia gardens and did I have a ball. Ooohing and aahing at lovely gardens. Both owners, Althea Drew and Barb Wicks, were very generous with cuttings and 2 buckets later - I was busy potting up. As it would be over a week before I could do cuttings, I decided to do them on my free day in Queensland and pot them all up. I had 3-4 cuttings of the same variety in each pot and when I'd finished I had 20 tiny pots and 40 tubes. I packed them in a box just like the mail order nurseries do and put the box with the lid on in my bag which sat upright. We arrived home at 9pm. Opening my bags I was horrified to find all the pots in one bag had been tipped upside down . What a mess. Could not believe the sight, all the cuttings and propagating sand were thrown all around the box. I spent the next 2 hrs, while the rest of the family were asleep, re-potting them. It paid off as some of them are flowering which is very exciting after what they went through.

I am in the throes of extending the present salvia bed to put them in so I can keep them in one area and in new ground. From there I'll take further cuttings to put in other parts of the garden. With all the hot weather and odd showers the growth in the garden is certainly keeping me busy with pruning and weeding this year. Three days ago the brown bugs arrived in full force sucking all the sap out of every flower. They come this time till end of February each year. They leave dirty spots on white washing and love white flowers usually, but this year they have headed for every colour.

Coming back to the cuttings I got on our Queensland trip, one named salvia was "Giant Salvia" *Brillantaisia subulugurica*, I planted out 2 cuttings or, more to the point, 2 thick sticks – one in a very large pot and the other straight into the ground. The one in the pot loves it, as it is growing so well, the one in the ground has new leaves but is not as vigorous. Both are in partial shade. Pots gets watered more than the cutting in garden. Will keep you informed of their progress. That is all salvia lovers till next time. Happy Gardening, **Jane Lee**

Re brillantaisia subulugarica [acanthaceae] **Also called Giant Salvia or Tropical Salvia**

The beautiful plant brillantaisia subulugarica is listed as a potential weed in subtropical and tropical areas so we should be careful that its beauty doesn't dazzle us into being careless. It is in the acanthus family and though I know a lot of people delight in acanthus I have been battling for years to stop it spreading in my garden.(Trudi)

In South Africa ie Zimbabwe and Tropical Africa apparently the Cape Robin and Crested Barbel like to hunt around through this shrub and the common Mother of Pearl butterfly feed on the leaves. It needs full sun for at least part of the day. Too much shade limits flowering and makes it long and lanky. It is summer flowering and 2mx2m.

The large lush leaves give a tropical appearance to the garden compounded by striking large, light purple, salvia-like flower heads. It needs a good light , well-drained soil with plenty of added compost. Mulch well. Water well over summer but it prefers to be drier over winter. Frost tender, needs a protected position. Trim lightly after flowering to keep the plant neat and encourage bushiness.

This plant is not a salvia.

Meg Bentley

NEWS FROM WERRI BEACH

At the moment, there are several salvias flowering and some coming into flower. Those flowering are *Salvia guaranitica*, *S. 'Marine Blue'*, *S. microphyllas* inc. 'Cyclamen', 'Iced Lemon', 'Sensation' and 'Red', *Salvia Indigo Spires*', *Salvia africana-lutea*, *Salvia africana-caerulea*, *Salvia 'Black Knight'*, *Salvia chamaedryoides*, *Salvia greggii* 'White', *Salvia lanceolata*, *Salvia melissodora*, *Salvia 'Purple Majesty'*, *Salvia spendens*'Van Houtii' and *S. 'Hot Lips'* to name a few.

I haven't bought any new salvias for a while as I have been attempting to grow from seed. As I reported in the last issue I had most success with *S. repens* and have planted out several of them. The others have been slow and I've had to try again with some. I do have quite a few up but unfortunately, the wind blew all my labels around the yard so I'm not sure what they are. Hopefully, I will be able to identify if I get them to the flowering stage.

I've been feeding up the two *S. superba* I have left as they didn't flower prolifically last year. I want them to clump up much more than they have. They are planted near a grey Ballota and I think they will complement each other. I am enjoying *S. guaranitica* flowering amongst the lime green Helichrysum at the moment.

