

SALVIA NEWS

NUMBER 40



Official Newsletter of the
Victorian Salvia Study Group

THE VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP

A Branch of the Herb Society of Victoria inc.

THE AIMS OF THE SALVIA STUDY GROUP ARE:

- 1. To grow and collect salvias to study their growth habits.**
- 2. To identify and name plants correctly.**
- 3. To propagate new and existing Salvias**
- 4. To promote the qualities of Salvias to the general public**
- 5. To 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 maintenance and planting of our GPCAA registered garden collections.

LOOK FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR WEB ADDRESS

WWW.SALVIAS.ORG

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Hi

This is Your Editor in a Text Box. You don't know what a text box is? Neither do I. What's more I have no idea how to get out!!

So coffee in one hand I will type away and see what happens.

The garden is a riot of colour and the SEQ beauties so glorious I have had Patrick Hogan photograph them, helped by Jillian attaching labels. I got these splendens seedlings from Barb Wickes some time ago. They have spent two years 'quarantined' in my poly house where they have thrived and produced seedlings. So what with cuttings and seedlings I have a gorgeous confusion. Because some have variegated foliage I have taken care in case it is a spreading virus. The bright gold blotches on the vigorous foliage plus the multitude of flowers of every shade of purple, red, pink all with contrasting colours of calyx and corolla is mind boggling. I haven't seen any sign of virus spread in Barb's garden or in any other garden in SEQ. The variegation doesn't appear on all of them and varies from a light dusting of star dust to splashes of gold. We did over 50 labels and some more have flowered since and I expect some will die this winter, especially as I have cleared a spot under and round a Meyer lemon trimmed by the drought to a ball shape covered with golden lemons and crammed it full of plants. When planted most were just green flowerless babies. It has become a daily treat to get me out of bed and to the letterbox each morning to see what is new. I should add that we are having wild weather, icy cold but some good rain. They are knocked around by the wind but OK. Have walked outside in slippers with tape measure: the tallest one I can reach is over a metre, purple calyx, violet corolla, thick square stems and near it is a deep red with hot pink corolla, tall but shrubby. There are all sorts of growth patterns from front of border size to back of border and one is the colour of mandarins!

This is another Text Box. I have still no way of release. However I will write what I intended to before my QLD intoxication. The exciting thing is the photographs of The Nobelius Opening which you will find in the 2 middle pages. Thanks go to our photographers for such warm, skilful pictures interpreting the day. You can see the enthusiasm and feel the achievement of the workers who put so much into such a successful Salvia Garden.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- July 6th Tuesday 10 30am** Pakenham Garden Club “Christmas in July”
Salvation Army Hall, Bald Hill Rd., Pakenham
Lyndi will be guest speaker with Salvias for sale.
Xmas lunch will be provided.
- July 8th Thursday 10 am** 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 11 am** 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 to share
Enjoy the day, everyone welcome. Remember notebook & chair
- Aug 15th Sunday 11 30am** Visit to Lyle Phillippe’s Roraima Nursery
20 Swan st Lara 3212 Mel:423 D9
A nursery not to be missed. Fabulous plants from all over
the world, drought hardy. Desert and tropical plants available.
Bring lunch to share and a chair. A truck to carry plants home
Ring Lyndi or Jillian if you have transport problems.
- Sept 4th Saturday 9 am** Pakenham Garden Expo
Pakenham Racecourse, Racecourse Rd, Pakenham Mel:317:E8
Wonderful variety of plants and products available.
Salvias for sale.
- Sept 19th Sunday 11am** Visit the Salvia Collection at Geelong Botanical Gardens
Geelong Botanical Gardens, Geelong Mel: 402:Q8
Meet Dee the curator of the collection & Bill Whitehead our
oldest member and a major donator of the many Salvias.
Bring lunch to share. Ring Lyndi or Jillian if you need transport.

