

SALVIA NEWS

SUMMER 2009/2010

Number 39



Official Newsletter of the
Victorian Salvia Study Group

THE VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP

THE AIMS OF THE STUDY GROUP ARE :

- TO GROW AND COLLECT SALVIAS TO STUDY THEIR GROW HABITS**
- TO IDENTIFY AND NAME PLANTS CORRECTLY.**
- TO PROPAGATE NEW AND EXISTING SALVIAS**
- TO PROMOTE THE QUALITIES OF SALVIAS TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC**
- EXCHANGE INFORMATION, SEEDS AND CUTTINGS WITH OTHER SALVIA ENTHUSIASTS.**

THE GROUP IS NOT A PROFIT MAKING ORGANIZATION, ANY MONIES RECEIVED ARE USED TO RUN THE GROUP'S ACTIVITIES, AND THE PLANTING AND MAINTENANCE OF OUR GPCAA REGISTERED GARDEN COLLECTIONS AT HAMPTON AND NOBELIUS HERITAGE PARK.

LOOK FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR WEB ADDRESS WWW.SALVIAS.ORG.

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VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP

A Branch of the Herb Society of Victoria

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From the Editor: Trudi Fry

The excitement given us daily, even three or more times each day, by the weather is outstanding. Yesterday I moaned by email about my garden begging for rain as storms passed me by. I reminded my friend that rain was a four letter word not used by well brought up ladies and that I couldn't remember what it looked like anyway and as I pressed send the sky went from blue to black. It was 2.30 pm and I had to put the lights on. The thunder roared, the lightening showed off as usual and as usual no rain. Then suddenly there was a terrible racket on the roof and great lumps of ice shattering on the verandah, wind throwing branches everywhere and the windows threatening to break. The noise was shocking. After it settled down to heavy gushing rain Ray Boatman rang to see if I was alright, Jillian had the bathroom skylight smashed. I believe that email has some malign influence on the weather.

We have a wonderful series of events this year. All salvia lovers and those who would like to learn more about these great plants are welcome.

OUR NOBELIUS SALVIA COLLECTION

Our salvia garden is wonderful, tough plants weathering all the trials nature has bestowed upon them and Lyndi and Jillian, equally tough, tending them enthusiastically with the help of so many of you. Masses of growth and vibrant colour in those skilfully planted borders are a credit to the gardeners. There is much to be learnt here about compatible colours and growth patterns and it is so useful to be able to relate this back to our own gardens. Do note leaf colour and shape and style in your garden planning. Many salvias bloom for months but apart from the ones who snuggle underground for winter their leaves are so varied and beautiful they are a feature in themselves not just a background. I intend to write an article soon on the stunning calyces often persistent after the flowers have dropped, especially on, for example *Salvia lanceolata*. I have enjoyed watching the flowers followed by the calyces turning rose pink and the rusty red on one plant I pass as I roam the garden.

Trudi Fry

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2010

April 11th Sunday 11am Nobelius Garden Day

Nobelius Heritage Park, Crichton Ave, Emerald Mel 127 G4
Bring tools, chair and lunch to share & something to carry cuttings home.

April 14th Wed 7.45pm

The Anglican Church of St James
Church Hall, crn Burke & High St., Glen Iris Mel:59: G8
Lyndi will be guest speaker.
Bring Salvias to be identified.
Salvias will be for sale.

April 16th Friday 1 pm

Mill Park Garden Club
Mill Park Community Hall Mel . 10 A6
11 Mill Park Dve (enter from Blamey Ave)
Geoff Crowhurst will be quest speaker
Bring your Salvias to be identified
Salvias for sale

April 18th Sunday 11 am

Geoff Crowhurst & Kate Herd
11.00am 5 Clyde Street, Thornbury Mel : 30:G5 (includes morning tea)
From 12.30pm BYO lunch at Yarra Bend Park (past Golf Club house) at
Mel: 44: H4 – toilet nearby.
Nice short walk available, weather permitting.

note

Kate Herd, 1.30-2.00pm 1 View Street, Alphington Mel:31:C12 –
Kate lives at river end of street, and house faces View Street.

April 19th Mon 7 pm

Bulla Garden Club
Old Shire Offices, Crn Bulla St & Green St Bulla Mel:177: B7
Lyndi Garnett will be quest speaker
Bring your Salvias to be identified
Salvias for sale

May 1st Saturday 2pm

Ferny Creek - " Buy- Swap and Sell"
Ferny Creek Society Hall - Hilton Rd Ferny Creek
We will be selling Salvias at this very interesting
sale day, put on by the Society's Rock Garden Group

May 4th Tuesday 2pm

Salford Park Retirement Community Garden Club
Auditorium, 100 Harold St, Wantirna. Mel: 63: G7
Lyndi Garnett will be guest speaker and there will be
Salvias for sale. Bring your salvias to be identified.

