



SALVIA NEWS

Victorian Salvia Study Group

A Branch of the Herb Society of Victoria

WINTER 2009

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From the Editor: Trudi Fry

The visit to my QLD families was quite different from past visits. In spite of arriving via wheelchair I was much fitter than usual but the weather was wet and the sky gloomy if not raining so the exuberance of colour I look forward to was missing. The abundance of rain had left its mark both underfoot and on the plants. Garden visits were curtailed but Barb Wickes garden was lovely as always. We had a small salvia meeting and it was good to hear of people battling on in spite of floods. I enjoyed Nambour Garden Show held in the show grounds. There were tools and plants I longed to bring home. The emphasis was on sustainability. Just before my flight home the sun came out and Kate tells me of warm/hot days now. I was glad of my long Johns. My three children are keen gardeners with interesting gardens. Andrew even has a Kaffir lime with large orange knobby fruit (apparently the fruit is useless only the leaves are used) and these are the kids who took no interest in our garden. It seems that parental soil rubs off unnoticed.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2009

October 2nd Friday 2pm

Growville Growers

Rowville Library

Stud Park Shopping Centre, Rowville Melways: 81-J1

There will be salvias for sale. Bring your salvias to be identified.

October 8th Thursday 8pm

***Vermont Garden Club**

The City of Whitehorse Horticultural Centre

82 Jolimont Road, Forest Hill Melways: 62-F4

Trudi will be guest speaker and there will be salvias for sale. Bring your salvias to be identified.

October 10th & 11th Saturday & Sunday 9am until 4pm

Baw Baw (Warragul) Garden Expo

Lardner Park, Warragul Melways: 612-U8

We will be selling salvias and there will be other interesting plants for sale. Plenty of parking available.

October 21st Wednesday 9:30am

Mt Eliza Morning Garden Club

Mt Eliza Community Centre

Canadian Bay Road, Mt Eliza Melways: 105-F1

Wendy Smith will be speaking. Salvias will be for sale. Bring your salvias to be identified.

October 24th Saturday 9am

Upwey's Annual Garden Show

Upwey Community Hall

Burwood Highway, Upwey Melways: 75-B10

Stalls with plants for sale including salvias.

**November 7th & 8th
Saturday 1pm-5:30pm &
Sunday 10am-4:30pm**

Rose Show

Mt Waverley Community Centre

Millers Road, Mt Waverley Melways: 62-2E

We will be selling salvias surrounded by beautiful rose displays.

November 15th Sunday 11am-4pm

Official Opening Salvia Display Garden at Nobelius Heritage Park

Crichton Rd. Emerald. (below the packing shed) Melways: 127-G4

Come and join us on this very special day.

Refreshments provided.

Please phone Lyndi: 9803 4534 or email: highcon@hotmail.com if you are attending.

December 6th Sunday 11am

Christmas Party

Pat and John Anderson's Garden

98 Bradley's Lane

Warrandyte Mel. 23 C12 phone 9802 7139

Bring; food, chair & gift plants, not necessarily salvias.

NOBELIUS SAGA

Over the last few months we have had two wonderful turn outs for our Garden days at Nobelius. Each time a few new faces appear which is encouraging as it shows that the website is working and these new faces want to know what we're doing in the Salvia Garden at Nobelius and to be part of it.

The first garden day we received many helpers, (12 in all) wonderful! Jobs were found for everyone such as pruning, mulching and weeding out the oxalis where we wanted to plant, .

One of the helpers on the day took quite a few photos, showing the hustle and bustle of everyone working, but all he found was bottoms in the air!. He was going to put them on our website with the idea of "who's bottom is who's ?" or "can you identify the bottom?", but he thought better of it, as he didn't want to be sued in case that particular bottom could not be correctly identified.! We have some cheeky partners!

It wasn't long before all the paths were cleared of leaves, the edging strengthened, weeding completed, mulch applied and the never ending planting completed with each hole receiving a good scoop of gel in the bottom.

With all major jobs completed it was time to knock off and enjoy one of our renowned sumptuous feasts under the oaks. When we finally decided to stop eating there was only cleaning up to be done and off home once more.

The second and last Garden day a few weeks later also received a good turn up of helpers (8 in all). Again a few new faces appeared and everyone was quickly put to work staking and tying the wind blown taller salvias.

Again the tasks for the day were planting, staking, pruning, mulching and tidying up. Because the damage made by the wind is quite severe in certain parts of the garden, we are now trying to plant in layers to protect the bases of some of the taller salvias, to prevent them from being blown out of the ground damaging other salvias in the process.