- Oct 17th Sunday 11am** **Visit to Cloudehill Gardens & Nursery in Olinda (Dandenongs)**
69 Olinda-Monbulk Rd, Olinda Mel:122:A9(opp Howard Rd)
A world renowned nursery and gardens to wander through .
We will buy lunch in their restaurant
- Oct 23rd Saturday 9am** **Upwey Garden Festival**
Upwey Community Hall, Upwey Mel:75:A10
Variety of stalls, plants and products available.
Salvias will be for sale. Bring plants to be identified.
- Nov 6/7th Sat/Sun** **The Annual Rose Show**
Community Centre, Miller Ave, Mt Waverley Mel:62:D12
Saturday opening 1pm, Sunday opening 9am
Salvias and roses for sale
- Nov 21st Sunday 11am** **Salvias available at Nobelius**
Nobelius Heritage Park, Emerald, Mel:127:G4
Bring “want lists” to gather
the plants you have been waiting for.
- Nov 23rd Tuesday 10am** **Pakenham Garden Club visit to Nobelius**
Nobelius Heritage Park, Emerald, Mel:127:G4
Members to wander through the garden.
Salvias available on the day.
- Dec 5th Sunday** **Xmas Party Gathering**
To be advised

BEGINNING THE VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP

To celebrate our Salvia Garden Opening at Nobelius I was asked to put in colour pictures of the day, this good idea got me thinking about several things; firstly how? Another new task to learn. And then dates seemed relevant. When did we begin? People who were there at the start are still there and some who worked so hard to get The Salvia Study Group started have gone on to other interests or are no longer around. So I began ringing around and hoping the word would spread and information would flow in. And it has! A lovely article from Bill and a pile of data from Ray are particularly good and more articles about 'the old days' have been promised. All interesting good stuff which has kept me enthralled strolling down memory lane. I have realised that there is far too much interesting data for me to smooth it up together and to get neatly into this our anniversary (or thereabouts) issue. Ray has worked hard at collecting piles of paper which I find so interesting I'm reading it instead of getting it on disc. I will do it gradually for the future.

The relevant date of our beginning appears to be **June 1989**.

I will start with Ray Boatman's article **A NEW ROLE FOR OUR SOCIETY FROM 1989**

He writes " The Ornamental Plant Collections Association has been formed by noted horticulturalists, such as John Patrick and Jane Edmondson with the support of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, the Australian Garden History Society and other prestigious bodies in an attempt to rescue several species of plants, which are becoming scarce and, perhaps, in danger of extinction. It also aims to build up complete collections of species of plants in a particular genus. Already several collections have been commenced by groups and individuals in both private and public gardens.

The HSOV Committee have approved that we, as a Society, shall become a member of the Association. I am hoping that many of us will become actively involved in plant research as a result. I am proposing that the Herb Society of Victoria should be involved in building up a collection of the genus **Salvia**.

To build up a representative collection of this genus will present a great challenge, as there are more than seven hundred species represented and many of these species have several varieties. However as most of us in the Society already have some species of salvia in our gardens for medicinal, culinary and craft uses we have an excellent starting point. Some salvia species known to us are *Salvia rutilans* (now *elegans*) Pineapple sage, *S. sclarea* (Clary Sage) *Salvia officinalis* with its varieties such as *S. officinalis* 'variegata' and *S. officinalis* 'Tricolor and *S. leucantha* (Mexican Sage).

Building up the collection will involve:

1. Checking up salvias available in nurseries. Sending for catalogues.
 2. Collecting seeds and cuttings from gardens of friends, neighbours and relations. Check old gardens.
 3. Importing seeds (check Department of Agriculture first)
 4. Buying seed from reputable seed companies.
- Correct identification of plants is most important. Label plants. Note Jerusalem Sage is not a sage but is a phlomis.

Researching The Collection

Correct identification of plants, as mentioned above, is essential. As most of us are amateur horticulturists, how can we go about this task?

Reference material is readily available in catalogues, encyclopedias books etc.

Enlist the help of our botanist friends such as James Hitchmouth, John Patrick, Colline Muir, Jane and Malcolm Calder and Roger Spenser all eminent in their field will be able to offer valuable assistance.