- May 16th Sunday 11am** **Lyndi's Plant Identification Day.**
844 Highbury Road Glen Waverley. Mel: 62:G10
Bring plants to be identified and join in an
interesting discussion and relax in this beautiful
garden. Bring lunch to share and a chair.
Phone Lyndi: 9803 4534 if attending.
- May 31st Sunday, 11am** **Nobelius Garden Day**
Nobelius Heritage Park, Crighton Ave, Emerald Mel :127: G4
Bring tools, chair and lunch to share
Plenty of Salvia cutting material to take home.
- June 6th Sunday, 11am** **Nobelius Garden Day**
Nobelius Heritage Park, Crighton Ave, Emerald Mel :127: G4
Bring tools, chair and lunch to share
Plenty of Salvia cutting material to take home
- June 20th Sunday 11am** **Debra Nette Garden Visit**
89 Perry St, Fairfield Mel : 31: A10
Enjoy a visit to this beautiful garden
Bring lunch to share and a chair
- July 6th Tuesday** **Pakenham Garden Club " Christmas in July"**
Lyndi will be guest speaker with Salvias for sale
- July 8th Thursday 10am** **Camberwell Morning Garden Club**
9 Woodlands Ave, Camberwell. Mel:60: B2
Lyndi Garnett will be speaking. Bring your salvias to
be identified and there will be salvias for sale.
- July 18th Sunday 11am** **Photo Day with Patrick Hogan**
Nobelius Display Garden, Emerald Mel :127 G4
Patrick will show us how to take good photos of flowers, people etc..
Bring camera, digital or otherwise, lunch and chair
Share in the fun of the day, every one welcome

GLENROWAN NEWS

How many New Year's Resolutions have you broken by the time this newsletter comes out? Perhaps you are like me and don't make any, at my age, what the heck, I am entitled to do my own thing!

Today, January 11th. I have decided I am a slow learner. For the last two years when I have planted tomatoes, they have all cooked on the bush come January. This year I put them under green shade cloth, smirking to myself and thinking how clever I was. At 5.30pm today it was 46 degrees and boiled tomatoes were not on the menu for the evening meal. Next year, I hope I am bright enough to resist the temptation of planting them again.

In the winter edition of Salvia News there was an article by Lyndi Garnett on the cleaning up of the garden at Nobelius and weeding out the oxalis was mentioned. The following is great for eradicating

this obnoxious weed. 1 part sulphate of ammonia to 2 parts sand. Mix and sprinkle lightly over oxalis. Repeat in three weeks, then again if necessary.

Some years ago we had to move our community rose gardens filled with David Austen roses. The Council dumped a truckload of dreadful clay soil with every weed known to man for us to create our new masterpiece. With all the added goodies of manure, straw, etc. we diligently repeatedly weeded all the nasties out, all except the most luxurious crop of oxalis. The above was a solution offered by a friend. All the “Doubting Thomas’s” scoffed at the idea, but after three applications we are free of this horrible weed. And as the Nissan car advertisement says – “Please Consider”.

Another product I was introduced to was Hydrocell, an alternative to water crystals. It was trialled by the Wodonga Council with their streetscape trees with really excellent results. It looks similar to crumbled polystyrene, and retains moisture. The benefit being that the roots of the plant grow to the moisture, but instead of stopping when it is reached, the roots pass through the foam and go deeper in the soil. I tried it firstly in plastic pots for cuttings with new roots to see how it worked. I was astounded at the rapid growth and how quickly the roots were coming out the drain holes at the bottom. Since then, everything I have planted in the garden has had hydrocell mixed with the soil before planting, and the survival rate in such trying dry times has been great. Previously when I dug up any plant which had died on me, even though I had added gel, the root ball was small, and had not passed through the crystals. I buy it in a large chaff bag size for approx. \$40, but it goes such a long way. I pass on these tips so folks can decide for themselves if it is worth a try. (*I am going to try it: editor*)

My garden is crisped and sad as are most in the country areas. This year I have not watered most of the salvias to ascertain their survival rate. Most look as though they may struggle through, but the ones which surprised me were the greggii group. The first scorching day they just decided to drop all their leaves and sulk. Come autumn and rain I am almost sure they will shoot again, but a lovely lemon plant I am particularly fond of and have kept the water up to has still not rallied. I now intend to just ignore it and wait for the cool weather. On a particularly hot day I decided to clean out a large box with garden notes and hints I had saved. An article from Gardening Australia in May 1994 had a 3 page segment on salvias by Jane Edmanson. Included in this was a recipe from Trudi for Sage bread rolls.