In the lower pink corner we started by planting a *Salvia canariensis* (which had been removed from its previous position as it was crowding out other plants). This was used to help protect the base of S. 'Romantic Rose', then a S. 'Anthony Parker' was used to protect the base of the *S.canariensis*, then below that we planted three S. *eiggii* around the corner. Other plants planted with these that have done well near by are S. *spathacea*, the low spreading form of *S.disermis*, *S. coahulensis* and shrubby *S. greggii* 'Alba', these were planted along the edges to protect other plants further in. In other areas we are using S.'Joan', *S. rubiginosa*, *S. cacaliaefolia* and S. 'Winter Red'. We are aiming for these plants to act as buffer plants for other susceptible plants in the path of the winds.

It was a good band of helpers who just got on and did what was required, and in no time at all everything was finished and we could relax beneath the oaks with another wonderful feast, stories to swap and a good chinwag before heading off home after a job well done.

Lyndi Garnett

A Small Word on the Selling of Salvias

Again another successful sales day at Pakenham. Always enjoyable to catch up with the many familiar faces who generously continue to acquire our beautiful Salvias.

The effort expended by the few, particularly the people who set-up the stalls and grow the cuttings, is not necessarily even considered by us the many, but just a look at the enormous number of pots gracing the trestles, even the beautiful artfully placed floral displays to show off our wares, doesn't just happen it takes time and much thought to rank them in varieties and colours particularly as the 'growers' don't necessarily know what the other growers are bringing to boost the display.

And of course invariably the one plant in short supply has during the week of the sale, any sale, been promoted on TV and EVERYONE wants it!!!! Fortunately we have paperwork allowing the 'wanters' to write their choices and we will ensure they receive their plants in due course. A wonderful system, as no-one misses out in the long run.

Sometimes too, we are thwarted by that same TV information, occasionally the popular nursery name is asked for rather than the correct title and unless one of the sellers happened to also see the programme we may occasionally be at a loss to put a name to it for the buyer. Often the very same plant being described by three different people is so varied as to be destined to remain a mystery, yet when perhaps a bloom is produced, all chorus together, "that's it" and three very happy customers with warm glowing hearts proceed to choose other pots to compliment their envisioned garden display.

No sellers are required for the sales of Salvias (though of course we always have many people to attend to your needs) the plants have the ability to do that all by themselves, they're so very beautiful, hardy and varied.

May our gardens continue to receive plaudits and please plant your favourites in the front garden and stand back and receive the accolades maybe you'll even encourage the enquirer to join our friendly group.

Laurelle Willis

SALVIA SALVATION

My involvement with The Victorian Salvia Study Group and in particular with the Salvia News is a way of keeping in touch with gardening as my physical abilities wane. I had an interesting life as a sculptor with Don and when he died I just fell apart. I felt that I had lost everything exciting and interesting and I was on the brink of being a boring, horrible old woman.

Deciding that my children and grandchildren deserved better I looked for ways to "get a life" but where and how? Then Heather Boatman arrived, dug me out of my depths of gloom, bundled me into her car and took me up to the first Salvia garden at Nobelius. I met interesting people, some I knew such as Lyndi and some new to me such as Meg and then I saw the salvia plants and felt the enthusiasm of everyone. Nothing is as healing as a garden.

My supportive children gave me a pair of steel capped Blundstones and a big polyhouse. My sister-in-law gave me her old computer and my four year old grandson showed me how to turn it on and soon I was a one finger typist and editor. Completely unskilled and incompetent.

Editing Salvia News has put me in touch with a wide circle of people in many countries as well as all over Australia. The expansion of my brain has been amazing! My son got me a Vista laptop which I gather is a difficult impressive computer. And I love it. And yesterday my grand daughter told me I was fun and interesting and I have a baby great grand daughter too.

I'd like more people to help with Salvia News. It has grown and I would love you to widen your horizons. Don't feel you need skills or knowledge of plant names. No one could know less than me when I began editing. This is a learn as you go experience and I will hold your hand as so many people have held mine. The friendship and kindness of the people in the study group is wonderful and I feel you will enjoy being part of Salvia News. You don't need a computer or email.

Ring me Trudi Fry 9754 4041 or email trudifry7@bigpond.com

AN ERROR IN GEELONG BOTANICAL GARDENS ARTICLE IN PREVIOUS SALVIA NEWS

With respect to my article on Geelong Botanic Gardens in the previous Salvia News, there was an important error in direction. After reading the article twice, I noticed that the huge circular salvia bed stated as being on the western end of the main path must of course be located at its eastern end.

All visitors entering Geelong Botanic Gardens must enter through the gates at its western end. The main central path just inside these gates, are lined each side for a short distance only, with a few salvias. To reach the main salvia beds, one has to travel eastwards along this path.

The huge circular bed containing the mexicanas and microphyllas is located at the eastern end of the path. Because it was raining lightly and continually on that day, I found it difficult to write. One hand held the biro, the other the writing paper, hence I could not use my umbrella. Perhaps that may have caused my mistake, for which I apologise. Bill Whitehead

NOTES ON PROPAGATING SALVIAS: June 2009.