I have a new area to play with as I have just removed a huge Echimium, the one that smothered my *S. semi atrata*. I've had a lot of trouble propagating this salvia from pieces given by friends. Might have to buy a new one. The Echimium left a space about 1m wide and 2m long so I might try some low growing plants including salvias. There is a dry rock watercourse nearby which had been hidden by the Echimiums and I want to keep it fairly open. I have kept another Echimium close by which is a silver pink and quite stunning. I have also been developing a hedge of Westringea which gives a bit of protection from the strong northerly winds.

Another salvia which I'm enjoying at the moment is *S. disjuncta* in the front garden which has a white Tobacco plant flowering behind it. I planted a blue cerastigmata under it as advised in one of my salvia books. They look really well together.

Maureen Cox

ON THE WILD SIDE

Our October garden visit was to Trudi's garden in Selby. I had been looking forward to this with much anticipation. I had heard so much about Trudi's place – how big and wild the garden was, how big the plants grew and all about the potted garden etc and I also knew that Trudi had facilities for large-scale propagation. BUT, everything was much bigger and better than I could ever have imagined.

Passing the attractive scarecrow at the gate, we drove in anticipating a tiny parking area. But someone (Elly & Leon) had thoughtfully marked out the lawn area with white lines to maximise the number of cars that could be fitted in off the narrow road. Then we walked beneath towering salvias and up the steps to the biggest veranda/deck I have ever seen on a house and from there we looked down over the expanse of garden. It's not just salvias either, in spite of Trudi asking, "Is there anything else?". Among many special items were a macadamia tree in full flower, as well as a horse chestnut – my favourite European tree (see note at the end). There was also a succulent garden and everywhere, the garden was enhanced with Trudi's artistic creations, sculpted in clay.

Our subsequent walk revealed a *Salvia africana lutea* as big as an average room, laden with seed-filled calices, and a *Salvia rubiginosa*, also covering a big area. There were many other memorable salvia specimens, but Trudi's *piece de resistance* was her wall of potted salvias. Her son has skilfully built a zig-zag timber fence to hide the battery of water tanks, and in front of this, protected from the wind, terra cotta pots rise in tiers, all burgeoning with salvias. Trudi claims that she does not spend hours manicuring these, but they all seem to be in splendid shape, nicely compact and very floriferous. Trudi is really happy with this approach to maintaining a varied salvia garden. Certainly the prospect of tackling 6 acres of rocky hillside is daunting.

Thank you Trudi for hosting such a lovely afternoon attended by so many group members. And thank you also to Jillian and Meg for organising a table of salvias for sale. It was a pity that you were a bit isolated for some of the time, especially on such an auspicious double birthday occasion. Happy birthday retrospectively.

Pat Anderson

PS. Note about the Horse Chestnut tree. This species, *Aesculus hippocastanum*, we, or at least I, tend to think of as the quintessential English tree, with its spreading branches providing shade in the village, and its fruit providing the "conkers" of childhood games. It is actually native to Eastern Europe and was not introduced to England until some time after the reign of Henry VIII. A friend who was studying the introduction of hardy woody aliens to the UK for a PhD informed me of this after we saw the film "A Man for All Seasons" because of a technical error therein. At the end of the film, when Sir Thomas More is about to be martyred for his Papal beliefs, the camera moves up into the trees – none other than Horse Chestnuts in full flower, but sadly, before they were introduced to England.

MY GARDEN

The real problem is that I am simply getting older, no longer a fit fifty year old smugly thinking that I could work all hours of the day. This garden was designed for two people with a reasonable amount of money and a passion for gardening. Now there is one person with passion enough for two. No interest in clothes, fine dining, good wines, just plants, especially salvias. When Don and I and our children found this land we saw only the view and disregarded the fact that it was a West facing, wind swept, rocky ridge. Granitic sand for 'soil' meant that there was very little growing on the fairly level area available for house and garden. The rest of the acreage was steep and supported sparse scrub.

This year I was ill. With my body forced to be inactive I began to use my brain. Use brain to save body is my new resolve. This house is a good machine to live my lifestyle in, the area has a downside re bush fire hazards, but my circle of caring friends, the magic view, the birds and animals, the peace and quiet all are gifts beyond price. So many people, of my age leave the house because they can't cope with the garden. Not me. Yes, the garden is large and has weeds, but I have resolved that weeds have rights too, and of course make a good ground cover and compost.

