

# SALVIA NEWS

WINTER 2008 NO.33



Official Newsletter of the  
**Victorian Salvia Study Group**  
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## THE SALVIA DISPLAY GARDEN FRIENDS GROUP

Lyndi Garnett, Bevan Whelan, Geoff Crowhurst, Jillian Barkell, Marilyn Johnson, Neil and Margaret Keir, Pat and John Thomson, Heather Davies, Geoff and Jennifer Ellis, Karen Meeuwissen, Meg Bentley, Pat Anderson, Ray Boatman, Christine McDermott, Trudi Fry. If your name isn't here please let Lyndi know.

**THE PURPOSE OF THE SALVIA STUDY GROUP IS TO GROW AND COLLECT SALVIAS FOR STUDY AND RESEARCH**

### GROUP AIMS

- To encourage the study and growth of salvias
- To assist with the planting and maintenance of the registered OPCA collections at Hampton & 'Nobelius' in Emerald
- To exchange and gather cuttings, seeds and information with other members and similar study groups
- To collect & propagate plants for private & registered collections
- To correctly identify and name existing & any new salvias

### GATHERINGS HELD REGULARLY

### **DETAILS OF VENUES AND DATES PUBLISHED IN SALVIA NEWS**

*The views expressed by the contributors of this publication are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Salvia Study Group. While every effort is made to publish reliable information, the use of that information is at the discretion of the individual.*



# **SalviaNews**

*Victorian Salvia Study Group*

**A Branch of the Herb Society of Victoria**

**WINTER 2008**

**NUMBER 33**

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*I think June /July must be my annual leave. I love South East Queensland . Three of my children and their families live there. Watching their gardens grow is amazing. The children are all so tall and beautiful too. Wonder if there is something in the water? Kate lives near Barb Wickes and some of her treasures came from Barb as well as advice and encouragement. The Wickes garden is lovely. I spent a happy morning there with Denise Horchner on the Open Day answering questions. "The Poppies" are a large enthusiastic group with salvias only one of their interests. Meetings start at 9am! I have returned refreshed and I love my garden too and our Victorian Salvia Study Group is just as enthusiastic and as much fun as the gardeners I met on my travels. Arriving back to such bitter cold weather was a shock. I was told about the storms I missed while I was away and wondered what I would see in the morning. Jillian had cared for the plants in the poly house. The door had been damaged but all was well and in the garden Salvia africana lutea plants were flowering and the rest of the garden was fine. It is easy to garden with good friends and salvias.*

## **DEADLINE FOR SALVIA NEWS COPY IS SEPTEMBER 20TH**

Like me you have all hibernated over winter. Let us make Spring really **Spring.**

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE COMING YEAR? I PLAN TO USE MORE STONES/ROCKS/PEBBLES FOR COOL ROOT RUNS AS WELL AS MULCH AND MORE MULCH. ALSO TO PLANT MORE SUCCULENTS AS GROUND COVER.. IT ALWAYS SEEMS THAT WEEDS FIND A WAY TO THRIVE SO THE SELF SOWN PLANTS ARE WELCOME.

## SALVIA CALENDAR

**SEPT MON.15<sup>th</sup> 8pm TATURA GARDEN CLUB**

**TATURA COMMUNITY HOUSE  
KERFORD STREET TATURA**

Trudi Fry will speak on salvias Jillian Barkell will have salvia plants for sale on behalf of the Salvia Study Group of Victoria

**OCT SAT/SUN 11,12<sup>TH</sup>: BAW BAW ( WARRAGUL) GARDEN EXPO**

**LARDNER PARK WARRAGUL  
PLANTS FOR SALE  
MEL: 612 U8**

**OCT SUN 19<sup>TH</sup> I.D.DAY AT MEG BENTLEY'S**

**3 FORDS RD, GRUYERE**

**MEL : 285 – E3**

**BRING A CHAIR AND A PLATE TO SHARE**

**BRING FLOWERS / PIECES OF SALVIAS TO I.D.**

**OCT SAT 25<sup>TH</sup> UPWEY GARDEN CLUB UPWEY COMMUNITY HALL**

**BURWOOD HIGHWAY MEL 75 A9**

**NOV 9<sup>TH</sup> SUN GARDEN VISIT : KAREN MEEUWISSEN**

**325 EACOTTS RD HODDLERS CREEK**

**MEL: PAGE 14,- Q/R 9 (REGIONAL MAPS)**

**NOV 11<sup>TH</sup> TUES CROYDON GARDEN CLUB 8PM**

**MT.DANDENONG RD CROYDON**

Trudi Fry will speak on salvias Jillian Barkell will have salvia plants for sale on behalf of the Salvia Study Group of Victoria

