



SalviaNews

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

Number 24

AUTUMN

MARCH APRIL MAY 2006

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It is such a privilege to meet so many subscribers to Salvia News and to hear such praise for our Newsletter. As Editor I become so amazed that a 2 fingered computer illiterate gets so much admiration, then of course, my sensible self realizes that the praise is really for you, the people who really write the interesting and informative articles. Thank you all and congratulate yourselves for the excellent work you do in the Study Group. An assistant editor is much needed and the task is yours if you want. Our first Salvia News appeared in April/May 2001. Just thought you would like to know. Because I will be away at intervals this year I will need articles early in May please and also please write before I ring you and beg!!

EVENTS

MARCH 19th Sunday WORKSHOP AT TRUDI'S GARDEN. Time 10.30 am.

Learn to take salvia cuttings. Bring secateurs, gloves, lunch etc ... take home your trophies.
Tea/coffee provided, also propagation mix. 39 Temple Rd South Belgrave Mel 84 J2
RSVP PH 9754 4041 as we may have to limit numbers

**MARCH 17TH / 19TH HERBS & COTTAGE PLANTS NURSERY Sale at
195 Church Rd, Panton Hill MEL 263 H5 Further information: Arja, Ph. 9719 7660**

**MARCH 23rd & 24th FLOWERS OF THE COMMONWEALTH.
Ferry Creek Horticultural Hall. Hilton Rd. Ferry Creek. MEL.66E12 10.30 am to 4pm.**

**APRIL 4TH Trudi & Jillian will speak on Salvias at Sunbury Garden Club.
There will be salvias for sale.**

APRIL 5th / 9th MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FLOWER & GARDEN SHOW

**APRIL 8th & 9th ROSE SHOW Mt Waverley Community Centre,(Opposite the station)
MEL 70 E1. Time Sat 2-5pm Sun 10am-5pm. Salvias will be for sale**

**APRIL 30th SUNDAY OPEN DAY FOR SUBSCRIBERS AT MARCOS GARDEN
MEL 76 K4 For all those who came to see the Marcos Garden at Hampton and those who missed out or would like to see more salvias in bloom, this is a must. This garden is the Salvia Study Groups Collection registered with the OPCA. Autumn is one of the prime flowering periods. This is an afternoon for all salvia fanatics; come along, bring a friend and join the Salvia Group for their usual sumptuous afternoon tea.**

**Time 1pm – 4pm. 21 Barnett St. Hampton. Enquiries to Jillian Ph. 9756 6361
Parking not available in Barnett St. please park in either South Rd or Ludstone St.**

**MAY 21st. Sunday Hands on at Nobelius salvia garden. Bring tools, lunch etc
Time 11am MEL 127 G4 Place: Nobelius Park off Creighton Rd Emerald.**

**JUNE 18th SUNDAY Visit the garden of Jillian Barkell. Time 11am
Place: 6 Halcyon Ave The Patch. Ph. 9756 6361 MEL 124 D4**

GLENROWAN VICTORIA

In December, the Benalla Garden Club had the pleasure of listening to Trudi Fry enthusiastically sharing her knowledge and passion for Salvia. It was reassuring to many of us when she mentioned how naive she was when first becoming involved with the group, certainly not knowing the botanical names. This encouraged me to share my limited experiences with this wonderful plant. After reading two of the Salvia News, I thought "I know that one, I have this one, and generally surprised myself at what I did know. At our garden club meeting, I had brought along a *Salvia canariensis* for identification. Trudi said it was a much deeper colour than hers, so of course cuttings had to be taken. I live at Glenrowan, on the side of the Warby Ranges in the extremely hot north east of Victoria. During the holiday period temperatures reached 48 degrees, followed by 43 then 45. Yesterday the top just about went off the thermometer with an incredible 52 degrees, today we are up to 49, so when the television forecast for the day tells you we had 38 degrees, they are dreaming. Admittedly this is an extreme summer, but gardening here is difficult, especially if you only have tank water in limited supply. However, gardeners are like farmers, eternal optimists.

My *S.canariensis* is growing in granitical sand. It is mulched, but is never watered. At the moment it looks extremely sad and is crisped, as is the rest of the garden. Other salvia which have had no water are; *S. iodantha*, *S.africana lutea*, *S.madrensis* and *S.Waverly*. I have found *S. purpurea*, *S. Anthony Parker*, *S. Indigo Spires*, *S. Purple Knight*, (there is *S.Black Knight* and *S. Purple Majesty* so we will need to I.D.these) *S. Black and Blue*, and others I don't know the names of, all require some moisture to survive. The 'bandits' appear to stand up to the extremes quite well. *Salvia splendens* Van Houtii is frost prone in our area, and is planted under a pergola in enriched soil where it comes into its own in autumn.

There are benefits to getting old. You don't get upset if people scoff at your ideas which may seem unusual, taking the attitude "Well, you just missed out on some useful information". Having always been an avid reader, information gleaned over a long period can often be joined together to make a lot of sense. Living in the country we have always had septic tanks. When this required pumping out, I was told to put a half a cup of BROWN sugar down the toilet every three months. This activated the micro organisms in the septic which then almost eliminated the need to empty again. At a much later date I applied a fish/seaweed fertilizer to our pastures. I was advised to add diluted molasses (Brown sugar) to the liquid mix, as this would again activate the micro organisms in the soil, which in turn promoted healthy pasture growth which then helped smother weeds. At our garden club one of our speakers was a gentleman from Supercharge fertilizer which is based on carbon rock. Carbon releases nutrients from the soil allowing plants to take them up. Speaking to the gentleman next day on the phone, he advised me to make up a liquid fertilizer as follows.