CUTTINGS

The questions people ask are... "When is the right time to take cuttings"?...and "How do I take cuttings, by heels, tips or side-shoots"? Here are some helpful tips that should work well for everyone:

Generally speaking, spring, early summer and autumn are usually the better times. Summer is usually too hot and in winter plants are in dormant mode, unless of course you have heat beds on which to stand the cuttings. It really depends on how your plants have performed, their growth habit, type of climate, soil content and access to moisture also the particular species or cultivar you wish to propagate.

1/. New spring growth for tip cuttings, these can be taken until late spring or early summer and a good test for this is to bend the tip down towards the base, if it flexes nicely then it's not too sappy to propagate.

During summer stems can start to harden and the inside core can be pithy or dry. Sometimes these cuttings will work, especially with the taller shrubby species or if you are desperate to multiply a certain plant then give it a go.

2/. Some side shoots and tip growths may have buds forming but these can be nipped out when you take the cuttings, this can push plant material into a root forming mode rather than a flowering mode and the cuttings will have a better chance to strike. Sometimes removing tip buds on one branch can encourage new side shoots which is good if you want to promote more cutting material at a later date.

3/. Heel cuttings can be taken but are not always necessary with salvias; this is usually done with hardwood material in other plant genera. Most salvias are soft wood shrubs. Woody older plants may need to be propagated for several reasons, either they are getting too old or they may have to be removed, therefore a heel cutting with a bit of old growth attached may help with salvias such as *Salvia canariensis*, *S. karwinskii*, *S. mellifera* and *S. munzii*.

"What size should my cuttings be"

There is really no set rule about the length of a cutting, much depends on the piece you want to strike. It may have nodes wide apart perhaps 10cm. to 12cm (4 to 5 inches) for example *Salvia involucrata*, *S. iodantha* and *S. wagneriana*, or a small slip of a cutting 2 1/2cm.(1 inch) long with several nodes close together like those of *Salvia greggii* and *S. microphylla* varieties. Generally speaking though, most cuttings can range between 5cm. (2 inches) and 8cm. (3inches) and may only need to have one node in the ground to strike, my preference is usually two because I feel there is a better chance of a root strike. If it is a prolific grower and takes root as it grows then you only need put one node into the soil to strike. A rooting hormone is entirely optional. When taking cuttings carry a container of diluted seaweed solution and put the cuttings into the liquid as you go. After firming them into the potting medium, pour the remaining liquid over the cuttings and label all the plants as you go, then place them in a shaded spot out of direct sun and wind. Best not to take a lot of cuttings from similar plants at the same time, this can be quite a problem when trying to sort them out, especially if they don't have flowers on to tell them apart. Varying the type of foliage when doing a batch of cuttings makes it much easier to distinguish one species from another. Always remember to label each one or each batch as you go.

What Type of Soil For Propagating?

There are plenty of pre-packaged propagating mixes on the market, some people like to make up their own and others may just use ordinary potting mix. The main requirement is good drainage whatever the type of mix, keep the soil damp, don't over water and keep the cuttings in a warm, sheltered position out of direct sun. Air circulation is important, especially for the grey leaved salvias which can go mouldy and drop their leaves if crammed too close together.

SALVIAS BY DIVISION.

Quite a few salvia species are herbaceous perennials, growing in clumps that need to be divided every few years and there are other 'loose' clumps where shoots extend a little away from the parent plant thus forming a new 'clump', these can be cut away and potted up or replanted straight away into another part of the garden.

The best time to divide is late winter- early spring or as the new growth starts to emerge, depending on your climate. If you don't need to divide the whole clump but want to propagate a few pieces, then slide a knife or your finger down beside the shoot into the soil and cut out the shoot preferably with a root intact, trim off any broken pieces and pot it up.

To divide a large clump, dig it up out of the ground and check where the new growth is in the old plant. A healthy clump will show many new shoots while an old tired clump will reproduce very few which is a good indication as to why we need to divide these herbaceous perennials.

Some clumping species include *Salvia pratensis*, *S. nemerosa* and their cultivars and *S. virgata*, others with running clumps include *S. forskaolhei* and also *Salvia elegans* 'Pineapple Sage' and 'Honeymelon', *Salvia guaranitica*, *S. muelleri* and of course some *S. microphylla* varieties.

Division can be done either with a spade or a knife, cutting the clump into sections where new growth appears, shake off the old loose soil, cut off any damaged roots and leaves, keeping the new sections in proportion of root ratio to the top growth. Watering with diluted sea weed solution helps to minimise the shock. The best time to do division is early morning before the day starts to warm up, keep the plants shaded if they are in containers.