### Salvia leucantha

How easily we take things for granted in the plant world... sometimes we just assume everyone knows what we are talking about, especially in the case of common names. Take for example, the 'Mexican Bush Sage', well known in established or older gardens. It has been around for so long with this common name that many are apt to forget that its Botanical name is *Salvia leucantha*. The article 'A Superbly Beautiful Sage', in issue 32 of Salvia News, by our long time friend from Geelong, Bill Whitehead gave an example of this problem.

How many of us over the years have bought this beautiful plant, sometimes with the species name on the label of *Salvia leucantha*, and at flowering time it produced purple calyces along with purple flowers. Anyone could think that this was in fact the species because there was no reference to it being a cultivar. According to Stearn's Dictionary of Plant Names for Gardeners, the word leuc- signifies white: leucan'thus is white-flowered.

In Flora's and Encyclopedias the species *Salvia leucantha* has a white corolla (flower) and dense purple and white wool on the calyx. Personal observation has shown that usually the calyx is a paler purple with white on the undersides (away from the sun) and the corolla is white.

This plant on the whole does not look as showy as the cultivar with its deeper

purple on purple so I guess this is why nurseries promoted the brighter cultivar rather than the species and giving it the common name of Mexican Bush Sage could cover all its cultivars, including the species.

One can see in the nurseries these past few months how many new cultivars of *Salvia leucantha* have come onto the market. There are quite a number of different forms. Most of us know of the pale mauve and the deep purple-magenta forms, then came the compact form, *Salvia leucantha* 'Santa Barbara', now we have a pink flowering form called 'Pink Velour' and an all white form 'White Velour' which has white calyx and corolla. Velour of course pertaining to a soft textured, velvety material. This just shows how easily one can get confused with common names and fancy promotional names... we still need to use the first name, the Botanical name of any plant to really understand just which plant species we are referring to.

*Meg Bentley.*

## SALVIA MICROPHYLLA X JAMENSIS SPECIES

Some of us are illiterate.... did Pat and Cait know this when they threw that uncommon word at us? I couldn't pronounce it or spell it ... what did it mean? I refer to the word **invagination**. I rushed to the dictionary, and yes, it simply meant **indentation**. So do all salvia flowers have indentations at the base of their corolla tubes? Some salvias do but I don't believe they are important when my books don't even mention them.

On the other hand, the tiny projections named **papillae** are important as these take the place of the indentations when the later are absent. Only microphyllas carry these papillae and thus are used in their identification. *Salvia greggii*'s, which don't possess papillae probably carry these **indentations**. Unfortunately, I haven't seen those structural details... my fingernails are not sharp enough to slice the flowers neatly in two halves.

James Compton, the salvia expert who found the **hybrid swarm** of salvias near Jame in Mexico, knew they were the progeny of *greggii* and *microphylla*. Nevertheless, he bestowed upon them a new species name **x jamensis** and as an amateur salvia grower, I'm unaware of his reasons for doing this.

I wonder if any member of the Salvia Study Group can explain why he did this? I do believe this may have caused some complexity in naming and identifying them.

Amongst the beautiful salvias I possessed with this new species name, was *Salvia x jamensis* 'La Luna'. In her book, Betsy Clebsch calls this plant a cultivar with a creamy yellow corolla with its upper lip (hood) covered in reddish brown hairs. In the last Salvia News, I noticed in Pat's article ( see page 8, paragraph 4) she discusses 'Raspberry Royale' as perhaps being tied to the species X *jamensis*. John Sutton, in his book agrees with her. He gives it the species name and adds the rider, "it is an American introduction". This identification of 'Raspberry Royale' is not shared by three other authors, Yeo, Bentley and Clebsch, in their salvia books. I find this surprising, particularly when Betsy Clebsch is an American. Also the name *x jamensis* was only recently given by Compton, when the **swarm** was found in 1991. No plant is allowed two species names... or are they really hybrid names? I ask again, can the Salvia Study Group throw further light onto this unresolved matter?