1 cup of supercharge

1 kg molasses

1 kg. compost or manure.

Mix molasses in approx 3 lt. WARM water (not hot). Dissolve and allow to cool.

Add Supercharge and compost, fill bucket with water.

Stir 3 times a day for 2 days.

Use approx. a margarine container of this in a bucket of water and pour round drip line of trees, or roots of plants. So you see adding all this trivia together was most beneficial. Now, I won't start telling you about planting by the moon or you may think me a complete nutter.

If you choose you can just use the straight Supercharge spread round the garden. It can be used with blood and bone, but not other fertilizers. I used this on all my garden with great success. Supercharge is available at most nurseries, I paid \$21 for a 25kg bag.

I am looking forward to my Salvia Costa Rican Blue flowering, having bought this at Macedon Rare Plant sale from Jillian. You all seem to rave about it, but as yet I haven't had the pleasure of seeing it.

Jess Kay.

Note: Jillian & Trudi have some samples of supercharge to experiment with. Kindly supplied free by Terry Farrell. Phone if you are interested.

NEWS FROM WERRI BEACH NSW

What a summer we've had! So hot on New Year's Day that plants which had never been affected by the heat, suffered badly. Most recovered but some that had not been in the ground long enough didn't.

I only lost one salvia however and that was *S.forskaohlei* and that may have been my fault. It was in its third position and had been growing well but I think I might have overwatered it as we had so many days of hot windy weather. I didn't think to take any cuttings so I'll just have to replace it.

Most of the salvias were badly singed but we had a brief shower that night and the next morning I trimmed all the burnt ends off and with later follow-up rain, they recovered and produced new shoots.

I think I may have to give up on *Salvia purpurea*. It seems to need a lot of water here. I have tried it in a couple of spots, maybe I'll try one more time, I do like the colour. It grows so big when it's happy, which does make it difficult to place but at the moment it is looking really straggly and not very attractive.

S.elegans 'Purple' however, which was planted in the footpath garden accidentally, is doing well. I was going to move it, I didn't think it would do too well there, but even though it sometimes gets battered by the wind and needs a bit of a tidy up, it looks good most of the time.

S.involucrata 'Bethelii' is another which droops badly without regular water. Both plants I have are on slopes and I might have to look at retaining water better.

S.guaranitica is another which doesn't like the heat here or is it the wind? It needs regular water to look its best and with the great rain we had before Christmas, it was fabulous. The honey eaters love it to death and I often find bits broken off from their weight on the spindly stems. My South African species did well throughout the summer.

I am propagating at the moment in my new potting shed. We won't talk about the tray of seeds I had coming on which I put outside in the morning to give them a little sun and promptly forgot all about! I must have had about six or eight seedlings just starting to get their second lot of leaves and they all shriveled!!! A hard lesson to learn. Luckily, I had a few left and am now trying again but what a waste!

We seem to be experiencing a little pre-autumn weather, cool early mornings with heavy dew but still hot days. Late February, if we've had rain is a good time in my garden, not only the salvias but also Plectranthus, Cosmos, Tibouchine, Hibiscus, Easter Daisy etc. are all in flower. I have a few different Plectranthus which I'm trying as they are a great late summer early autumn flowerer.

Salvias out at the moment include, S.'Christine Yeo', (which I love), *S.discolor*, S.'Harmony', S.'Phyllis Fancy', S.'Margaret Arnold', *S.confertiflora*, *S. melissadora*, the microphyllas, early *S.madrensis* and S.'Waverly' with the promise of more. S.'Marine Blue' and S.'Hot Lips' are constantly in flower.

I recently visited a rose garden 'in progress' which had the largest *S.chamelaeagnea* I have seen. I didn't realise it grew so big.

I've just remembered another I did lose this summer, *S.atrocyanea*, again probably my fault as it was in a difficult spot. (Remember, it rests underground all winter, so does *S. michoacan*. Mine have re-appeared and are in bud. Tricky wretches, I plant a small bulb on top as a reminder. Trudi) Otherwise, I am pleased with the way most of the salvias survived what has been a trying summer and I'm looking forward to some more agreeable weather.

Maureen Cox

HERBS & COTTAGE PLANTS NURSERY

Downsizing or closing down sale????

Salvias and a large range of perennials.

Lots of bargains.

When? Friday, 17 March to Sunday, 19 March, 2006

Time: 10 am to 4 p.m.

Where: 195 Church Rd, Panton Hill

Mel 263 H5

Further information: Arja 9719 7660

Salvia News from Hobart-Autumn 06

John Daniels

Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens

Further to the report of seed collection from *Salvia* 'Indigo Spires' at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens (in *Salvia News* a year ago) I planted out five seedlings in spring last year. These seedlings have recently come into flower and do appear to be true to the parent cultivar, which is reputedly sterile, in flower and form. This season, so far, there does not appear to be any calyces containing seed, no doubt the result of environmental factors. The most noticeable of which have been the December average minimum temperature, being the warmest ever recorded of 2 degrees above average, and, compared to the previous summer, the evident reduced number of bumble bees, although there have been plenty of honey bees. I will continue to monitor for further seed production.

Our one specimen of *Salvia taraxacifolia*, grown from seed from the Geelong Botanic Gardens, still has a few flowers. Positioned in full sun, at the edge of a sandstone terrace, it commenced flowering in November. A perennial from Morocco with a basal rosette of grey indented leaves, it formed a mass of branching flower stems to 70cm in height and over a metre across before recent pruning. Interesting features of this species are the dense hairs at the entrance to the corolla, which is white, with a blunt, pink, hooded upper lip and pink edged lower lip and the tomentose, green, ribbed calyces, the lips of which have long, sharp spines up to 5mm long. Since the removal of most of the seed heads, the plant is producing a further crop of shorter flower stems.