Make use of the material at our State's Herbarium.

Keep detailed notes as you build up your collection.

As time goes by we will need to publish some of the information. For example lists of species we have collected.

A photographic record of the plants in each collection would also be essential.

When a comprehensive collection of potted plants has been established the next step is to 'house' it in a reasonably central garden plot.

I now leave Ray and go to **Helen Fallshaw** working hard collecting seeds cuttings and information in February 1990 and in July 91 mentioning that we now have our own salvia-land and reminding us that Peter Lumley Principal Horticulturalist at the Botanical Gardens has said that seeds may not grow true and that we must take note of this and take care.

Dates are in short supply but I have an article from **Graham Ellis dated 8/12/94**. The HSOV chose to house the collection at the Nobelius Heritage Nursery at Emerald and at a private garden at Hampton. These sites have significantly different climates and soil types.

The Collection consists of 82 species and 42 cultivars; since it was established, 16 new Salvia have been added. Some species from Mediterranean climates such as *S. officinalis* and *S. fruticosa* require dry soil conditions in winter. At the Emerald site the generally high rainfall and frosts present a problem. Fortunately the soil (texture is clay, pH 6, structure is excellent) permits a reasonable number of air pores to remain to keep roots healthy over winter. *S. officinalis* 'Purpurescens' is a particular success story: there is a beautiful very low hedge formed by a planting of this purple leaved cultivar. This plant performed well overwinter. A number of tropical species are long night flowerers (examples are *S. gesneriiflora*, *S. dorisiana*, *S. involucrata*) and cope with frost fairly well though *S. dorisiana* was cut down by frost in 1992 but unaffected when covered with snow in 1993.

MILESTONES

THE SALVIA EXPO IN MARCH 2002 AT FERNY CREEK HORTICULTURAL CENTRE WAS A GREAT SUCCESS AND THE SALVIA SPECTACULAR ON 3RD 4TH OF APRIL 2004 AT FERNY CREEK HORTICULTURAL HALL WAS OUTSTANDING. THESE OCCASIONS WERE A REVELATION TO MANY GARDENERS INCREASING THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF AND INTEREST IN SALVIAS, WHICH CONTINUES..

TOP MILESTONE IS THE NEW SALVIA COLLECTION AT NOBELIUS HERITAGE PARK IN EMERALD WHICH IS VISITED BY SO MANY PEOPLE WHO CAN SEE SALVIAS GROWING AND WATCH THEIR PROGRESS.

SALVIA NEWS came out in APRIL / MAY 2001 The second hand computer was old and erratic and my 4 year old grandson gave me my first lesson. But people praised it and read it and that old computer printed courageously on, in both colour and black and white, for many years.

NOTHING WILL GET TO THE PRINTER IF I DON'T QUIT READING ABOUT THE WONDERFUL THINGS WE HAVE DONE IN THOSE YEARS, THINKING ABOUT EXCITING NEW SALVIA FINDS SHARING WITH LOVELY FRIENDS. I RECKON I COULD CONDENSE IT ALL AND SAY BEAUTIFUL, INTERESTING PLANTS, BEAUTIFUL INTERESTING PEOPLE ENRICHING MY LIFE. Trudi

It would be great to have even more information and the views of more people Send your news for Salvia News in late July. PLEASE. I may go to QLD in September.

AN INTEREST IN SALVIA STUDY GROUP AND THEIR PLANTS

I became a founding member of the GEELONG Herb Society in 1983. Soon after I was told that a group of Herb Society of Victoria (HSOV) members were making a bus tour of the Bellarine Peninsula. On finding the nursery and arrival time of the bus I decided to meet it there. On arrival, a tall slender man stepped out first and I asked him how to join the HSOV. We introduced ourselves, and I found I had met Ray Boatman for the first time.

During 1989 the HSOV Newsletter, The Herbage, briefly stated that their Committee wanted members to form a subgroup, to grow and study plants of the salvia genus. I then phoned Ray saying I lived in Geelong, could I possibly join this salvia group. He replied, saying I could join, providing I could come to the Melbourne area in the daytime, several times a year. I was a member from day one. Obviously the term 'Salvia Study Group' grew from this first meeting.