*Bill Whitehead.*

**NOTE:** It is quite interesting reading peoples ideas and their responses to certain words that one wouldn't normally come across, hence the responsive article from Bill (above). Here is a follow up to the words in bold lettering and meanings.

**invagination** : to form a pocket by turning in, to fold or draw back within its-self.

**papillae** : a small nipple-like process or projection.

**hybrid swarm** : hybrid plants which are back-crossing to the parents and crossing with them-selves so that there is a continuous intergradation of forms.( **intergradation**: one into another as different species)

**swarm** : exceedingly numerous, occuring in multiudes.

**x jamensis**} These three will be covered in the next issue of Salvia News.

**hybrid** }

**cultivar** }

*Meg Bentley*

## **POPPY GARDEN DAY South East Queensland 20<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2008**

It was a crisp June day when we drove through mountain valleys, crossed the Albert River many times and finally arrived at Cherrol Mc Ghee's 'Garden Hill' in its dramatic setting at Lost World, Darlington.

Here there was a hive of activity with members exploring a collection of historic old country buildings on the site including a slab hut, sheds, and small basic dwellings. Others were busy purchasing lush plants from the many and varied plant stalls, all the time enjoying a welcoming cup of coffee and meeting up with friends.

President Barb Wickes opened the meeting by welcoming members, speakers, visitors and special guest Trudi Fry, a member of the Salvia Study Group from the Herb Society of Victoria. Guest speaker Liz Scott from Jacob's Well was then introduced.

The topic chosen by Liz was 'Organic Gardening'. This was concerned with the preservation of our environment, its seeds and plants. It was difficult to decide which made the greater impact: her message itself or her passionate enthusiasm for her subject. She expressed her appreciation of the work of the Poppies Group in caring for plants, seeds and soil. She stressed the need to use mulch, compost and manure. She spoke of the importance of not using chemicals, of saving seed so that plant species were not lost and of growing our own vegetables. We felt charged with enthusiasm to do some little thing in our contribution to preserving the environment.

Next, local botanical artist Janet Hauser explained how central the skill of close observation is in botanical art and she explained what this close observation revealed in the structure of plants, particularly of leaves. Her first step on paper was to draw on a piece of kitchen paper the basic shape of twigs and leaves. Second step was to trace this onto art paper and thirdly to begin painting.

Cherrol, our hostess for the day, talked about her garden and its history. She explained that the garden, set on a hillside, began as a Chinese garden. An angophora was planted and survives to shelter many plants from the cold. This is a bush garden developed over time by using bulldozing to flatten the hill and to bring soil and rocks from below to create gardens and pathways. The rose garden was developed in this way The bush garden is a mixture of informality with brief glimpses of classical symmetry. Cherrol and her husband Jon have a passion for gardening and for collecting old-fashioned plants. It certainly was impressive to see what has been achieved through love of gardening, hard work and dedication.

Sandra Nanka's herb topic was chervil, the foliage of which resembles carrot and coriander It is easy to grow but dies off in summer. It is used extensively in French cooking with eggs,cheese and fish. Sandra uses it with chicken and mushrooms. Good for digestion.

Garden expert Denise Horchner gave a wonderful repeat of her contribution to the Great Debate held at Eves On The Park Restaurant, Roma Street Gardens. Her talk was all the more entertaining as she had to defend tropical gardening instead of her great favourite the cottage garden. It was spiced throughout with humour and a few little garden jokes eg, Eager purchaser to nurseryman, "Are these new pansies the ones that come again?" "No madam. They die. You come

again!” Our hearty laughter throughout indicated what a brilliant entertainer Denise is. Catherine Thompson spoke on the medicinal properties of stinging nettles. They are recommended as a tea.

The raffle was huge and very exciting. The prizes were impressive in number, seventeen altogether and valuable! As Judith said, “Where could you go and get so many chances for a win for five dollars!” In her inimitable style Judith thanked all the kitchen helpers at Barb’s Open Garden Day. SE

Morning tea was tasty, as usual. There was great variety in the plants for sale and plenty of time for members to enjoy each other’s company. Altogether a very enjoyable Garden Day.