Layering: There are a few salvias that lend themselves to layering, (taking root as they lay across the soil) this can happen if a branch has fallen over and birds have scratched mulch and lightly covered up the main stem where it takes root at each node. Another method is to peg a stem into the ground at each node, first removing a few leaves at the node. Some salvias that layer naturally can be utilised as ground covering salvias and a good example is *S. scutellarioides* which is generally a prostrate or low growing species and another is *S. aurita* var. *galpinii* which can form a new clump with each rooted layer. If left in an area on their own they will form a good cover, although one has to watch out that *S. aurita* var. *galpinii* does not self seed in the wrong places but it is easily removed.

GROWING SALVIA FROM SEED

When to sow... Soil type for seeds.. Depth into the soil...

When to sow seed depends on when it is gathered. Since most plants flower in the spring and summer, seed will be mature enough by the autumn to collect and sow at that time or you can wait until the following spring. Generally most seed will germinate from spring to autumn but not usually in mid summer which can be a bit too hot. The type of soil for seed raising should be free draining which is essential to get your seeds to grow and not too rich for the seed to germinate. Use a good seed raising mix or make up your own by sieving equal amounts of compost and garden soil and mixing in some washed river sand. Not all seed is viable and to test this out, place the seed into a dish of water, if it continues to float then it may be no good but sinking to the bottom is usually a good indication that it will grow. Some seeds lose viability if kept too long, fresh seed is usually the best because it contains more energy to grow and mature. Growing salvia from seed can be tricky since many species and cultivars can be promiscuous and prone to cross-pollination either by insects or birds.

There are also many species that do come true from seed and are worthwhile growing.

Depth of soil:

A good indication for any seed is to go by the size of the seed in hand, if it is 1, 2 or 3mm long, push the seed into the soil to that depth. If the seed is fine, sprinkle it on top of the soil and cover lightly with a fine soil mix, this applies to direct sowing into the garden or in containers.

Positioning after sowing:

Once sown, you need to water the soil and this can be done in several ways, a fine mist spray overhead or stand the pot in a shallow dish of water to allow the moisture to soak up into the soil. The later is usually quite successful since it doesn't 'splash' out the seeds and gives the seed a good soaking, remove the pots from the water when the top soil is damp to the touch.

Place in a shady protected spot where the soil won't dry out, be consistent with the moisture until the first two leaves (cotyledons) emerge followed by two main leaves, wait until they are bigger before planting out and watch out for slugs and snails.

Meg Bentley

SALVIA PLANTS

As salvias have become the plant of the moment we expect a lot of people would like to buy some plants at our Open Day. If you have any salvia plants to add to our stock please contact

Lyndi ph 9803 4534

Jillian ph 9756 6361

It is good to be able to introduce gardeners to these obliging plants and to add to the collections of the converted salvia lovers.

Salvia News from SE Queensland

After what 'Mother Nature' had thrown at us last winter, we weren't really sure what to expect this year. I had left all the old growth on our salvias such as *Salvia leucantha*, S. 'Phyllis Fancy' and S. 'Anthony Parker' with the thought that if we got frosts such as last year the new growth would be given a little bit of protection.

Yes they looked rather unsightly but it was the lesser of 2 evils. And what has happened? We have had a very mild season with few cold nights and absolutely beautiful clear warm days. So, last weekend I bit the bullet and had a massive cut-and-drop session. Now it is keep the fingers crossed that with only 3 weeks left of winter we don't get one late last cold snap.

Our garden is looking great for this time of year because of the continued rain much later than most years. Although I must admit things are starting to get a bit on the dry side now. With our son being married in the garden in November and then an AOGS opening late January we have major projects just waiting for spring to arrive. So we are making the most of these next couple of weeks just tittivating and enjoying our time in the fresh air.

Salvia saggitata has been a shining light over the last couple of months. One plant is next to a mauve coloured wallflower (*Erysimum cheiri*) and backed with maroon *Perilla gorilla*. The electric blue flowers have been wafting about at knee height calling attention to themselves to anybody who enters that part of the garden. *S. myriantha* has performed particularly well for us this year. Being one of the few in our group to be growing this plant it was decided to give it another try in a different part of the garden. It grew much stronger than before and began to flower at about a meter high.

On a recent visit to Tambourine Mountain we decided to take a pit stop at one of the local nurseries -as one so often tends to do. At something like 2-2.5m an eye-catching plant was cascading over the front fence. I asked the lass working there if she knew what it was as I was certain it was a salvia. She didn't know but she took me off for a closer look and a generous handful of cuttings. On arriving at home I had my long-suffering husband stop halfway up our driveway so that I could dash across to compare the flowers with that of *S. myriantha*. And guess what? They are one and the same. I think our plant will have to have another shift in residence if it is going to reach those proportions in OUR garden.