At The Caulfield Gardening Australia show in October I bought two salvias which have died on me, one was Joan, and the other *Salvia involucrata* ‘Joan’. Would like to know the difference if any please. (*Both are the same salvia and usually very tough. Ed.*)

May 2010 bring the weather which benefits your particular area, and all our salvias bloom in abundance.

Jess Kay Glenrowan

Thankyou for all that good information Jess. Great to hear from you again. Wonder who was the Trudi who made bread!! I certainly haven't seen her lately. Probably because she is now a Great Grandmother.

DON'T FORGET TO CHECK OUR WEB PAGE: WWW.SALVIAS.ORG

DON'T FORGET THAT WE WILL NEED YOUR NEWS IN EARLY MAY EVEN LATE APRIL!!!!!!!

News from Southeast Queensland

At the time of writing rain has settled in for the day – it is just wonderful to hear as we have been very dry here on the Sunshine Coast. Usually it is this area that gets the most rain but this summer we have been missing out. Two weeks ago our dam was almost dry and then we had 75ml overnight and it was full by morning. Luckily we don't rely on it for a water supply – it is however a feature of the garden.

We have just decided to open our garden with AOGS in mid May so it is time to get busy pruning and mulching. I am always cautious when pruning salvias at this time of year as if pruned hard they can keel over very quickly so I take half of the plant down and wait for new growth before completing the process. I have been rather remiss in keeping many of the salvias tip pruned so such a lot a very lanky – particularly the *microphylla/greggii*'s. I have been a little more brutal with the winter flowering salvias – some of them have been 3m high. This rain will be just what they need.

Megan's Magic has proved to be a larger grower than I thought so I am contemplating moving it but must firstly get some cuttings going. It is certainly a great plant that never stops flowering. I'm planning on featuring the more prolific flowerers in focal positions and putting the others in less conspicuous places. I know I always mention the 'Heatwave' series and 'Wendy's Wish' but they have to be the best for continual flowering in our climate. S 'African Skies' also is a stunner! It is never without a flower and seems to love our climate. *S.leucantha* 'Midnight' is in need of a prune and I should have done it weeks ago as it gets so high before it flowers that when it does flower it flops everywhere. Maybe if I give it a haircut now it will perform with mass colour in May. I have not been so impressed with *S. leucantha* 'White Velour' and 'Pink Velour' as they seem rather spindly.

Members of our group, Brenda Seabourne and Kristen Mathews, have edged a garden bed with these and they look great but Brenda is very good at tip pruning! I must learn from her. *Salvia muirri* is another that flowers all year round and copes well with a hard prune. It is these toughies that we should spread about the garden more. One of mine is tumbling over a rock wall alongside a heliotrope and both look wonderful. *Salvia azurea* I moved last year as it was sprawling all over the place and now gracefully hangs over a rock wall. Another also planted on a rock wall has decided it wants to go upward and is over a metre tall so it has to be moved – it has a mind of its own! It could be that the second spot had a good dose of manure that gave it new life!

Of three new salvias we bought last year from Sue Templeton two are thriving. *Salvia carnea* succumbed to the heat early on but *S. curviflora* and S 'Magenta Magic' are doing well. We are trialling them in three different areas of southeast Queensland and they are thriving in all. *Salvia coccinea* 'Purple' I got from Sue a couple of years ago and we both felt that the flowers were rather ordinary. I have made a decision that I don't need it in the garden as it does self sow, but not badly, and its flower really is rather insignificant. Two others that are more recent arrivals, S. 'Violet Eyes' and *S. caudata* are impressive and we need to spread them amongst our members. S *caudata* has such lovely apple green foliage. S 'Finn Grove' is loving our drier weather and has been growing in SEQ for a couple of years now and seems to survive the humidity well.

Now is the time I give the old-fashioned roses a light prune – this will result in a lovely autumn flush which is generally the time roses look their best in southeast Queensland. Two of my favourite Tea roses are 'Jean Ducher' and 'Rosette delizy' – both rarely without a flower which makes it extremely difficult to pick a time to prune them! 'The Fairy' which edges our lawn is due to be cut to the ground – this I do twice a year with great results.