I already knew that salvias were more commonly known as sages. Also I knew that my garden contained at least half a dozen herbal sages. Without any doubt my desire was to increase my range of sages and my knowledge of them. Years later my garden contained over a hundred species and cultivars of these wonderful plants.

Long time readers of the Salvia News, may remember from my written articles, that I placed common sage on a high pedestal (figuratively speaking). Today it is mainly known as a culinary herb, but in former times health problems were more to overcome. In those days, common sage was greatly used for medicinal purposes. I believe it achieved its very important botanical name, *salvia officinalis* (officially safe) because of that usage. As common sage was then so well known throughout the world, it was found that there were many other plants with similar genetic properties to it. For that reason I believe, they were also given common names which included the word sage.

From their huge family, I only mention two here: Andean Sage (*salvia discolor*), obviously this common name relates to its indigenous background, the Andean mountains of Peru. Mexican sage; a local nursery used this name when I purchased it 27 years ago. I still grow this plant, or its progeny today. It bears its reddish purple corollas almost the whole year, every year, and I'm certain that it is the easiest and most durable salvia one can grow. I had seen it growing in other gardens long before I joined SSG. After the SSG identified it as *Salvia leucantha* I discovered my plant was a cultivar not the true species which has white flowers. (And I'm interrupting here Bill, my mother grew it as Mexican sage, 50 years ago in NSW. I will see you get the species and the other cultivars. It is a marvellous salvia ..Trudi)

A remarkable highlight in my journey through the later years of my life was being able to join the wonderful people from the beginning of the formation of the SSG and the other beginning was that I commenced learning Tai Chi. Both activities have filled my life keeping me reasonably active until the present.

Des Lawrence my friend and the creator of those wonderful beds of salvias in the Geelong Gardens very graciously takes me to the Melbourne area occasionally to rekindle my fellowship with my SSG friends.

Bill Whitehead

Nobelius Saga (4)

2010 dawned bright and clear for Nobelius. Going up in February saw the garden dry but in a much better condition than it was last year at the same time. This year the weather has definitely been kinder with a little more moisture over those hot months.

It wasn't long before Jillian and I began our Wednesday visits and cleaning up. Most plants survived quite well but there were a few that didn't or were struggling, namely *S. fruticosa* (an old bush that was gradually giving up and didn't like the humidity that often occurs in that area). Other casualties were *S. sclarea* alba and *S. canariensis candissima*, which put on such a splendid show during the open day that everyone wanted them, and a few other mealy plants that hadn't grown well .

As with all new gardens there is a huge learning curve about new plants that are going in. As always there are a lot of ups and downs showing us that we can't expect plants to live for ever, that some have a relatively short life span and they need to be renewed every two years at least, others look best if planted annually although they may be perennial.

Looking around the garden showed that some plants needed shifting, either they had grown too large and had over powered other salvias or they just didn't fit into that niche.

What we did find was, horrors of all horrors was that we had planted a big Red Salvia in the Pink bed!!!. So in due course, this will have to be taken out and be replaced with perhaps a blue Salvia - no confusion there.

The first Garden Day in April had a wonderful turn out . Each time we have a Garden Day a few new people appear who are willing helpers and who get stuck into the jobs that need to be done. This is encouraging as it shows that the website is working and that these new enthusiasts want to know what we're doing in the Salvia Garden at Nobelius and to be part of it.

Even Bill (94) and Des came up recently from Geelong to help prune the masses of Salvias yet to be dealt with. Bill came with his secateurs ready willing and very able, so I put him to work dead heading and getting rid of dead wood.

Once all the major pruning is complete, planting will begin again - shifting those plants that don't belong, to a better position, filling in gaps and planting new species. Coupled with this is the job of fertilizing each bed, probably using "blood n bone" and "Rooster Booster". Finally put on, as mulch, all those lovely oak leaves that we have at our disposal; they will keep the soil moist when it warms up as well as smothering a lot of oxalis.