The strategies I evolved are; to make the most of the existing assets, such as the big rocks natural to the land and our sculptures from 30 years of clay sculpture, to realize that this can never be a "cottage garden" and therefore restrain myself from unrealistic ambitions, and to plant suitable plants for this environment. The strange thing is that the garden, over the 30 years, has always known these facts, and forced us, even in the early days to plant survivors. I can see now, after thinking things over, how we were being guided by the garden even before the loss of Don and the years of drought. I just didn't listen. Cottage garden dreaming wasted a lot of time and resources. The land has its own intrinsic beauty and my puny efforts at 'controlling' the garden was a waste of time and a reaction to all those who told me that I could never cope with so large a garden by myself. Listening to the land and being guided by it is the way to go.

Because over the years we have grown big architectural plants they provide a framework of survivors. Flowering now are 16 clumps of *Doryanthes palmeri*, most about 15' wide with long, tough leaves. Never tended in any way they grow among the rocks. These are the Gynea Spear Lily. I

think there are about 15 spears, a 15' inflorescence with up to 150 blood red flowers along the spike, taking about a year from bud to bird feeder. The honey eaters love them. The plants of *Doryanthes excelsa* or Globe Lilies are still babies and I look forward to their huge waratah like flowers crowning the spike.

Succulents such as the bigger types of *aeoniums* and numerous succulents "anon" provide contrast with growth patterns, leaf shapes and colours and others, such as *furcraeas*, grow tall as punctuation points. Trees rarely grow well because of the lack of soil above the rock shelf. The umbellifera types of plants (names rarely known by the donors) self seed and fit the landscape well. Salvias are the most reliable things. They look right with the scenery, faint away with lack of rain then spring into beauty effortlessly. The bed of African salvias interplanted with *Aeonium* 'Schwartskopf' is looking great now.

The 'salvia wall' has over 150 salvia plants in terracotta pots 30 strides from the poly house. For the Garden Visit on October 23rd they showed off a treat. I was so pleased that my idea was so successful. I think I will spend ages on a chair gazing at them. They are not a chore to water and require surprisingly little.

So this is how my garden and I will spend our next years. I will let it guide me and restrain myself when tempted by delicate beauties. The citrus trees are successful too. All are laden with blossom. The macadamia tree was a joy on the Garden Day. It draped itself with pinky brown flowers with a perfume that is indescribable.

Trudi Fry

There are miniature poly houses available, holding 6 trays on 3 shelves. One of our group has 3 of these standing on concrete, partly shaded and with no artificial heating.

These have proved very useful for striking cuttings. For example, *Salvia* 'Marine Blue'. *Salvia* 'Costa Rica Blue' and *Salvia confertiflora* struck in 10 days.

Salvia News from Hobart – Summer

As part of a new perennial design to replace some annual bedding at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, we have used *Salvia leucantha*. Propagated as cuttings in December last year and planted in April, the resulting plants flowered as low as 10 cm in height by mid winter! The prostrate spikes with purple calyces of white flowers persisted through winter and the plants continued to produce more flowers through spring. Only by mid-November were these plants making vertical vegetative growth; shoots that also were developing inflorescences at 40cm.

In contrast, the mature plants of this species had finished flowering by mid winter. Stem thinning and tip pruning of remaining stems at 60cm, soon after, resulted in the first flush of flower colour on old stem tips in late October. This was three months earlier than the appearance of the first flowers, on the new stems, which occurred last January. This later January flowering resulted from the pruning technique of removal of all stems in the preceding winter to reveal and promote the growth of the numerous beautiful, white tomentose shoots developing at ground level.

Plants of the herbaceous *Salvia argentea* have persisted into their fifth year although they are generally short lived. Basal rosettes of 'silvery' leaves, which are covered with long soft hairs, remain above ground through our winter. The leaves increase in size during spring, and by November, gave rise to sticky, branching inflorescences up to 1.2m high (twice the height of last year), that burst into fountains of white flowers. They emerge from whorls, spaced 5cm apart on the flower stems, of light green bracts and calyces covered in dense, short, tacky hairs. The two bracts at each whorl support the calyces which contain the 10mm long, narrow corolla. The curved upper hood emerges with its tip bearing dense, short, multi-cellular purple glands. Held close to the stem, the 2.5cm long upper hood

is presented vertically. Intriguingly, the structure of the lower lip has a central lobe which reflexes the front half of the lobe, the sides of which curve up to form a 1cm deep 'scoop'. This is situated directly below the projecting anthers and the extended stigma.