Similarly sourced, and positioned against a sandstone wall with a north-easterly aspect, is *S. chamelaeagnea*, Rough Blue Sage, from South Africa. Planted just over a year ago, this erect woody shrub has grown to 1.40m in height. The thick, dark green, serrate, aromatic leaves and reddish, sticky calyces provide a beautiful foil to the bright bicoloured flowers on branching inflorescences up to 40cm in length. The profuse display of the pale blue hooded upper lip contrasting with the widely spaced white lower lip is most appealing. Apparently, the corolla can vary from blue through mauve to pink and pure white.

Another ornamental salvia, also from Sth. Africa, is *S. dolomitica* which has attractive leathery, aromatic, pale leaves that are covered in dense white hairs. Currently, our specimens have formed plants a metre in height and 80cm in width. This subject has lax growth that requires the occasional tip prune to maintain compactness. While it has rarely been without flower, it appears to be about to exhibit a profusion of terminal inflorescences. These are especially appealing. The mauve 2cm long hooded upper lip and cream, mauve edged, 2cm broad lower lip are twice as long as the corolla. This is contained within the large, red-brown, 1.5cm wide calyx, soft to the touch and aromatic because of the dense cover of glandular hairs. The upper lip of the calyx, with three blunt lobes, encloses half of the hooded upper lip of the flower while the lower lip of the calyx, has two 5mm long lobes on which rests the flared, vertical central lobe of the lower lip of the flower.

As part of the annual display at the R.T.B.G. this summer, we have grown *Salvia farinacea* 'Strata'. This compact, vertical plant, growing to 50cm, contains dense floral spikes, up to 15cm in length, which, as with the calyces, are covered in dense white hairs. The conspicuous horizontal, violet lower lip, to 1cm in length, has a central splash of white which reflects the contrast in colour of the stem and flower and complements the 'silver' of *Senecio cineraria* and dark blue of *Heliotropium arborescens*.

John Daniels

Your subscription is due on June 1st 2006. A subscription form is enclosed.

STRATFORD NEWS Victoria

I do look forward to Salvia News & hearing everyone's tips.

Flo & I came down to Mark's garden in Hampton & brought with us a couple from our area, new to salvias, & they are just loving these plants.

Not having seen the Hampton Collection, I was spell bound at the growth & height of these salvias. We caught up with salvia members & came away with more salvias to plant from the salvia plant stall.

Grasshoppers are still with us. It is so disappointing & frustrating to see your plants continually getting eaten & some plants are just 'bare', only the stalks left.

Grasshoppers came in December, and they not only have eaten the paddocks but have been into the garden for 2 months now eating everything, some salvias they have left untouched, yet others are stripped bare. The worst year for grasshoppers in 50 years, just not sure how long they will be around for. 'Experts' aren't saying. They are saying with global warming etc, our summers from now on are getting hotter. Next year they say summer is expected to be very hot. I'm not happy with that news, I can tell you!!

I'm about to spray with Confidor to see if it will deter grasshoppers. It lasts inside the plant for up to 6 weeks. So you don't have to spray grasshoppers on contact, which you can't anyway, as by the time you've reached plant the grasshoppers have jumped away.

Regarding follow up to my article in last Salvia News re salvia cuttings from QLD- well they are slowly growing & probably with ¼ success. This summer has just been too hot for so long & not only the cuttings are sick of this continuous heat but the garden is as well, telling me enough is enough.

With regard to growing *Brillantaisia subulugarica*, I thank Trudi & Meg for their remarks in the last Salvia News, I will still call it a salvia as it is so spectacular. One in a pot had two stems of flowers whereas the one in the garden went down hill. Before I flew to Perth mid January, I made the decision to move the cutting into another part of the garden where the soil was more friable & didn't seem to be so dry. I knew it was going to die where it was, so I took a gamble & moved it. Also put a 2 litre drink bottle upside down near the cutting after cutting the bottom out of it, & in the 2 weeks I was away, it decided to make new leaves etc. It hasn't looked back so by moving just a cutting, I've proved it pays off.

That's all folks till next time. Happy Salvia Gardening. *Jane Lee*

Salvia Seed Germination Trials, Spring 2005 Pat Anderson: January 2006

As part of an on-going investigation into germination of seeds from the genus *Salvia*, trials were undertaken in Spring, 2005, to help answer the following question:

Which specific treatments are required to overcome dormancy/induce germination in *Salvia* species that have proved to be difficult in previous trials?

Background

For seed germination to be initiated, three conditions must be fulfilled: the seed must be viable (embryo alive), the seed must be subjected to appropriate environmental conditions (water, temperature, oxygen and light) and primary dormancy (a set of conditions preventing immediate germination) must be overcome.

While I have successfully germinated many salvias from seed, there are some species for which I have had very little success and so I set up a systematic trial in the Spring of 2005 to determine which, if any, of the various ways suggested for overcoming dormancy might prove to be the best for some of these difficult species.

Choice of species for the trial

I wanted to include species that others had described as possibly benefiting from treatment with smoke (species from the South African Fynbos or Californian Chapparal country) or with the growth hormone, gibberellic acid (Ginny Hunt (1) lists the following as showing improved germination with treatment this way) *S. carduacea*, *S. columbariae*, *S. chamaedryoides*, *S. mellifera* and *S. spathacea*.