Being the middle of winter Nobelius looks wonderful, a kaleidoscope of winter colour from the large salvias, these will continue flowering throughout winter and well into spring, when the smaller salvias will take over the main display.

The garden is well worth a visit at this time of year.

Lyndi Garnet



THE NOBELIUS SALVIA DISPLAY GARDEN
 GRAND OPENING BY PENNY WOODWARD 15/11/09



11/07/2009



15/11/2009



WERRI BEACH NEWS SOUTH COAST NSW

The salvias in my garden have been glorious throughout March and April due to the regular rain we were receiving. Even though we haven't had much since they are still looking good. I have had to water this week as we've had some pretty hot days. Today, though, has been almost cold so winter can't be far off.

Great to read the item on summer propagation, will give it a try. I've given up on Clary sage even though it seems such a useful plant. It does not thrive here. It has the most beautiful flowers but I can never get it to flowering stage before it keels over. So disappointing!

Anyway, there are lots of other salvias with which to console myself. Both *S.leucantha* 'White Velour' and 'Pink Velour' have begun to spread and next year should produce some good clumps. The birds keep breaking off bits but there are still plenty of flowers to admire.

It has been interesting to note that because of the good rain, plants which were considered 'finished' flowering and been cut back have flowered really well for a second time. Not just spot flowering either.

I now have a few good clumps of *S.caradonna*. I have been a bit more vigilant in keeping the area around them clear so that they can spread and not be overcrowded by everything else that I just have to have in the garden.

I laughed today when I went out to inspect a salvia I had grown from a piece and not labelled, to find it is *S.iodantha* which I had lost and not realizing I had taken a cutting, had re-ordered. It pays to remember to label your cuttings. I was also thrilled to see *S.elegans* purple which I had replaced, with lots of buds ready to open in the next few days. When I had it in the footpath garden, it was a picture until it was ruined by a strong south-easterly earlier last year. I had many comments on it from passers-by. Now I have it in a more protected spot.

I'm also enjoying the bright red of *S. 'Timboon'*. It is in the front garden but seems to cope with the salt. The leaves are a nice shiny green and I think it could become a favourite. It's near a red dwarf New Zealand Christmas bush and a small red Callistemon. I didn't mean to put all the reds together but it is a colourful little corner.

I've had to prune several branches of an elm tree as it was creating too much shade for a bed with about 6 or 7 salvias. They hadn't been flowering well enough and straight after the pruning you could notice the difference.

You are not always sure of how tall some plants will get and then you have the problem of too much shade.

I've noted down some of the new salvias mentioned including *S. 'Violet Eyes'* which sounds lovely and *S. 'Finn Grove'* which Barb says doesn't mind the humidity. I'll look out for them.

Hope to get down to Victoria sometime in May and will probably come back with a car load of plants as usual.

Cheers, Maureen Cox. Werri Beach

COMMUNICATING WITH YOU DEPENDS ON ACCURATE INFORMATION ON YOUR SUBSCRIPTION FORM WHICH IS ENCLOSED.

Salvia News from the Sunshine Coast of Southeast Queensland

We have just opened our garden (15/16 May) and had a most successful weekend. It had been very hard work getting the garden up to standard as the continual rain, humidity and high temperatures, coupled with grey overcast days and no breeze, really stifled the growth of plants and resulted in many deaths of both salvias and roses. The old-fashioned roses were fine eg Teas and Chinas but several David Austins were lost and that confirmed for me that it is best not to attempt to grow them in this climate when the Teas do so well and rarely ever get any blackspot.

I do need to rethink some of the plantings in the lower part of our garden as during this wet period the plants sat with wet feet for weeks and many microphyllas drowned. There has been continual rain in the past but this year with the lack of sun and wind it became too much for them. Our autumn has only begun in the last two or three weeks – usually from early April we can expect the cooler nights and crisp mornings – the lack of them contributed to the deaths.