During the past weeks when it has been too hot to garden I've been working on a garden tour that I am planning for our group to Victoria in November. It is falling into place beautifully and we are really looking forward to seeing the gardens of some members of the Victorian Salvia Study Group. We have scheduled a visit to the Geelong Botanic Gardens and to Nobelius, as well as to Pat Anderson, Wendy Smith, Glenda Sellenger and Karen Meeuwissen. Ten days of wonderful gardens! On tour there will be five who are members of our salvia group, but most members are keen growers of salvias – we look forward to seeing how they grow in the south.

Barb Wickes

The Perennial Poppies Group Inc r.bwickes@optusnet.com.au

7th February, 2010

A propagation set-up

As an insert in the latest *Journal of Heritage Roses in Aust. Inc.* is a member's description of a summer propagation method for old roses, which I think could easily be adapted for salvias. The little plastic cups (instead of pots) is a good idea, as root growth can easily be seen, though most salvia cuttings could go in smaller cups. The Richgro mixture recommended is only available in WA, so we would have to substitute something else. The size of the container chosen might be determined by the size of the rack(s) to go at the bottom, and could be just a modest size for someone starting out with propagation. I found I could cut drainage holes easily on the bottom edges of the cups using a fine saw tooth knife from the kitchen. For the more experienced propagator, the method might be tried with salvias that don't strike readily (for grey leafed salvias maybe more sand in the mix). I am going to try old roses first, and then some salvias in March.

Geoff Crowhurst.

Summer propagation

Patricia Routley, Northcliffe, WA

1. Buy one of those big clear plastic boxes from Coles/Woolies (instant hothouse). I used old fridge shelves and cake racks on the bottom so there was no moisture pooling.
2. Buy one bag of Richgro Seed and Cutting Raising Mix (instant potting mix). One bag of this goes a long way when using the following.
3. Buy el cheapo clear plastic drink glasses. You need the cheaper brand of glasses that are easy to cut.
4. Two or three days before potting up, fill the glasses with soil, water well and allow to drain to being only just damp.
5. Have labels ready for every glass. Re-cut the cuttings top and bottom and dip them into Hormone Rooting substance (I use the No.2 powder). Shake off the excess and pot up one cutting per glass.
6. Place the lid on and put the whole box in the shade (to the south of the house?) but with good light. Leave untouched for three weeks. With tweezers or tongs, then take out any dropped leaves and you may need to give each glass a teaspoon of water. Close the lid and walk away again for another two weeks.
7. Then... remove the glasses and place them in seedling trays with sides (so they don't fall over) on the north side of the house in the morning sun only – say until 10 or 11am only. Perhaps more teaspoons of water if the soil is very dry.
8. Then comes the fun part. With a mug of coffee at your side, visibly check the bottoms of the glasses daily for roots. After the first success you will be able to recognize a rose root for the rest of your life.
9. Have pots ready with a plastic glass that has been fully embedded in the soil for a day or so, so that when you immediately slip the tiny rooted plant into this perfect-sized impression, there is minimal disturbance and it doesn't even know it has been bedded. Watering the glass 30 minutes before decanting will hold the cutting mix together perfectly.

Place your potted-up tiny plant in full sun, but under the eaves to protect it from winter hail and excess rain. You do have to hand water these sheltered pots a little. Friends have adopted this plastic glass and plastic box method of striking our precious cuttings and all our green thumbs are positively glowing.

Editor: This sounds such a good idea I asked Geoff if he had permission for us to print. He had a quick response from Patricia Routley in WA: "Of course it is OK to share the plastic glass/plastic box method. That's what gardeners do actually. THANK YOU PATRICIA.

Clary Sage, *Salvia sclarea*

Clary sage, also known as clarry, orvale, toute-bonne and clear eye, belongs to the LAMIACEAE family. Its large leaves grow off a central stalk that bends with the weight of the flowers. It grows to a height of three feet and a width of one foot. The flowers are lilac or pale blue, pink or white, in whorls on top of the stems, with the upper lip curled up. The leaves are broad oval or heart-shaped, in pairs, 6-9 inches long, covered with fine silver-white hairs, almost stalkless.

The Romans called it sclarea, from *clarus* meaning clear, because they used it as an eyewash. The practice of German merchants of adding clary and elder flowers to Rhine wine to make it imitate a good muscatel was so common that Germans still call the herb Muskateller Salbei and the English know it as Muscatel Sage. Clary sometimes replaced hops in beer to produce an enhanced state of intoxication and exhilaration, although this reportedly was often followed by a severe headache. It was considered a 12th century aphrodisiac.