I also had some seed of *S. recognita* that had been sent to me from overseas which I wanted to be sure of germinating. The ultimate choice of species for the trial was determined by availability of sufficient seed and included: *S. spathacea*, *S. mellifera*, *S. judaica*, *S. namaensis*, *S. lanceolata*, *S. recognita*, *S. chamaedryoides*.

Method

Separate trays of sterilised punnets were prepared with identical fresh seed raising mix (Debco brand). Seeds of the selected species were counted out into batches of 20, where available, for each treatment. Where the seed supply was limited, treatments were restricted as indicated in the Table of Results.

Unless otherwise indicated, seeds were sown evenly onto pre-wet seed raising mix and covered with a thin layer of vermiculite

All treatments were prepared indoors at the same time and moved to the glasshouse when complete.

The Treatments

1. A “Control” punnet was sown for each species.
2. **Soaking in water:** Seeds of each species were placed in separate bowls of water to soak overnight, after which they were sown as described above.
3. **Nicking:** Seeds were nicked by a single pass with a narrow file, where the seeds were large enough to handle. For smaller seeds, these were gently rubbed between sheets of fine glass paper. All seeds were then sown as described above.
4. **Smoked water:** Seeds were sown as above, watered with smoked water (a 10% solution of “Regen 2000”) then left for 48 hours before any further watering
5. **“Australian Wildflower Seed Starter”:** (improved germination of some West Australian wild flowers indigenous to fire-prone areas has been demonstrated with this treatment). The granules were dissolved in hot water and after cooling, the seeds were placed in separate bowls of the solution to soak overnight, after which they were sown as above.
6. ***Gibberellic Acid (0.1%)** – Seeds were soaked overnight in the prepared solution then sown as above
7. ***Gibberellic Acid (0.01%)** – Seeds were soaked overnight in the prepared solution then sown as above
* The concentrations of Gibberellic Acid were chosen based on figures quoted by John Sutton (2). It is available in Victoria as a 10% solution and was diluted to the required amounts in water.

Results

The germination rates after 6 weeks are summarised in the following Table.

1. With the exceptions of *S. judaica* and *S. chamaedryoides*, there was no germination of seeds in the “Control” punnets. This is consistent with expectations as the species for the trial had been determined by poor results on previous occasions, using the same batches of seed.
2. *S. judaica* produced some seedlings irrespective of treatment. It is possible that the only reason that *S. judaica* had not germinated in the previous trial in September was that the temperature of the medium was below the minimum threshold value required, whereas this trial was conducted one month later and conditions were a bit warmer.
3. Soaking the seed was of very little value.
4. Nicking the seed was likewise of little value, although it may have contributed to the germination of one seedling of *S. spathacea*, a species with very large seeds, although not particularly hard-coated.

- Smoked water appears to have contributed to some germination of *S. mellifera* and *S. namaensis*, Californian and South African species respectively.
- Treatment with Gibberellic Acid aided germination in every case, with germination rates being generally higher than with any other treatment (50% for *S. chamaedryoides*; 67% for *S. recognita*). In general, the better results occurred with the lower concentration of Gibberellic Acid. These results are more clearly seen in the comparative photographs.
- It should be noted that some of the seedlings induced by the use of Gibberellic Acid, especially at the higher concentration, were rather tall and spindly. This is consistent with expectation, in that Gibberellic Acid is a hormone that stimulates growth, especially in inter-nodal extension.

Conclusions

- Based on these trials with these particular batches of seed, Gibberellic Acid appears to be the most consistently useful treatment for breaking dormancy in *Salvia* species that have been otherwise difficult to germinate.
- Care should be taken in using Gibberellic Acid as some of the resulting seedlings were weak and spindly. This was particularly true for *S. lanceolata* and *S. chamaedryoides* with the higher concentration of Gibberellic Acid.
- Salvia judaica* demonstrated some germination without treatment, although germination rates were enhanced by treatment, especially with Gibberellic Acid.
- With the exception of *S. namaensis* and *S. clevelandii*, all the seed had been collected in the Autumn prior to the germination trial. The seed had not been stored in the refrigerator, a factor which may have been detrimental to resulting germination rates.

References:

- Ginny Hunt, seed supplier from the USA, trading as “Seedhunt”, p1 of seed catalogue for *Salvias*
- Sutton, J. (1999): “The Gardener’s Guide to Growing *Salvias*”, pp 123 – 124

Germination rates of *Salvia* species 6 weeks after sowing on 2nd Oct 2005

<i>Salvia</i> Species (date of seed collection and source)	No. seed in each batch	Treatment 1 CONTROL	Treatment 2 SOAKING	Treatment 3 NICKING	Treatment 4 SMOKED WATER	Treatment 5 AUSTRALIAN WILDFLOWER SEED STARTER	Treatment 6 GIBBERELIC ACID
<i>S. spathacea</i> (Jan '05 PA)	10	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	20%
<i>S. mellifera</i> (Mar '05 MB)	20	0%	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%
<i>S. judaica</i> (Dec '04 PA)	20	5%	10%	15%	25%	55%	30%
<i>S. namaensis</i> (Mar '04 PA)	20	0%	15%	0%	35%	25%	25%
<i>S. lanceolata</i> (Feb '05 PA)	20	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	10%
<i>S. clevelandii</i> (Chiltern Seeds, purchased '03)	20	0%	X	X	0%	X	5%
<i>S. recognita</i> (Aut '05 GG)	5	0%	X	0%	X	0%	20%
<i>S. chamaedryoides</i> (Mar '05 PA)	20	15%	X	X	X	X	45%

“X” indicates no seeds sown

PA = Pat Anderson; MB = Meg Bentley, GG = Geoff Genge

The 'Not So Common' Common Sage

What was the first Salvia most of us heard about? Wasn't it the Common or Garden Sage, *Salvia officinalis* ???! Though we may not have used it to spice up our culinary masterpieces, we knew of its popularity as a flavoursome herb. To honour it paving the way into the exciting world of Salvias, I thought I'd revisit the characteristics and usefulness of this extraordinary plant. In fact, there is SO MUCH to write about it, I'm going to introduce it here and if permitted, rave about its further virtues in the next newsletter.