Another salvia that has most impressed is S. 'Timboon Red'. A small cutting given at about this time last year was grown on and then planted out. Having reached about 1.5m in height it started to form flower buds. And then alas, 2 very windy days which saw it blown over almost horizontal, completely blocking the path through our main salvia garden. My husband's pleas to cut it off entirely at knee height and stake it or possibly move it have fallen on deaf ears. NOT until it has finished flowering. And flower it has. Large fat dense flower heads of a deep crimson red that just keep on coming. Slowly, one by one, the branches have been removed and I think this weekend I will make the final sacrifice and just 'lop it off'. In spring it will be moved further back in the garden with a little more protection.

A new addition to our collection is S. 'Magenta Magic' which hasn't made it into the garden as yet. Looking quite reminiscent of S. Waverly but with a gorgeous magenta flower we can only hope that it performs just as well as the latter.

Enjoy the rest of winter. Happy Gardening

Carol Kerkin 'Kingsholme'

The Perennial Poppies Group

WINTER BLUES IN A WARRANDYTE GARDEN

Every winter is different in the way damaging frosts can wreck our colourful displays of winter-flowering salvias. Each year as winter approaches, I hope that this one will be mild (and wet of course), like ones we experienced in the past when I had a lovely shrub of *S. dorisiana* coping beautifully out in the open.

While Melbourne gardens are generally considered to be frost free compared to those inland of the Divide or those in more mountainous areas, local conditions play a big part. Our garden is close to the River Yarra in Warrandyte – near water, mild, I hear some people say. Not so. We are in the valley bottom and on clear nights, with no cloud cover to trap the loss of radiation from the earth below, air is chilled and flows down slope to pool in the valleys and low spots. I have friends in Wattle Glen who live on a hillside where they observe frost on the hill top above their house and down in the valley below while the garden area immediately round their house remains frost free.

Winter of 2008 brought our garden plenty of cold weather and some (not enough) rain, but no damaging frosts until the end of July. In contrast the previous winter of 2007 brought us a severe frost quite early in June as well as some later ones in September. This year, our first heavy frost hit during the first week of July. While very few of my salvias will actually be wiped out completely, the timing of the first frost is critical to whether or not we get to see the glorious winter flowering of these larger leaved tender salvias. So much depends on the degree of overhead shelter in their particular spot in the garden and the ones that enjoy the most protection here tend to be so shaded that they struggle to flower at all.

This year, *S. oxyphora*, which has no overhead protection but is planted cheek by jowl with other leafy salvias, has turned black from top to toe, but at least that plant has flowered on and off throughout the year. In the same densely planted patch, the top half of *S. miniata* is black, but the lower half is fine. Again, this one has flowered throughout the summer, so it's no great loss. *S. 'Desley'*, the various *S. coccinea* forms and *S. 'Black and Blue'* likewise look rather shabby, but they too have performed well for months. *S. rubiginosa* and *S. gravis* however were just coming into flower and have now been spoilt. Whether or not they will recover enough to flower before the Spring will depend very much on the conditions over the rest of the winter. *S. 'Van Houttei'* in the same patch, and next to *S. 'Desley'* rather surprisingly still looks fine and even has a few flowers left. Previously I lost a couple of these to frost while they were still small and in pots, but since this has grown to 1 metre plus in this spot, it has proved to tougher than many others.

In other areas of the garden, *S. adenophora* and *S. madrensis* have also been nipped in the bud, while other large leaved plants like *S. elegans* 'Purple' and *S. fallax* are not yet in bud, so their capacity to flower will depend on how many more frosts we experience and how late they come.

I didn't want this article to be a comprehensive list of all salvias that have been affected by frost. The list is huge. Rather I wanted to emphasise the point that the timing of the frost relative to the timing of flowering or the bud stage is critical. At the other end of the spectrum, the frost has finally finished off the flowering of some of those gems that have performed so well for months, such as *S. melissodora*, *S. chiapensis*, *S. 'Harmony'* and the autumn flowerers like the various *S. mexicana* forms and *S. 'Megan's Magic'*.

With all these large plants that have been damaged, I am fairly certain they will survive here, so long as I leave the messy black tops to protect any new growth from the rootstock. Nothing will be pruned until mid to late September. Two plants that I am certain will not survive,

however, are the smaller *S. oppositiflora* and its close relative, *S. tubiflora*. These have a much smaller rootstock and canopy than the larger plants I have been describing. So my strategy is to propagate multiples of plants like this and to trial them in various positions, always having a

back up in the glass house! I try to have back ups of most of the tender ones in pots, either in the glass house or in a protected place like under the veranda. Similarly, with the various new plants that I have like *S. littae*, *S. ionocalyx*, *S. curviflora*, to name a few, these are in the glass house to be on the safe side until I can propagate enough plants to trial them out of doors.