The parts used are the flowering tops and the foliage. The constituents are linalyl acetate, linalol, pinene, myrcene, saponine and phellandrene. Its actions anticonvulsive, antidepressant, antiphlogistic, antiseptic, antispasmodic, astringent and bactericidal. As for its relative *Salvia officinalis*, clary tea, the leaf juice in ale or beer, was recommended for many types of women's problems, including delayed or painful menstruation. It was once used to stop night sweating in tuberculosis patients. An astringent is gargled, douched and poured over skin wounds. It is combined with other herbs for kidney problems. The clary seeds form a thick mucilage when soaked for a few minutes. Placed in the eye, it helps to remove, small irritating particles. A tea of the leaves is also used as an eyewash. Clary is also used to reduce muscle spasms. It is used today mainly to treat digestive problems such as gas and indigestion. It is also regarded as a tonic, calming herb that helps relieve premenstrual problems. Because of its estrogen-stimulating action, clary sage is most effective when levels of this hormone are low. The plant can therefore be a valuable remedy for complaints associated with menopause, particularly hot flashes.

For aromatherapy uses, the essential oil is extracted by steam distillation from the flowering tops and leaves. A concrete and absolute are also produced by solvent extraction in small quantities. Its character is Yang. Its characteristics are a colourless or pale yellowy-green liquid with a sweet, nutty-herbaceous scent. It blends well with juniper, lavender, coriander, cardamom, geranium, sandalwood, cedarwood, pine, labdanum, jasmine, frankincense, bergamot and other citrus oils. USES: Skin care: acne, boils, dandruff, hair loss, inflamed conditions, oily skin and hair, ophthalmia, ulcers, wrinkles.

The essential oil lends strength, both psychological and physical. While it helps reduce deep-seated tension, it remains stimulating, regenerative, and revitalising. This is the oil chosen for treating nervousness, weakness, fear, paranoia, and depression. Clary feeds the soul and helps us get through rough times. It is recommended when pressures and stress come from outside. The oil is very relaxing. It is particularly recognised as useful for people involved in creative work. It lends us the courage to do things we have not done in a long time. It is wonderful for people in mid-life crisis. Clary helps bring us more closely in touch with the dream world. It seems to encourage vivid dreams or at least enhance dream recall.

To make a clary eye lotion, place a handful of leaves or tops in a saucepan, cover with a cupful of milk or water and simmer over a low flame for 10 minutes. Strain and, when lukewarm, bathe the eyes with cotton or use an eye bath.

Clary sage has some ritual uses. It can be used as a love potion to attract a man. Combine equal parts of dried lavender, bachelor's buttons and clary sage, with a pinch of valerian and a sassafras leaf. Place in a small sachet and wear inside the clothing. Its planet is Moon or Mercury. Clary is known for its ability to enhance vision, protecting not only one's physical

eyesight but promoting increased skill while in meditation and visionary states. The seeds are the most useful part of the plant for this purpose and may be extracted as a wash to make a magical lotion which may be used in the magical healing of afflictions to a person's sight.

Clary sage is also used as a fragrance component and fixative in soaps, detergents, cosmetics and perfumes. The oil is used extensively by the food and drink industry, especially in the production of wines with a muscatel flavour.

It is non-toxic, non-irritant and non-sensitising. It should be avoided during pregnancy. Do not use clary sage oil while drinking alcohol, it can induce a narcotic effect and exaggerate drunkenness.

The young tops of clary sage were once used in soups and as a pot herb. It gives a new lift to omelets and flavours jellies. The leaves were chopped into salads. Culpeper recommended a 17th century sage dish where the fresh leaves were first dipped in a batter of flour, eggs and a little milk, fried in butter and served as a side dish. The flowers have an aromatic flavour and make a lovely contrast in salads. All sage flowers are edible after removing all greenery and stems.

Jill Bryant

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Early Autumn Blues

It sounds like a song but my garden really has got the blues at the moment and not just because it has received such a soaking in this unusually kind season. I walked around the garden yesterday marvelling at the myriad hues of my favourite colour in every shade and form and counted at least 25, almost double that of the reds and pinks. The purples merge into the blues, as they do into the reds and pinks, and I often wish for a really good colour chart to define one shade from another.

I started by setting lots of red and pink *salvia greggi* and *salvia microphylla* flowers out on a sheet of white paper as Meg does, but ranging them in colour so I could better recognise my numerous forms, S. 'Ruby Ever Red', S. 'Navaho Red', S. 'Raspberry Ripple', S. 'Musk Pink' etc.