The constantly flowering *S. chiapensis*, lightly clipped at 90cm in height at the end of June, had put on 20cm of growth by mid October, and had developed a mass of small cerise flowers on short spikes. They have lengthened to up to 50cm over a dense thicket of thin stems bearing dark, smooth and shiny leaves.

Pruned in the second half of July the specimen of *Salvia* 'Black Night' protected by the Gardens' restaurant deck, had its first flowers in early October. The more exposed plants of this cultivar, however, in late September, had to be repruned and by early November had their first flowers.

A specimen of *S.* 'Costa Rican Blue', moved at the end of winter from persistent possum nibbling, revealed, by the end of October, its splendid long violet flowers and 'black' calyces. Thank you Geelong Botanic Gardens! What a spectacle! An open shrub, already a metre high, with beautiful, textured, aromatic cordate leaves, has been receiving constant attention from a solitary Silvereye, nectar feeding by penetrating the side of the corolla above the calyx.

These species and cultivars of salvias are just a few in the collection at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens and show the rewards for visitors prepared to discover the variety of the genus: plant form, the diverse flower structure and arrangement, leaf shape and texture, and often, fragrance.

John Daniels
Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens

SALVIA MILTIORRHIZA

Chinese Red Sage, Dan Shen or *Salvia miltiorrhiza*, they are all the one salvia and a beautiful one at that. An ideal plant for containers as well as in the ground and looks a picture in full bloom.

This salvia has been quite delightful in my garden, the flowers can come in two shades, one is pale lavender and the other a darker purple. On closer observation one can see varying differences with the leaves too. One is a glaucous blue-green and the other a slightly deeper green. This fractional difference between the two is a good indication of what the flower colour will be, purple or pale lavender.

It would have to be my favourite of all the salvias for many reasons, the colour of the flowers, shape of the plant and height, which is very accommodating. It is one of the few salvias that actually has a full head of flowers, a well covered flowering spike.

It propagates easily by cuttings and doesn't take forever to produce its first blooms.

When you re-pot the plant you can clearly see the red roots that give this plant its common name of Red Sage or the Chinese name of Dan Shen. The roots have been used in Chinese medicine for ailments such as coronary heart disease, breast abscesses, mastitis, ulcers, sores, menstrual problems and poor circulation.

It grows naturally in China, on hillsides by streams and in forests 100-1300m.

Originating in places like Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Shandong and Shanxi.

Further Information: Flora of China Vol.17. Science Press (Beijing)
& Missouri Botanical Garden (St. Louis)
Encyclopedia Of Herbs And Their Uses. by Deni Bown

Healesville News

This past July saw some pretty rough winds and heavy rains come our way. My garden is quite exposed and the shrubs and large bushes I've planted as windbreaks have yet to grow thick enough to prevent damage. Over the summer I had been amending the clay with compost and gypsum but the garden bed still flooded and I had to work quickly, trenching it to create mini canals so the water could drain away. *Salvia Tamaupalis*, ('Tammy'), suffered greatly from the wet feet syndrome. *Salvia* 'Joan' didn't look too happy, either, but being a larger plant was able to cope. The wind ravaged *S.* 'Costa Rican Blue' and broken branches lay everywhere though its spor (?) *S.* 'Omaha Gold', was intact. The wind bonsai-ed other salvias; *S. madrensis*, *S. gesneraeflora* 'Tequila', *S. wagneriana* were all stunted. The average height of these was only about two feet or so. *S. gesneraeflora* and *S. wagneriana* tried their best to put on growth but the wind kept their branches laying low to the ground making them look like tarantula legs.

After perusing the damage done to the garden after a particularly windy and rainy winter day, I decided I wanted to move. Well, ever since I became obsessed with salvias I wanted to move and have a bigger garden to play in. About a week later we found a place not five minutes from this house on half an acre of land. There were larger properties around but they were either tree filled or out of our price range. What we found was a place with a mature garden that's well planted around the perimeter with trees and bushes and relatively bed free in the center. It's really like a blank canvas in that respect and gives me a chance to be very creative. It's also a much sunnier garden than I have now.

What I find amusing is that it seems like the larger the property I buy, the smaller the house becomes. My house in New York was twice the size of what I currently have, and the house we're buying now is a tenth smaller than this one. I guess I'm finally getting my priorities right.