Sage the Saviour

Even the generic name 'Salvia', from Latin 'salvare' meaning 'to save or heal', applauds the curative powers of the Common Sage. The species name 'officinalis' is a reference to its medicinal properties. It let's us know that this Salvia was used for a lot more than stuffing in years gone by (and still is). Medieval rumours had it that if you grew this Sage, you wouldn't grow old or die. Can there be a more awesome reputation for a plant!!! And girls, have you heard that if a sage grows vigorously in the garden, it's a sign the wife rules.

So, why do I kill my Garden Sage?

I can grow this Sage in pots no worries, but I've killed the three I've planted in the garden. (psst! Hubby rules, but I won't tell him.) Sure this plant is viewed as short lived, deteriorating and turning woody after 3 to 5 years and best replaced then, but mine have lasted only months. The bit of research for this article has given me some clues as to why my plants have died.

Garden Sage grows wild on dry banks and stony places in Spain and along the northern shores of the Mediterranean, including Asia Minor, usually in limestone.

Clue 1 It thrives in neutral to very alkaline soil. I gave it a death wish planting it in acidic soil. Next time I'm adding lime.

Clue 2 It enjoys light sandy or loamy soils. Imagine what it thought about my planting it in hard clay.

Clue 3 It dislikes growing next to wormwood, basil, rue, cucumber and squash. Twice I planted mine next to rue and once next to wormwood. Probably didn't help.

Clue 4 It's dry tolerant once established. Planting and forgetting was not the way to go.

Clue 5 It likes a sunny site and an annual rejuvenating tip prune after flowering. Mine never were around long enough to get one, and I suspect the position wasn't sunny enough.

Spare a spot for this Sage. I'm giving it another go!

Each time I've seen the Garden Sage grown well in other people's places, I've been smitten again. It's a beautiful small, evergreen shrub. The interesting, highly aromatic grey green leaves add contrast and texture to plantings.

The usual lavender to purple flowers over a month in late spring are gorgeous. Pink and white flowering forms also exist. Its size, 60cm x 60 cm, makes it versatile for borders and rockeries, as a low informal hedge, a filler, and of course it's valued as part of any herb garden. In the vegetable garden, it's said to be a beneficial companion for carrots and cabbages, repelling white butterflies and other insects. As well, it loves to rub shoulders with a rosemary. Added to compost, the leaves are a herbal activator that help speed up bacterial activity. And too, the Garden Sage attracts bees to the garden. In Europe, Sage honey is highly prized.

I would love to get tips, comments and success stories about growing this Sage. You can email me on torkkola@netspace.net I will add new information to part 2, next issue.

Happy Gardening Arja

A visit to Mark Dymiotis, Sunday 12th February, 2006.

We drove down on a warm Melbourne Sunday. The air was still. As we drove down the street I thought one garden looked much the same as another. Gardens around the edges, a prominent tree in the middle, trying desperate to look original. And then I parked the car and Marie and I walked the short distance to Mark's home. I had been told about the colour, Marie had been the previous day. I normally do not like a mass of something in a garden, be it gum trees or tomatoes. And yet, with Mark's home, the colour of the Salvias with the striking blues, the low and tall plants well thought out, I knew that here was a garden. The soil, as many of us know is sandy but many hands have brought it into a good tilth. It is still sandy, and always will be, but now it is bulked up with humus of one form or another. The front garden is a credit to the Salvia Group, gardens like this just do not happen, they take careful thought, and steady sustained work.

There would be people who would not like or more likely not understand his veggie patch. It is not pretty pretty, vegies all in a row. I've tried that myself, it's boring! But it is production, based on organic practices, the use of compost, manures, crop rotation and companion planting. The plants look healthy, there is plenty of them, there is variety, but there is something else. Here lives a man who knows, like most of us, that sometimes, in pure economic terms, it does not pay to grow a lettuce. And the same applies to reading a book, going to a film or getting out of or into bed. But you cannot put into money terms the independence you have when you pick a crop just when you feel like it. Logic and science tell us that the feeling a person has for their soil cannot be transferred into the size of a cabbage. Maybe so, but people talk about a love of the land and soil which is all about getting the right balance between thought and action. I think that in a little street in Hampton someone has found the right balance.

Barry Revill

The Hampton OPPCA Salvia Collection

There was a great article in the Sun Herald February 25th about Mark Dymiotis productive vegetable garden. This was open, along with the Salvia Collection, as part of the Open Garden Scheme. About 1600 enthusiastic people viewed the gardens over two days. There will also be an article about the Salvia Collection in Mark's front garden, in the Sun Herald on Saturday March 18th.

The salvia garden was pruned and weeded last November and tended regularly. Mixed animal manure, Mark's compost and other compost was applied and watered in before mulching with sugarcane mulch and an aquapore watering system was installed. Planting of more salvias, grown on by Salvia group workers were added. This resulted in a lush garden of many unusual salvias greatly admired by salvia enthusiasts and gardeners who found something new to grow.