The range of intensity in the blues is also fascinating, from the deepest dark blues of dainty *S. coahuilensis* and *S. caudata*, which I have just moved out into the open; *S. sagittata* is such a true deep blue, and tough to boot, *S. macrophylla* shares a lot of the characteristics, a lovely royal blue flower and large heart shaped leaves but needs the heat to make a comeback here.

Nearby the very hardy *S. pratense* form that came as *S. cadmica* still has many spikes of deep purple blue and is setting loads of seed again. Another of the true deep blues is *S. cacaliafolia*, doing well in its new home, the leaf is just like the leaf of *S. cacalia*, a Chinese perennial I grew for many years, lost now. S. 'Costa Rican Blue' took a long time to establish here but now waves wands of royal blue over my roses, cistus, *S. involucrata* 'Joan' and *S. 'Anthony Parker'*, through a towering *sorbaria aitchisonii*.

Another tall one, *S. corrugata*, at the back of the old Salvia border, did not like being cut back hard and has not flowered again until now, back to nearly three metres.

It helps that we don't have as many parrots as usual as they love picking off these flowers and throwing them on the ground like magic carpet. *S. guaranitica* does not spread too much in our heavy soil.

Such a welcome performer mixed with Pineapple Sage *S. elegans* and waving Bog Sage *S. uliginosa*, which spreads more but is easily controlled. I have been surprised at the robust nature of *S. 'Marine Blue'*, a firm favourite in the low rockery below the compost, which I can cut back hard as it sprawls across the path. It seems to always be in flower, and must be constantly propagated as it is a favourite with so many. Back in the border, *S. mexicana* 'Limelight' is just coming into flower, with new healthy growth, after sulking so much in Spring I thought it was lost again. The branches snap easily in strong winds, so it is snuggled against *S. corrugata*. The star of the blues, here, is *S. chamaeleagnea*, so tall, upright and strong, with its with its strange aroma. *S. 'Bluebird'* is not flowering now but reached astronomical heights last season and flopped over everything, so has been cut back and it shot immediately, where to next? Below her *S. 'Phyllis Fancy'* and *S. 'Meigan's Magic'* carry on the bluish purple theme but in the bracts rather than the flowers.

I followed Lyndi's example in pruning 'Phyllis' after the Nobelius working bee, then had a nervous four month wait until new growth appeared. Now she is magnificent! *S. leucantha* 'Mexican Sage' is really purple/magenta but fits in here perfectly. The white flowered one is not as strong but has reappeared. In the nursery stock beds *S. lorentzii* is having a wonderful season with long masses of velvety mid blue flowers. I hope it will set seed as I have not struck cuttings and can't move these pots because, like *S. guaranitica*, the plant forms underground storage tubers and they have gone under the weed mat.

S. patens is another favourite royal blue but I only have *S. patens* 'Chilcombe' at the moment and must collect its seed as it rarely survives Winter in the garden. *S. 'Finn Grove'*, with its filigree foliage is still waiting for a home, once I fix up the bay tree hole, but I love its tiny mid blue flowers. Another in the same shade is *S. reptans* which has to be one of the toughest and most reliable of salvias, but is often overlooked, though it does such long service. *S. somalensis* is another of this ilk, though of very different habit, a real stayer, never out of bounds and with that odd smell I associate with the North African plants.

S. semi atrata is not so bold, but what beautiful shades of blue and pink. She is happier after a light prune. Under the eaves near the kitchen I have planted a row of *S. 'Snow White'*, *S. jamensis* and *S. 'Kathe'* which look good together, with geranium apple blossom. *Kathe's* soft blues are the lightest shade I have, the foliage being also a soft grey.

The last on my list is not a Salvia at all but attracts a lot of attention with mass of lavender blue flowers for months on end, and that is Russian Sage, '*Perovskia atriplexifolia*', which I have included as it doesn't fit in anywhere else. I must add that I am not the only one enjoying these flowers at the moment. The salvias are a constant buzz of movement. With all the Honey-eater babies, both Eastern Spinebills and the New Holland Honey-eaters. In the birdbaths the other day were White Nape Honey-eaters and White Cheeked as well. The singing Honey-eater is more shy, flitting quickly into the deep tank for a drink or bath. Whenever people tell me they plant native shrubs to attract the birds I say the birds don't mind where plants come from as long as they have nectar.