**ELAINE AND MARGARET FERGUSON The Perennial Poppies Group Inc**  
**SE Queensland**

### **Visit to Geelong Botanic Gardens**

The Salvia Study Group had a very interesting time checking out the Salvia Collection at the Geelong Botanic gardens and Des Lawrence, Curator of the collection, was our guide for the day. In spite of the wet and cold conditions it was great to catch up with everyone including folk from the Geelong area and a young family from Swan Hill with a keen interest in salvias.

We had the use of the comfortable nursery lunchroom and welcome hot drinks.

There were quite a few changes to the gardens due to the storm damage earlier in the year but come spring, things will be thriving again, of course there were many salvias flowering. The South African bed had to be moved and is now incorporated into a new area and if the blooms on some plants including *Salvia dentata* are anything to go by, then it will prove to be a great success.

Thank you Des for the interesting tour of the gardens and the way you made us so comfortable on such a cold Sunday.

**THERE WILL BE MUCH NEWS ABOUT THE HAMPTON AND NOBELIUS GARDENS NEXT ISSUE. A LOT OF WORK HAS BEEN DONE.**

### **PAKENHAM GARDEN CLUB EXPO**

It was another great day at Pakenham. Despite the weather, loads of people turned up, coming by bus from Leongatha, Echuca, as well as Sale and many other places. Some came just for the Salvias!!. Sorry for those who couldn't make it. A professional photographer was taking shots down the tables at the hordes of people all along their length. At this time of year people were buying pink and red salvias to brighten up the days. Blue salvias were almost forgotten, but they are always wanted at the summer events to cool down the day. Just a seasonal observation.

As a Group, we have a lot to be proud of. The fantastic interest in salvias proves how good they are for gardening now, the helpers were constantly flat out selling or answering questions. Many came to buy salvias again because they were so pleased with last year’s plants. Though a large number and variety of salvias were grown and made available for the day many favourites were sold out early and people put down their names for an order, which will be fulfilled when the plants are available.

The Pakenham Garden Club did a fantastic job of publicity, the garden stalls were many, well varied in types of plants and were well patronised. There were a few stall holders who pulled out at the last minute. The speakers made up for this with their knowledge of plants and gardening and their promotion of the stalls.

We all look forward to next year.

Lyndi

## NOTES ON PROPAGATION

Salvias are reasonably easy to propagate and vegetatively is by far the best method to obtain multiple plants, it also ensures that the species you are dealing with come true to form.

### CUTTINGS

Best times are generally Spring, Autumn and Winter for large leaf varieties, some species can be taken in late Summer.

**Tip Cuttings:** Young growth, where stems have not hardened too much ( stem flexible without snapping).

**Side Shoots:** Small side shoots can also be taken and young growth from the base of the plant. This applies to all bushy, herbaceous and tall shrubby species.

**Division:** Herbaceous perennials and basal clumps can be divided after the worst of winter and as the new shoots start to appear. Divide clumps either in half or quarters, depending on size and quantity of new shoots.

**Seeds:** While this may bring quick results in propagation for mass quantity it is not always the best method if you are wanting a plant species to come 'true'.

Cross pollination can lead to many varied cultivars and hybrids.

Not all salvias cross, there are many that do come true from seed.

Sow seed in Spring to Autumn, in friable soil. Sow seed directly on top of soil, don't cover with soil, keep moist but not wet and warm but not hot, best in filtered light. Cover pot with fly wire to protect germinating seed from being eaten.

## PLANT OF THE MONTH

### Salvia subrotunda :

This a compact open shrubby perennial, which seems to be constantly flowering and producing new shoots with more flowers. Originating from Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, it produces beautiful vermilion flowers in perfect contrast to the bright mid green leaves.

To get the best from this plant and to make the planting more effective it should be grouped in 3's or 5's or even in rows, as it can get lost if planted by itself. I have mine as a row in front of a grey wistringia hedge, the vermilion flowers certainly brighten up the area. I have also seen this salvia planted as a double border in front of a low stone wall – the effect was wonderful.

The leaves are broad cordate shape, approx. 4cm long x 4cm wide, crenate edges, veins indented and a pointed apex. Leaves at the base of the flower stem are almost sessile, they almost encircle the stem. Pedicels are 3-4 cm long.