Salvia chamelaeagnea has been in the same garden bed for years but this year I almost lost it – there are just a few shoots appearing now so that will be moved to higher ground. It was interesting to see how *Salvia chiapensis* fared in three different positions in the garden – it almost died in the wetter areas and in the well-drained spots it thrived. *Salvia* ‘Wendy’s Wish’ also suffered the same way. The one in semi-shade in the high part of the garden seems to be doing the best. One by one branches died on the one in the wetter area but now that is recovering.

I began pruning many of the salvias in early February but only by half and then when the continual rain arrived they struggled to recover. Usually they shoot back quickly and then I prune the remainder of the plant. It has been a learning curve – we cannot anticipate the weather can we! It is a good exercise to plant the same salvia in different parts of the garden and judge the results – *Salvia muiiri* is another that has thrived in the higher well-drained bed but was lost in the wetter areas – I guess I have always known it preferred a dry climate but had not experienced these results before in the 10 years we have been here. *Salvia blepharophylla* was doing so well – it generally does not enjoy the humidity but has always managed to survive and it has done that. There are a lot of salvias that I plan on reproducing and planting in various parts of the garden to see the results.

Finding suitable perennials to underplant the Tea roses with is a challenge as heliotrope, golden oregano, yarrow and catmint in the wetter areas turned up their toes. Perhaps I need to raise all the beds but that sounds like hard work!

Salvia elegans ‘Golden Delicious’ in the lower part of the garden getting morning sun only survived well. *Salvia leucantha* ‘Pink Velour’ and ‘White Velour’ were lost in these areas – I don’t think they like the Sunshine Coast! Brenda Seabourne and Kristen Mathews have the most stunning border of these plants in their Burpengary garden – they have very well-drained sandy soil so I guess that is the answer.

New to our region are *Salvia* ‘Magenta Magic’ and *Salvia curviflora* – both doing well - what beautiful flowers they have – I plan on duplicating both of these throughout the garden. At the moment the winter flowerers are beginning to put on a lovely display. Salvias *iodantha*, ‘Timboon’, ‘Sugar Pink’, Pink Icicles’ and *purpurea* are looking wonderful. Old favourites S. ‘Joan’, S. Purple Majesty’, *S. leucantha* ‘Midnight’, S. ‘Ripe Raspberry’ continue to add colour to the garden. In southeast Queensland we need to focus on the salvias that thrive in all conditions and offer colour for much of the year – they are the backbone of the garden.

Our website is likely to be sometime away as all of our salvia group members seem to have many commitments and not enough time to devote to this task. I am going overseas to US in mid July so perhaps after that work will commence.

Barbara Wickes The Perennial Poppies Group Inc

22nd May, 2010

WHEN A SALVIA FANATIC'S PARTNER IS LEFT IN CHARGE

The editor rang me last night and wanted to know whether Pat or I had anything to contribute to the next copy of *Salvia News* for which the deadline was today!. I explained that Pat was in Italy and although I had written an article about *S. divinorum* I was withholding it until I had checked out a few legalities. Whereupon the editor told me that she had seen a sample of processed dried material of *S. apiana* for sale in a health food shop recently and was it possible that it too was hallucinogenic. I was a little bit taken aback at this question as Pat had left me in charge of a batch of *S. apiana* seedlings in the glasshouse while she was away. When I consulted our various books on salvias this morning I was relieved to find no reference to hallucinogenic activity in this species. However, Clebsch (The new book of salvias) states that the a concoction made from the leaves of *S. apiana* “relieves colds or congestion and may also be used as a soap-less shampoo” so it seems that that any fears about the safety of this species are unfounded. However, I need not have worried. When I went to check the *S. apiana* seedlings later this morning most of them had been cut down overnight by a rapacious snail that somehow had got into the glasshouse.

All this reminds me that in mid-winter a few years ago I was asked to talk to a gardening group about plant nutrition while Pat was away in the UK visiting her ageing mum. I prepared a demonstration in our glasshouse to show that plants of silver beet grow very successfully in a water culture (i.e. without soil) containing inorganic salts of all the elements that are essential for plant growth. I grew an identical set of plants in water without any additions. The outcome was very compelling – the plants in the nutrient solution grew vigorously whereas those in water containing no added nutrients put on no new growth and eventually died.