SALVIA FORUM

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

Forum will appear in the next issue of Salvia News. Send in items for discussion, questions to be answered and information you wish to share.

SUMMER SALVIAS February 06

The Nobelius Collection has had some additional plantings during summer, the border of *Salvia officinalis* 'Icterina' has been replaced and various plants I have been holding, namely S.'Red Dragon', S.'Blue Bird', S.'Hot Lips, various *S.coccinea*, a border of annual *S.splendens* and *S. officinalis* 'Tricolor' have been added.

Weeding out a particularly rampant form of oxalis has been a constant task. Now, hopefully the beds are fairly free of this pest.

New plantings have been watered in, and one or two of the original plantings, which have shown signs of stress during the hot spells have also been watered periodically but otherwise the garden has survived quite well without general watering.

The white foliated *Salvia argentea* has survived but not thrived. It is a most attractive plant and hopefully will produce a flowering head this year. The plant is now two years old.

Our most notable 'survival plant' is *S. officinalis* 'Purpurescens'. Twentysix of these were planted. 14 years ago (from cuttings struck by Don and Trudi before he became ill) and still flower well each year. Their deep purple leaves a perfect foreground for the taller *S. polystachys* behind them.

I have been amazed at the large number of varieties in bloom over the past few weeks. During my last working day at the garden I counted 27 different salvias in flower; *S.microphylla*'Baby Sage' *Salvia microphylla* var. *microphylla*, *S. clevelandii*, *S. leucantha* (both mauve and white flowered forms), *S.coccinea* 'Lady in Red', *S.uliginosa*, *S.greggii* 'Purple', *S. lanceolata*, *S. involucrata* 'Joan', and *S. apiana* at their "blooming peak", while *S. forskaohlei*, *S. guaranitica*, *S. gesnereaflorea*, *S. corrugata*, *S. canariensis* and *S. somalensis* still have a few flowers to display.

My own home collection, many in pots and watered twice a day in hot weather are luxuriously foliated but not nearly as floriferous as the Nobelius plants. I am sure this reinforces what we have previously proven, that salvias do not need to be over watered to flower well.

My 'rehabilitation garden' situated on the decking outside our kitchen door, was a delight during the period when my knee replacements prevented me from working in my overlarge garden. Now even though I am repairing the desolation that has developed there, I still treasure the decking garden. We grow all our culinary herbs and some vegetables there, and of course just a few treasured salvias. *Salvia dombeyi* still clambers through the ginger lilies and up the stair railing, but the possums quickly demolish the large red flowers as soon as they appear. This seems to be the only salvia of the hundred or so I grow that they regard as delectable.

A couple of *S. farinacea* in small pots have survived for 2 seasons, one of them, a brilliant sky blue, is in glorious bloom at this moment. *S. semiatrata* is thriving. Its luxurious ,textured leaves look beautiful in the afternoon sun in a large glazed pot. Possibly because it is over watered it has ceased flowering at the moment. I must let it dry out to produce some autumn blooms.

I have enjoyed the blaze of color created by the ever flowering *S. forskaohlei*, (now up to their third flowering this summer). I have the white form too and it has also has flowered well. *S. hians* was a delight, its large florets were a picture for 3 weeks. *Salvia algeriensis* (an annual) seems to flower all summer as does the attractive pale blue *S. riparia*. *Salvia* 'Timboon Red' produced magnificent flower heads this year. Many of these were used to create showy salvia floral arrangements.

Altogether, it has been a wonderful summer for salvias.

Ray Boatman Nobelius Collection Curator

CHRISTOPHER LLOYD

2-3-1921—27-1-2006

I am saddened to hear of the death of Christopher Lloyd. I enjoyed reading his articles and books and his refreshing attitude to gardens. The lack of stuffiness and pretentious charmed me. His love of bright invigorating colour, such a contrast to most garden writers.

Gardener, writer of a regular weekly article in Country Life magazine for 34 years, author of many books, gardening correspondent of The Guardian until his death. His influence on gardens is immense. We will go on learning from him always and that is a great way to be remembered.
Trudi

Lunching with Salvia Fanatics

From time to time the salvia fanatics arrange corroborees to which they invite their partners. Just before Christmas last year one of these occasions appeared on the calendar and my partner asked if I would like to attend. Now I understand that, as is the nature of all corroborees, it is a very great privilege to be asked to attend a salvia corroboree so I graciously accepted this very kind invitation. I told myself that, as an observer of salvia fanatics en masse, I must be on my best behaviour, that I must not say anything provocative or politically incorrect and that I must not say or do anything to bring disrepute to the serious study of salvias. I was determined to keep my head down and nod approvingly when I thought it was prudent.

Our day began with me driving my partner to Upwey. We had no difficulty finding the right home which was distinguished by its beautiful garden. Similarly, the tumult coming from the verandah at the back of the house left us in no doubt where the corroboree was located. With some notable exceptions, most of those participating in the salvia corroboree were women. Some had their heads down examining one fanatic's success in striking cuttings of some notoriously difficult species but most of them were engaged in a corolla performance. This is surely one of the most overwhelming, bewitching and engaging forms of female expression I have ever seen and is unique to salvia corroborees. It involves a female fanatic displaying the hairiness, stickiness, sweetness and length of her colourful red-lipped, or in some cases, blue, corolla and inviting closer inspection with a hand lens and recording the display with a digital camera for placing on the internet. Hell, I thought, the modern 20-or-somethings in their tight clothes, and microphone in hand don't realise how tough the competition is when a salvia fanatic is on song about her corolla. No need for a microphone for a salvia fanatic.