Judi Forrester

Notes From Gruyere. Summer,

The last month of summer and thank goodness autumn is slowly starting to creep in. Early mornings are quiet, overcast or misty and even the bird songs have changed to the mellowed sounds of autumn. Then suddenly the rude awakening, a burst of the sun appears from behind the clouds and the heat

is on for another day. I know there are many out there who love the heat of summer and there are plants that simply thrive in the hot sun but you could say that I am more of a tree fern than a succulent, give me cool shade any day.

In the last *Salvia* News I wrote about my *Salvia greggii* 'Desert Blaze' and how the variegated leaves turned purple when I put the plant out into the direct sunlight. Well, I have come to the conclusion that this plant needs to be kept in a part shaded position in my area because of the intensity of the sun. I have noticed that other plants of 'Desert Blaze' that are growing in the garden are placed in an area that either has morning sun or filtered light and these have not discoloured in any way. Has anyone else had this problem?

The article from John Daniels in Hobart [*Salvia* News No.38. Spring 2009] was of great interest, especially about his pink flowering *Salvia gesneraeflora*. I too have a 'self sown' seed grown *Salvia gesneraeflora*, a pale apricot with a white blush at the throat and I have named it 'Apricot Splendour'. At this stage it seems to be slightly smaller in height and stature than the large species but the flower is the same size. It has continued flowering for quite a few months now. The plant size may be due to the fact that it is in a very large container and not in the ground at this stage, I wanted to see how stable the flowers were before I planted it out in the garden. *S. gesneraeflora* usually does take up a lot of space and not worth relinquishing the area if it can be used for something else.

John Daniels also mentioned in his article *Salvia hispanica* common name 'Chia'.

This salvia also goes under the name of *Salvia rhyacophyla* and is believed to be a rich source of essential fatty acids, 30% protein and contains vitamins and minerals, has antioxidant properties as well as being nervine, tonic, laxative and nutritive.

My 'All Rare Herbs' catalogue lists *S. hispanica* 'Chia' as being native to south-eastern Arizona through to South America. It also states that the seeds are extremely nutritious, high in protein and a high energy food and regulates sugar metabolism is a thirst quencher and survival food. More information can be found in the book 'How Can I Use Herbs In My Daily Life?' by Isabel Shipard, a very informative book. It is interesting that 'Chia' seed healthier bread is being promoted at a certain bakery, for all manner of goodness for a family. I asked if they knew what the 'Chia' seed was and all they could advise was that it came from a 'Chia' plant, a plant that has these brushes of blue flowers, they couldn't find any other information.

So, ever on the lookout to help, I spoke with the young lady about the 'SALVIA' and informed her of the plant 'Chia' and the one they were using for seed was *S. hispanica*.

I am not a big bread eater but bought some 'Chia' bread to try and I did find that it was a settling food for the stomach. I shall now get hold of some seed and try it in drinks and for sprouting, instead of in the garden .

Back to my garden and a salvia that is growing and performing beautifully is *S. curviflora* which has bright magenta flowers with a curved hood and narrow mid green leaves. In my garden it is around 1m. but in an area with good loamy soil, it could reach a height of nearly 1.5m at flowering. It is a slight shrubby plant that will send out one or two suckers close to the base of the parent plant which will add to the bushiness of the plant and no doubt will create a stunning picture in future flowerings.

One other beautiful specimen plant that has large soft magenta flowers covered in fine hairs and in bloom at the moment is *S. oxyphora* which also has very good textural foliage and would grow well in part shade, with some added moisture over summer.

Everything else has mulled over nicely this season with a few spots of rain here and there.

Meg Bentley 2010

News from Hobart – Summer

The most evident and anticipated change in the salvia display in early March here is the transformation of *Salvia* ‘Black Knight’ and the ‘Limelight’ variety of *Salvia mexicana*, that have had only a few flowers for the past couple of months, into a mass of colour, the former with dark purple flowers and the latter with glowing yellowish calyces. Also, the pink of the first swollen buds of *S. puberula* are appearing and the emerging tips of the spikes of *S. madrensis*, all with much promise. The warm summer with few cold blustery changes but with only half the rainfall on average has provided perfect growing conditions.

As mentioned in previous contributions, the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens received propagating material of *Salvia gesneraeflora* from Des Lawrence and Geelong Botanic Garden in 2005. One of the resulting plants is unique in that it is similar to the species in the shape and size of both its flower and leaf but with the distinguishing characteristic of a pink corolla with a white base at the back of the lower lip. So far all inflorescences on this plant have been pink which is unusual as, apparently, such pink corollas have only been observed occurring on a sport of the typical species with red flowers. Microscopic examination of the cerise-tipped style of the pink corolla reveals a similar arrangement of long hairs below the tip as on that of the species and its cultivar ‘Tequila’, both of which have hairs the colour of the corolla. The colour of such hairs though on the pink flower is white, a consequence, perhaps, of the large area of white on the lower surface of the corolla.