While Pat was away I was given jurisdiction of all Pat's plants. What an awful responsibility. Most of the plants are located in the garden and nursery but Pat moved some of the frost sensitive ones into the glasshouse. Since the weather is mostly cold and moist in winter I didn't have to spend much time watering the vast plantations of salvias in the garden or the nursery. The salvias that Pat brought into the glasshouse though were another matter.

The trouble was that when I went to the glasshouse I had eyes only for what interested me – which at that particular time involved my nutrition experiment and the veggie seedlings for planting out in the spring. As I pondered their progress I started to envisage summer evenings sitting at the back door with Pat, consuming various delicacies that she makes with produce from the veggie patch, helped down with a chilled bottle of sauvignon blanc, while the magpies at our feet engage in an antiphonic duet in an endeavour to encourage us to go to the fridge and provide them with a few morsels for their very unmusical progeny. With my mind concentrating on thoughts like these, and on the progress of my experiment, the condition of Pat's salvias in the glasshouse was barely on my radar. .

The plant nutrition experiment was going along nicely until one day I found some large holes in the leaves of one of the silver beet plants. Now that struck me as rather strange and I wondered whether some divine power had created a mutant blessed with holiness. However, the next day several other plants became similarly affected, and since mutations, let alone miracles, are rather rare events, I knew there had to be some other explanation. I had grown the silver beet plants in jars placed in a deep polystyrene box. When I removed the jars from the box, there was the explanation! On the sides of the jars and at the bottom of the boxes were a couple of large naked gastropods, the sort that don't have the decency to carry a house on their back into which they can retreat and maintain an element of decorum when their cavorting is exposed. Moreover, without a house to grab hold of, they are slippery buggers to remove from the scene of their crimes.

As I removed the slugs I pondered how they got there. Only then did I look at the salvias in the glasshouse. They barely had a leaf on them! Those that did were covered in silvery trails that led down to the small drainage holes at the base of the pots. Underneath each of the pots were numerous naked little gastropods, much smaller than the ones attacking the silver beet. Clearly, the slugs that had been chewing up my silver beet plants were introduced into the glasshouse when the salvias, in pots, were transferred there from the nursery. In the warm comfort of the glasshouse, and with plenty of plant material to devour, the mature slugs had grown and produced myriads of small offspring to attack my partner's salvias before venturing out to attack my succulent and nutritious silver beet.

I transferred the larger slugs from the silver beet into a strong solution of kitchen detergent – a recipe that makes short work of gastropods. I then turned my attention to Pat's salvias in the hope that some re-growth might occur before she returned, otherwise I was destined for the doghouse rather than the glasshouse. I got some forceps and toothpicks to piggle out the little critters from the drainage holes of the pots, an exercise which I repeated a few days later to remove those that had escaped detection during the first round. Most, but not all, of the salvias survived the onslaught. Thankfully, all this happened about three weeks before Pat returned, leaving just sufficient time for the plants to put out a few tender leaves before the critical homecoming inspection. Phew! Never again must the summer veggies and scientific experiments be put at risk by introducing contaminated salvia plants into the glasshouse.

Now, with the decimation of *S. apiana*, history has repeated itself though in this case it involved a solitary well dressed snail rather than a brigade of naked slugs.

John Anderson

Hampton Collection Changes Hands

The Hampton collection started so many years ago when Mark Dymiotis kindly donated his front garden to the Herb Society. With the idea of growing Salvias we began to propagate and grow any Salvias we could find at the time. Since then the garden has developed with many of the larger Salvias at the rear of each path and the smaller Greggii / microphylla varieties in the front with many others filling in between.

Over the years we have had a number of good working Bee's with quite a few Herb Society members joining in the fun and hard work, and then finishing the day with a wonderful meal with Mark.