Well, I'm an old-fashioned sort of bloke and it was all getting a little too sensuous for me so I went in search of a secluded corner away from this overt spectacle. The trouble was that the quiet corner on the verandah was already occupied by male partners of salvia fanatics who also sought this refuge. I tried to hold to my good intentions and keep my thoughts and eyes to myself. However, a bloke called Leon, who appeared comfortably ensconced as though he was part of the place, produced a long stemmed glass which he filled for me from a bottle of gorgeous red and suggested that I relax. Well, it would have been discourteous to refuse wouldn't it. Now Leon is clearly a keen and knowledgeable observer of human behaviour. After a few minutes, by which time the red nectar had coursed warmly through my veins, he quietly enquired "Finding this collection of crack-pots and nutters a bit of a strain are you?" Now I had promised myself that I would be absolutely politically correct so I circumvented this question by saying how could I find anything a strain when I was treated to wine such as this. Well, this led Leon to produce another bottle of the precious stuff which he shared with a growing circle of male partners of salvia fanatics whose needs were supplemented with a couple of bottles of our daughter's red clean-skins which I just happened to have with me.

As the afternoon wore on we noticed from the body talk and gesticulations of the salvia fanatics that they had moved on from talking about corollas to telling lively jokes so we thought it would not be out of place for us blokes to hold our own discreet discussions. Given the circumstances, the conclusion we all reached was that life would be very dull and just wouldn't be worth living without a salvia fanatic for a partner. But just as we were packing up one very indiscreet bloke, definitely not me, enquired whether it was possible that we blokes had any role to play in the lives of our salvia-fanatic partners. Whoops, I thought to myself, I'm not going to be baited by this one. It was Leon who saved the day. "Well" he said, "Somebody has to drink their share of the bottle for them".

Our day finished with my partner, Pat Anderson, driving me home because there was no alternative.

Many thanks to the salvia fanatics for organising such a wonderful day complete with a superb array of pies, tarts, quiches, salads, puddings, cakes and home made ice-cream. Finally our special thanks to Elly and Leon for their warm hospitality and for making their home and gorgeous garden, hewn from rocks on an amazingly steep hillside, available for this very memorable occasion. **John Anderson**

NEWS FROM LURG VICTORIA

We are situated about 25ks from Benalla trying to garden on a hill- top, with soil that is mainly clay and shale. Strong winds come from the North West.

My interest in salvias first started about 10 years ago when my sister bought some Salvia 'Mexican Bandits' that never stopped flowering. So being in the process of doing a new garden, I had to have some, and have never looked back, particularly the last 4-5 years. We are only on bore and dam water, so everything has to survive on what they get.

The backbone of the garden is roses, but I have found that salvias fit in very well. *Salvia madrensis* has been slow to take off, but I think this year it should give a lovely show. Also *S.purpurea* was slow to get going but last February/March the flowers were spectacular. I only wished it flowered longer.

In flower at the moment (mid December and it is **HOT**) are some of my favourites S. 'Lara', S. 'Margaret Arnold', S. 'Waverly', S. 'Sensation', S. 'HotLips'(never stops flowering), *S.verticillata* 'Purple Rain'. *S. lanceolata*, *S.canariensis* and all the greggii's and the list goes on. Salvia 'Southern Belle' and *S. gesneraeflora* just got going great when strong winds broke both of them off. Have just acquired *S. spathacea* and *S. dolomitica* and am waiting with great anticipation to see how they go. *Salvia forskaohlei* has put on a great display and S. 'Anthony Parker', though in a bit too much shade, is coming into flower. *S. dorisiana* and *S. corrugata* have done very well with morning sun, afternoon shade. *S. viscosa* has just finished flowering. It grew bigger than I expected so will have to be shifted.

A border of *Statice perezii*, which seems to flower all year, teams up well with most salvias. More could be written about salvias but this is enough for now. (We look forward to reading more next time. Ed)

Mary Luksevic

TERRACOTTA GARDENING

I panicked when the temperature hit 40° plus. My brain was fried and my precious salvias frizzling even in the terracotta pots. Their wall is in direct sun for most of the day and that is OK normally. But this was not normal. It was absolutely scorching hot and the leaves were shriveling as I watched. Not enough water to make a difference. Disregarding the bad back (mine, not theirs) I grabbed over 100 big terracotta pots and numerous smaller ones and jammed them into the shade house. Covered thickly with *Coboea scandens* it was as dark as a cellar, airless, in spite of the wind, and wondrous cool. A splash of water for the plants, and I staggered up the hill to drink a lot of water.

As my dehydration was eased I realized how awful I felt! My brain obviously kicks in with water. Anyway what else could I do? Actually, leaving them to fry would have been better, as I couldn't slash some ventilation into the shade house until I could recover a bit and a lot of them wilted, a few actually

got very ill and lost growth. Salvias do not like airless dungeons. The lucky ones such as *Salvia blepharophylla* were too big to move and scarcely seemed to notice the heat. On reflection it would have been better to let nature take its course. I really didn't 'rescue' any thing and half killed me.

The lesson I learnt was that losses of plants in extreme weather will happen and risking injury is crazy. The salvias are all out now from the shade house and in their sun drenched home. Some lost branches, some stopped flowering and a few died, not I think, from the scorching, but from the time spent in the airless, dank shade house. However there were 11 of them to display at 'Marcos Garden'. There have been more super hot days but nothing as hot as that. Anyway the losses were few and the limbless ones are growing shapely.