Are there any ways to diminish the effect of frost out of doors? Certainly on a commercial scale, orchardists sometimes resort to bonfires, water spraying or large fans to mix the air. But what about our gardens? Apart from positioning under a dense tree canopy, it is suggested that positioning away from early morning sun or early morning watering of plants may also reduce the degree of damage. This makes some sense. My understanding is limited but I know that frost damage in plants is more complex than cell walls bursting because the water inside the cells has frozen and therefore expanded. Movement of water across cell membranes under osmotic pressure is certainly involved, as is the fact that the freezing point is lowered by salts in cell water. Beyond that I haven't found a clear, but scientific explanation that I can understand, but a slow thaw might be much less damaging than a rapid one. Is it possible that a plant that has been raised "tough", (less water, less nutrients) with less sappy growth, will be better able to withstand frost? I don't know but there could be some sense in this. Certainly the tender plants are the larger leaved ones, but frost hardiness is surely genetically controlled.

Another strategy in certain gardens might be to grow tall hedges, with gaps for air drainage, to create some protected zones behind the hedges immediately downslope, but this would take a few years to create.

Other tricks are the application of the product "Stressguard", but I've written before about being a "Stressguard" sceptic. It didn't work for me and it is expensive. Far cheaper is a product called "fleece". This has nothing to do with sheep but is very thin, white material like vylene that can be bought in Bunnings (about \$10 for a 20m roll) and can be spread over tender plants on nights when a frost is forecast. This is used in the nursery industry. I believe a heavier duty, longer lasting, wider material might be available from agricultural suppliers (such as Muirs?)

As well as frost, another winter problem here is the poor drainage of our thin, clay soil, cold wet feet being the chief enemy of many Asiatic salvias such as *S. castanea*, *S. nipponica*, *S. koyamae*, *S. evansiana* and *S. przewalskii*. I have found a dry spot under a tree that helps here during the winter, but the same spot is far too dry in the summer! Again, a back up pot of each in a well-drained mix, under glass and with very little water should see them through the winter. The Mediterranean salvias also like good drainage and can succumb to root rot in winter if this is not provided. Plants like *S. officinalis*, *S. recognita*, *S. interrupta*, *S. 'Southern Belle'* and *S. candelabrum* can also suffer from mildew if we get prolonged spells of damp, cold and still air.

The only safe remedy for a collector/fanatic is to have a back up of all the vulnerable ones safely housed under glass before winter strikes. After all, our salvia colleagues in colder countries in the northern hemisphere do this for the majority of their collections, so we shouldn't complain!

Pat Anderson

News From Hobart – Winter

In southern Tasmania, we have had a very mild winter with regular rainfalls and consequently relatively few frosts, seven at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, that occurred mostly in July. August, so far, has been even milder.

Spurred on by the warm spell and throwing caution to the warm winds, extensive pruning has been completed this week of such species as *Salvia cardinalis*, *S. mexicana* and forms, *S. puberula*, *S. involucrata* 'Bethellii', *S. purpurea*, *S. madrensis*, *S. iodantha* and *S.* 'Black Night'. I noticed also the emergence of the first blooms of *Salvia sprucei*, *S. leucophylla* and *S.* 'Costa Rican Blue' as well as the first flower of the pink form of *S. gesneraeflora*.

Salvia sprucei was reduced by about half to a metre in height in early March and, now, in the fourth week of August, has masses of terminal buds about to bloom with dark pink corollas with white on the lower lip. The plants of this species have still attained a height of two and a half metres at flowering but are more compact with improved ability to withstand strong winds with their exposure to the north and west. Yesterday's "warm" blustery winds stressed the large leaves to the point of wilting in the afternoon sun and this species would be better sited with afternoon shade and more wind protection.

A hardier species, resistant to wind with a woody open form to 1.5m, and small grey-to-"white" strongly aromatic leaves, *Salvia leucophylla* is a distinctive and attractive species with beautiful pink stems that complement the white foliage and dense clusters of small pale pink corollas. It is well suited to full sun and wind exposure.

I welcome comments by members on the observations above and their particular experiences with these species.

John Daniels *Please John tell us about the pink form of S.gesneraeflora, I haven't heard of it.*
john-daniels@bigpond.com

NEWS FROM STRATFORD – EAST GIPPSLAND

It has been awhile since I wrote for *Salvia News* and so much has happened. After terrible summer heat and bush fires nearby, plus the added stress of our prolonged drought and seeing our cattle struggle to stand without green grass, I am at the stage now that I don't know what green grass looks like. I got away from it all and headed to Karratha in WA on 19th June and became a grandmother on 2nd July. Our eldest daughter gave birth to one gorgeous Lilly weighing 8lb 9oz. I am finally heading home back to Victoria on 6th August. Karratha winter is the place to be, 25-29 degrees every day, not once have I put a jumper on.