The flower stem is about 240 – 250 cm long with 15 – 16 whorls of 6 flowers.

The vermilion corollas are tubular, about 1 cm long with green calyxes.

An interesting observation about the flowers is that at any one time, there may be in the same whorl, a current flower, a dried calyx and a new bud forming ready to burst forth.

Salvia subrotunda is an easy plant to grow, liking full sun, perhaps some shelter when the afternoon sun is at it's worst, but generally this Salvia is fairly hardy during both the summer and winter months, receiving no extra water than is allowed. It does benefit from a well prepared bed with 'Blood n' Bone' applied and mulched. In colder areas and frost areas, S. subrotunda can be treated as an annual, but in the suburbs of Melbourne, it grows as a perennial quite happily.

Propagation can be either from cuttings or from seed. It can self seed, although this is not a problem with me it may be to others. It is similar in it's seeding habit to that of Salvia coccinea.

This Salvia will brighten up any area and can be grouped with white or brightly coloured perennials and perhaps a small border of blue or silver to show off the flower stems.

**Lyndi Garnett**

## Useful Sources of Information on Salvias

For those interested in references, the following will be helpful:

### **Books:**

- Bentley, Meg, 2004: A Manual for Salvia Growers (self published, available through the Salvia Study Group) – relevant to local conditions
- Clebsch, Betsy, 1997: A Book of Salvias (Florilegeum) -
- Clebsch, Betsy, 2003: The New Book of Salvias (Florilegeum) – also available in paperback – more comprehensive than the first book, more species and photographs, but the photographs are smaller
- Sutton, John, 1999: The Gardener's Guide to Growing Salvias (David & Charles) – lovely photographs but conditions refer to the Northern Hemisphere and UK in particular
- Yeo, Christine, 1995: Salvias – (self published) – a useful reference source describing 94 species
- Yeo, Christine, 1997: Salvias II – approx. 100 more species described
- Kintzios, Spiridon (ed), 2000: Sage: The Genus Salvia (Harwood Academic Publishers) – very expensive and of very limited use
- Perry Lawton, Barbara, 2002: Mints: A Family of Herbs and Ornamentals (Timber Press) – useful resource for those interested in the Family of plants – Lamiaceae – that includes Salvias
- Froissart, Christian, 2008: La Connaissance des Sauges (Edisud) – comprehensive book but written in French
- There are also various Floras (China, Europe, Pakistan etc ) that give great detail
- Websites:** There are hundreds, but the following will give you links to heaps of them, including some of the Floras
- [www.salviaspecialist.com](http://www.salviaspecialist.com) a source of a large range of very reasonably priced Salvia plants of Sue Templeton, the person responsible for bringing the most Salvias into Australia. The catalogue gives descriptions and photos
- <http://homepage2.nifty.com/~yoji/index.html> a comprehensive website with links to other sites, books, resources as well as photographs. Don't be put off by the Japanese. Click on the dashes and slashes on the left hand side of the page
- [www.robinsalvias.com](http://www.robinsalvias.com) 37 pages of excellent photos and descriptions of plants. With roughly 10 per page, this must be the biggest single, useful web resource of pictures
- [www.eclectasy.com/gallery\\_of\\_salvias/index.htm](http://www.eclectasy.com/gallery_of_salvias/index.htm) information and a comprehensive catalogue of Salvias. Richard Dufresne is a nurseryman in the USA
- [www.cabrillo.edu/academics/horticulture/salvias/html/index.html](http://www.cabrillo.edu/academics/horticulture/salvias/html/index.html) Details and photographs of the Salvia collection at Cabrillo College, California

Happy reading!

*Pat Anderson*

**THE SALVIA MANUAL**

**BY MEG BENTLEY**

**Contents :**

- List of Named Salvias and Cultivars
- Photos and Illustrations of 143 species and cultivars
- Cultivation notes for over 230 species and cultivars
- Pruning and Propagation

The Salvia Manual by Meg Bentley can be ordered from:

Jillian Barkell  
 6 Halcyon Ave  
 The Patch 3792  
 Ph 97566361

**Cost : \$ 65.00 + \$5.00 P/P per copy. CHQ only**

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