Trudi Fry

SALVIAS IN SOUTHEAST QUEENSLAND— February 2006

As I write this in mid February, it is raining again. Here on Tamborine Mountain in Southeast Queensland (500m above sea level) we have had a fairly wet summer, with more rain than most salvias really like. So they have put on a huge amount of growth with fewer flowers than usual. As we have all discovered over the past few years, salvias are wonderfully drought-tolerant, and in my garden they look better when we have not had a lot of rain.

Most of my winter flowerers have just had a rather drastic prune—almost to the ground—as they were 3 metres high and trying to take over the whole garden. These include Salvias' Bluebird (this one not quite as big), *fallax*, *involucrata* 'Sugar Pink', *iodantha*, *karwinskii*, *purpurea*, and *wagneriana*.

Salvia gesneraeflora 'Tequila' has had even more brutal treatment I'm afraid. I have chopped it out completely as it gets way too big and I feel that the display it puts on does not warrant the space in my garden. Especially as scarlet is not one of my favourite colours. *Salvia Costa Rican Blue* (or is it Costa Rica Blue?) is also due for the loppers. Stems become so thick and woody that they are too much for the secateurs. I usually brutalize it a couple of times a year and then it comes back and looks good for just a few months before it is too leggy again.

Salvia 'Phyllis Fancy' is in need of a prune. Such a pretty salvia but I find that by late summer it always looks very untidy and I usually chop it right down in about March. I think this year I will try only pruning off every 2nd stem so that there are still some flowers remaining. It's close relative *Salvia* 'Waverly' is flowering well at present and doesn't get as large and untidy, but I find the colour much less appealing.

This summer *Salvia leucantha*, both the plain purple and the purple & white forms, has not put on it's usual wonderful display. I think the amount of wet and cloudy weather that we have had have promoted leaf growth at the expense of flowers, particularly in this variety. Hopefully there are a lot more flowers to come in March and April when it is usually at it's best here. *Salvia guaranitica*, that gorgeous blue, (large form, **non-suckering**) is also a bit too "leafy" at present, not as many flowers as usual. My two plants of the lovely *Salvia* 'Indigo Spires' are not looking as good as they usually do. A bit woody and scraggly. Perhaps it is time to replace them with new ones, although they are only 2½ years old.

Two of my favourites have enjoyed the rain and are looking great: *Salvia* 'Purple Majesty' and *S.sagitatta*. Does everyone love sagitatta as much as I do? So different and totally gorgeous.

Most of the smaller growing varieties are also looking really good at present. These include *Salvias' chiapensis*, Hotlips, Iced Lemon, *lanceolata*, *microphylla cyclamen*, *muirii*, Navajo Red, Navajo Rose, Raspberry Royale, and San Carlos Festival.

A couple that I have recently removed as they do not perform well for me here are *Salvia Christine Yeo*—too floppy, suckers or layers everywhere, not enough flowers—and Navajo Purple which is very brittle, won't stand up and just not worth the space. As space is limited I am gradually sorting out my favourite salvias and growing only those that I really like. Several more should be really worried about their futures!

Virginia Major

The Perennial Poppies Group Inc SE Qld

Notes from Gruyere Victoria Meg Bentley

I don't want to even discuss the disastrous summer garden, how some plants managed to survive is miraculous!

Instead, I want to tell you about a particular salvia that did come through with flying colours and because it is a new species it has been given the necessary attention that a newcomer deserves (like plenty of water)

Salvia macrophylla, a salvia with great potential as a small shrub, so far about 1.4m. and it could grow taller. It looks to be a good flowerer with inflorescences on the tips on the branches, which are divided into three racemes, the center one being longer than the outer two, not unlike a candelabra. Flowers open at the base of the center raceme and work up then both sides start to flower and continue up the stem thus giving a beautiful picture of blue in full bloom. Yes, the corolla is a beautiful gentian blue, a similar colour to *Salvia cacaliaefolia* and I have to say it looks stunning! It's not often we come across a salvia species that gives such a good display of flowers at the one time, like this one does.

And while there are shrubby salvias in reds, purples, pinks, cerise even yellow there are not many large flowering specimens that bloom with such a vivid blue and in summer. My guess is that it could bloom from late summer (February) into autumn (March) and I have yet to test it out to see if nipping off spent stems will produce a second flush of flowers.

Notes about the plant: At this stage (12 months old) it has reached a height of about 1.1/2m. Leaves are very large, darkish green, not quite heart shaped but more triangular. Petioles are long and sticky to the touch, so too are the long flowering stems. The bud formation is very compact and uniform which start at around 10-15cm. before the flowers emerge and the calyces are green and also sticky to the touch.

Flowers are a bright gentian blue with a long narrow hood clasping the longer style and stamens. The lower lip reflexes back to the calyx and the split lip seems to clasp the calyx around the middle so to speak. See diagrams.

The size of corolla is about 1" long, emerging from the calyx, which is about 1-2cm. and attached to a long pedicel.

Most calyces hold along the stems until the seeds form but there are quite a number that drop rather quickly. There are long, narrow bracts (flower leaves) that clasp the base of the flowering stems, size about 1-1.1/2" long.

New shoots emerge from the base of the plant as the flowers bloom on the tips.

This salvia would no doubt grow better if it had more water but it grows well here with late morning to early afternoon sun and base protection from other plants and mulch.

Salvia macrophylla is distributed through Columbia to Peru and Bolivia.

In Columbia it can be a rare plant of scattered roadside banks between 1400 and 2200m. in the south of the country.

Further information: Kew Bulletin Vol., 44 (2): The Genus *Salvia* in Columbia.

NOTE LEAVES OF MACROPHYLLA WERE ON A LOOSE PAGE GIVEN TO PRINTERS SO NO COPY IN MY PC.