I've been very busy taking cuttings and potting up Salvias and other plants I want to take to the new house. It was interesting digging out *S. miltiorrhiza* because I was able to see its beautiful, red root. *S. sprucei* is actually looking the best I've ever seen it. No matter where I had placed it in the garden it floundered, but in the pot it's branched and leafed out like never before. *S. hirtella* did not like being moved at all and it's taken over a month for it to perk up. *S. somalensis* dropped leaves soon after but now there are plenty and it's in bud. *S. urica* was one of the Salvias in the flood plain that I immediately potted up and it's finally starting to grow leaves. For some unknown reason *S. rubescens* died after being potted, but I had taken cuttings from it so it's not entirely lost. All in all, the Salvias have taken to their new potted situation very well. Just one more reason to extol the greatness of this genus.

With any luck we'll be moving before Christmas and I'm really looking forward to it. Happy Holidays to you all!

Cait Hoogenbosh

Renmark News

In a previous *Salvia* News Peter Tucker told us about his salvias. They are growing as a border along an 8' fence with a vineyard on the other side. He has grown some of the best examples we have seen of *Salvia madrensis*, *S. rubiginosa*, *S.* 'Indigo Spires', and a great bushy *S. karvinskii*. A very floriferous *Salvia* 'Winter Red' is growing through *S. bethellii* and a perfect *S. lanceolata* is framed by the dark burgundy leaved of *Canna Tropicana* making an ideal setting for its old rose flowers and silver leaves.

There many other salvias in this border and Peter mentioned that some have been cut by frost. Perhaps it pruned them and is partially responsible for the dense lushness of the plants now.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ROOTS

Roots develop from ordinary cells, or from existing root 'initials' often found around the 'nodes' where leaves join the stem. Cuttings should be severed just below a node to take advantage of this. An energy supply is needed to power root development, this is generated by the power of photosynthesis. Carbon dioxide is a key requirement and enters through stomata (small openings on the under side of the leaf). If cuttings wilt, stomata close and little photosynthesis occurs. Quickly transferring cuttings to a propagation area with a damp atmosphere, but good light levels, can prevent wilting. However high humidity can also cause fungal rots to damage cuttings and carbon dioxide becomes depleted. Ventilation is needed to shed surplus moisture and top up carbon dioxide levels with fresh air.

Leaves in sunshine are warm, and surrounded by warm air, which can hold more moisture than cool air, yet warm leaves can lose moisture even in a humid atmosphere. Some shading is needed to keep leaves cool, but not so much that photosynthesis is greatly reduced.

The rooting medium should be well-drained and moist, but never wet, root formation requires the cells to grow and divide, air is necessary for this to happen, and soggy compost is poorly aerated. Cell division and root formation are also encouraged by warmth. Provide 15-25 degrees in the rooting zone, but no higher, as above this root production can be suppressed. Keep the temperature around the foliage cooler than the root zone. Too warm an atmosphere can allow shoots to develop before sufficient roots have formed to support them.

At Kanmantoo in South Australia Robin Rossini grows many salvia in her extensive garden among her collection of rare and interesting plants. These are thriving on the side of a hill with good drainage. The salvias include *Salvia chamelaeagnea*, *S. disermis*, S 'Marine Blue', *S. semi-atrata* and S. 'Waverley'.

Green Bags

These bags are Produce Bags designed to preserve the freshness of fruit and vegetables. I was able to buy some in SA at a vegetable stall and find they are excellent to transport cuttings and to store them for some time. The bag removes Ethylene gas and breathes to remove damaging gases produced by the plant material in storage. After hearing about them I was not able to buy them locally but know they are available interstate. I followed instructions re produce storage printed on the bag. **Trudi Fry**

FORUM

While *Salvia cinnabarina* can and does run around and spread in cool, moist positions, this doesn't necessarily mean that it will do the same in harsh dry conditions.

In Gruyere it has a job to even grow with a bent stem let alone fall upon the ground and spread. It would be very interesting to hear from other growers in all situations as to its performance.

The best performance of *Salvia dorisiana*, seems to be when it grows in part shade or with morning sun and base protection to help keep the roots cool. After several attempts at trying to grow this salvia in an exposed sunny spot I had to try one in a position less exposed to the elements. Finding a spot where it gets morning sun and afternoon shade changed the whole look of the plant, leaves that were greener and lush looking and flowers large and brighter.

Someone asked about salvias and rabbits and will they eat the plants, the answer is yes!

The best method used to keep them at bay is to heavily mulch the plant with a wide band of bracken or if this is not available then use old fern fronds cut to lengths and place around the plant, this has proven very affective.