Currently, this shrub of *S. gesneraeflora* with pink flowers is 2m high and the arching stems form a dome shape of over 3m in diameter. While it has flowered quite sparsely in the past, I think this is due to its protected and shady position due to the shade of surrounding trees. There, it receives only early morning and early afternoon summer sun and only mid-day winter sun. Other plants of the species *gesneraeflora* with the green calyx, in a similar position, also flower sparsely. Those with full sun exposure, however, are laden with an abundance of flowers at the peak of their blooming. Its recent flowering is the most profuse since it was planted. Vegetative growth has recently taken over from the flowering stage which started in late winter and continued through spring until mid-summer. By the end of summer it still had a few inflorescences in flower. Noticeably, some of the new stems are ‘blind’ and terminate in growth without apical buds that emerge from the node below.

In mid-February, I collected about a dozen seed off the plant although previously I have not been diligent in looking for seed. Interestingly, we now have the opportunity to see if these seeds are viable and to see if resulting plants come true to the parent plant.

Conclusions as to the hardiness and ability to withstand frost and drought of this pink variety, and possible cultivar, of *Salvia gesneraeflora* will need to be proved by trialling specimens in a variety of positions other than the temperate location near the Derwent foreshore of the RTBG. Consequently, I have sent cutting material to Lyndi Garnett and look forward to hearing of the results of growing these plants in a variety of micro-climates.

Sue Templeton has said she has had *S. gesneraeflora* sport stems with inflorescences with pink flowers. I welcome comments by members on the observations above and their particular experiences with these species.

John Daniels

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NEWS FROM LAURELLE

So, with Autumn upon us have you noticed the amazing growth of bulbs and self sown seedlings emerging from the well watered (hailed) ground for most of us Melburnian gardeners. Of course the delightful clear warm sunny skies since the hail have aided the spurt of growth so perhaps we can look forward to an early Spring show this year.

But first, let us enjoy the stunning Winter flowerers waiting in the wings, all those wonderful blues, pinks and reds, even yellow with *S. madrensis* simply THE "must have" plant for lovers of vibrant, cheerful colour in the Winter scheme and consider growing *S. discolor* against its tall growth, a wonderful lax silver leafed, black flowered very distinct gem. Incidentally, *S. discolor* is perpetually in flower in my totally unwatered garden, so it's a tough plant indeed.

Lots of new releases were evident at the many sales events of recent times, so many wonderful gardens open for viewing, often with plants for sale too and that always encourages the visitors. For those of you who missed the Anderson Garden at Warrandyte and the Roos Garden at Upwey, commiserations!

Don't forget to pencil in the big sale at Pakenham we'll be attending again this year - check the calendar of events in the front of this magazine for relevant dates and be seduced by the huge variety of plants available, incidentally, Pakenham is quite easily accessed by public transport (train & bus) or there is extensive parking for those choosing to drive. So make a day of it and speak with the 'experts'.

Enjoy your patch of beauty and continue to try 'newer' releases, happy gardening.

Laurelle Willis.

SALVIA 'HOLLY'

Salvia 'Holly' is the latest gift from my garden. I spontaneously called her Holly when she grew up vigorously from among the weeds about three years ago. I guess it was around Christmas time. The colour was right; bright shiny green leaves and the flower holly coloured. A tough plant ignoring drought and frost; cuttings strike easily and it is one of those plants that give pleasure for no effort by the gardener. The shiny green leaves are *greggii* like but as my garden has massed plants and is buzzing with pollinators I could never guess at parentage. It is one of the joys of gardening to find another new plant. I trial them for a year or three and then it is such a thrill to see them going to other gardeners. I hope Holly will be at Pakenham.

Salvia 'Snow White' who appeared a few years before Holly is a good obliging plant though I'm told it can get woody in QLD and Salvia 'Crimson and Black' blooms non-stop. I notice that commercial nurseries are propagating them now.

Trudi Fry

NOTE WATCH FOR NEW BABY SALVIAS, LEARN TO DISTINGUISH FROM WEEDS .

PUT IN A POT OF POTTING MIX AND SEE IF YOU HAVE A TREASURE.

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SALVIA NEWS

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