I believe we have had a lot of frosts even minus four so I am not sure how my garden of salvias and other plants will look as no one has had time to water while I've been away. I usually spray for frost every winter with stressgard, which I buy in concentrated form and dilute it in June. I ran out of time before I left so I'm not sure what to expect.

Some readers don't find stressgard works for them but I certainly see the results. With stressgard, frost will only burn the top of the plant but the rest of the leaves \ stems are protected. Without stressgard, frost could burn the whole plant. Pressure Pak ready to use spray isn't worth the trouble of spraying, once mixed with water the shelf life is only two weeks.

Now an interesting topic: How salvias coped in our terrible bushfires. Our garden club members lost their animals, sheds, and gardens but luckily their houses were spared. They were

just getting into salvias and had about 10 and out of 10 salvias lost only one. How's that! The rest of the garden burnt and so did the salvias but the only plants that came back in the whole garden – you guessed it – were the salvias. The one they lost was a ground cover but they can't remember the name. So the saying that is going around "salvias are true survivors" is certainly true.

Now to add a bit on to Geoff Crowhurst's article re council using black tubing to water roots, I find this is one way to water trees and know the water goes down to the roots. I use white PVC down pipe off cuts. Put ¾ in hole and ¼ showing on an angle is best and water weekly. I also use 2 litre drink bottles; cut the bottom off and put the neck end into the ground. I certainly found in these years of drought it has saved my trees by watering them this way.

Happy salvia gardening. Jane Lee

Notes from Gruyere Winter 2009

Firstly, I would like to thank everyone who came to the Propagating Day, what a wonderful group of enthusiasts braved the cold and tackled our hills yet again. I do hope everyone came away with a little more insight into salvia propagation and a few added cuttings and seedlings. It was good to share the garden with so many friendly folk interested in salvias and plants in general. **A great day all round!**

Things have been on the move since that day... **my interest in medicinal plants has been fired up once again and the project on the go is a 'Medicinal Garden'... salvias included of course. One can find the most unlikely plants have been used for medicine at one time or other throughout history.**

Salvia News, Autumn No.36. had some very interesting articles from our regulars and both interstate and overseas. It is of great interest to learn about how salvias perform in other gardens and climates. This shows up greatly even visiting gardens 30 mins away from me, albeit in the Dandenongs where the air is cooler and can be slightly damper than here in Gruyere. I came across *Salvia rumicifolia* with triangular leaves so large that to me, it was unrecognisable...I had to ask what it was!

This brings me back to the Propagating Day and listening to comments from a gentleman who noticed that plants that do well in my garden don't necessarily do well in his garden and some of his plants grow remarkably better than mine. We both live in 'waterless' climates but I think the ground structure may have a lot to do with it, mine being a dry stony clay on a hillside while his is wet clay on undulating to flat pasture.

I must say he had the best *Salvia canariensis* that I've seen in a long while and *Salvia chamenaeanea*, not to mention other salvias.

Now is the time to watch out for new shoots coming up from your winter dormant salvias, it takes no time at all to have slugs and snails eat all new shoots that emerge overnight and you are left wondering and waiting for *S. patens* or *S. pratensis* and others to show their faces...to no avail!

The seasons are very strange at the moment so I am propagating, dividing and planting seed while the sun shines... not all mind you, but those I know will handle it.

Meg Bentley

Salvia Snippets

In the first of half of June I made a trip to northern Europe – the sort I could afford, with cheapish accommodation, and train travel. I was chiefly aiming to see old fashioned roses at gardens in and near Paris, and at Sangerhausen in Germany. But salvias popped up on two occasions. On the outskirts of Paris I visited the chateau and garden at Malmaison, where the Empress Josephine lived for about 20 years before her death in 1814. In the flower meadow there I was pleased to see a violet or purple blue salvia among about five other flowering plants and attractive grasses. From descriptions and photos available to me, I am fairly sure it was, appropriately, Meadow Sage, *S. pratensis*. It grows in England, where it is becoming rarer, and through Europe to North Africa, and as far east as Turkey. There are less common forms with pink or white flowers, and it is one of the species involved in *S. nemorosa* hybrids. I haven't heard of people growing it here, but I should think it would grow easily enough, though it may not have a very long flowering season.

Then later, wandering about the famous flower market in Amsterdam, and browsing among the packets of flower seeds, I came across *S. viridis*, though it was labelled with its earlier name of *S. horminum*. The only place I have seen it here is at the Geelong Botanic Gardens, where a small group of old rose people were taken by its colourful bracts, which appear at the top of each stem. It is an annual, and therefore grown from seed, and occurs naturally around the Mediterranean and as far east as Iran. Forms with colourful bracts from blue through to white are grown overseas, the flowers themselves being an insignificant creamish-white. The customs & quarantine people let my packet of seeds through, so I do hope to get good germination, and I might even have spare plants to hand around!

Geoff Crowhurst

SALVIA NEWS DEADLINE IS AS SOON AS YOU RECEIVE THIS
OR AS SOON AS HUMANLY POSSIBLE!!!!!!!

I AM SORRY IT IS SO LATE BUT WE HAVE HAD SOME VERY SAD
CRISES AND ILL HEALTH.

FOR ONCE IT IS NOT ME ILL BUT I AM DESPERATE FOR HELP TO
AT LEAST FILL IN FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE.

TRUDI FRY

9754 4041

39 TEMPLE RD

SELBY 3159

EMAIL trudifry7@bigpond.com

PLEASE SEND ARTICLES TO ME DIRECTLY

A Garden in Tyabb

With winter behind us and new growth appearing, the damage caused by the heat of last summer is apparent. Several deciduous trees, while not dead, have branches which will never recover. Particularly disappointing is an *Idesia* (Wonder Tree) which has always needed a bit of pampering no longer having its original attractive shape. On a brighter note a Snow Pear seems to not mind the heat or the lack of rain, it just keeps growing and looking more attractive each year.

Much of the *Salvia* Garden survived the summer really well but not so the winter. For the last two years both July and August have been quite wet here (100mm+ in each month) and with heavy cold soil many *S. greggii* have given up. *S. greggii* X Desert Blaze is just holding on, retaining only a few very small leaves. I understand that it does not thrive in cold weather so there may yet be a chance of recovery. The Western beds which were replanted just prior to the end of summer have survived well and the young plants are beginning to enjoy their first full growing season. Some of the older plants will be cut back very heavily after our garden has been open to the public in early November.

Prior to the 'gathering' of *Salvia* Subscribers held here in August, Meg Bentley helped out and almost all the *salvias* are now clearly labelled so I am sure that will help raise the profile of *salvias* when our garden is open. Those who have visited here will know that in addition to the relatively large *Salvia* Garden we have some 280 roses, a collection of banksias, correas, grevillias, iris, bulbs and flowering deciduous trees etc but on 7-8 November we will try to make a feature of the *salvias* and having each plant clearly named will provide a relatively rare opportunity for the public to be introduced to the *salvia* range. There also will be a range of *salvias* here for sale over that open weekend.

Bevan and Lynn Whelan

5 Gardeners' Gardens

7 - 8 November 2009 from 11.00am - 5.00pm

\$5.00 for one garden /\$15.00 for all five

Ticket lasts all weekend.

Five Gardens on the Mornington Peninsula

50 Old Mornington Road, Mt Eliza

75 Shotton Road, Mt Eliza

313 Coolart Road, Tyabb (Melway 147 J7)

6 Heron Street, Mt Eliza

** 1 Allfrey Court, Mt Eliza*

The garden at 313 Coolart Road, Tyabb, is the home of Bevan and Lyn Whelan who are members of the Herb Society of Victoria and the *Salvia* Study Group. Their property on thirteen acres, relies almost solely on rainfall. There are over 280 roses, iris, bulbs, banksias and other trees and plants. The separate, large formal *Salvia* Display Garden has over 170 *salvias* all clearly labelled. There will be *salvias* and other plants for sale.

Salvia Open Day

at

Nobelius

THE VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP

(A Branch of the Herb Society of Victoria)

Invites you to the

OFFICIAL OPENING

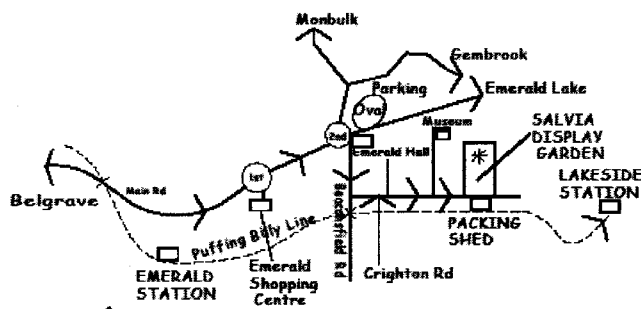
OF THE SALVIA DISPLAY GARDEN

To be opened by Penny Woodward at 1.30 p.m.

When : Sunday 15th November 11.30 – 4 p.m.

Where : Nobelius Heritage Park, Crichton Rd, Emerald. Mel: 127 G4

- Salvias will be on sale under the oaks
- Parking will be limited at Nobelius
- Parking will be available at the Oval behind the Emerald Hall
- Transport will be available from the oval
- Refreshments will be available at \$5.00 /person in the Packing Shed.



Attendance Form

I / we will be attending No of People.....

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