Unfortunately over the last few years maintenance has become a task with fewer members able to help maintain the garden, in fact we were feeling extremely stretched for time and people power.

The Salvia group now has a large display garden for our Salvia Collection in the Nobelius Heritage Park at Emerald. After much deliberation by quite a number of active members it was decided that we would like to concentrate our efforts at Nobelius.

It was decided to give the garden back to Mark and the Herb Society. The Salvia garden will continue and be maintained and cared for by the Herb Society. As the garden is mature they should have no difficulty in this task. I'm hoping that the garden will now develop not only with Salvias but also many culinary and medicinal herbs.

Feel free to go down and lend a hand with the Herb Society in caring for this garden.

Notes from Gruyere Autumn 2010

What mixtures of Autumn, Spring and Winter we have had and very cold with minus 2 or 3 at times. Heavy fogs, rain and warm sunshine, simply perfect weather for gardening! The autumn tints have been just beautiful with the Liquidambar, oaks, Golden Ash and the reds of the Chinese Pistachio (*Pistacia chinensis*) glorious, so too the butter yellow of the Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*).

There has been a small 'trouble spot' in my garden where nothing seems happy to grow no matter what I have tried (I guess we all have one at some time) so now I have planted a few succulents, those lovely grey-green sempervivums along the front with smatterings of creeping thyme and pockets of the dainty 'Hoop Petticoat' bulbs which are in bloom already! Such slender grass-like foliage contrasts so well with the rounded sempervivums and beyond that I've planted a few miniature day lilies. I know it sounds like an odd combination of plants but if some things are happy enough in a tough spot and will take the dry then it makes it all worthwhile. This is a raised bed area beside a path where many of the hardy drought loving salvias grow and quite a few are in need of a good prune. *Salvia aurita* var *galpinii* in particular which I grew originally to cover a small stump in the front garden and this it did admirably and kept on growing and layering.

The trouble when one starts to tidy up a garden that hasn't been touched for a while, pruning back one plant down to its socks uncovers a nest of worms so to speak. One then finds the need to do a massive work-over to 'tidy' the surrounding area. The layered parts of this salvia will be removed completely and replaced with other salvias. There are many just waiting to take up residency in the garden and they all call out at me as I walk past in the mornings, I can hear them all calling now "My turn, what about me" or another one "I've been waiting quietly here for over twelve months now, surely I can go out!" *Salvia aurita* var *galpinii* can be a great plant when one needs cover quickly and is a good soil binder on a bank but its only downfall is the fact that it will self-seed readily and I guess that's not a bad thing if one wants to grow more than half a dozen plants.

The Yellow-winged Honeyeater has nested in the oak-leaved hydrangea outside my window and two fledglings have been reared and now flown from the nest. This is a good time of the year to rear young ones since the Currawongs are not around to rob the nest of babies. It was a delight to see the proud parents introduce their young birds to the extended families of yellow winged honeyeaters as they came from all over the garden to visit and chatter loudly with one and other. The young ones too will be introduced in turn to all the salvias, correas, grevilleas and banksias that flower through-out the gardens.

Salvias that are in flower or just coming into bloom in my garden are listed as follows and the number one position on top of the list has to go to *Salvia gravida*, simply stunning! *Salvia* : *gravida*, *oxyphora*, 'Costa Rican Blue', *iodantha*, *purpurea*, 'Pink Icicles', 'Waverley', 'Phyllis Fancy', 'Anthony Parker', 'Violet Eyes', 'Meigan's Magic', *madrensis*, *macrophylla* (which hasn't stopped flowering since summer) *polystachya*, *littae*, *corrugata carnea*, *scutellarioides*, 'Van Houttii', 'Indigo Spires', *adenophora*, *leucantha*, *muelleri*, 'Joan', 'Ripe Raspberry', *involutrata*, *puberula* and *microphylla* 'Mystique'.

Also coming into bud and ready for a good flowering season are three strong growing beauties *Salvia wagneriana*, *S. karwinskii* and *S.* 'Timboon' which will flower right through to spring and beyond. The gardens respond very well to the coolness of autumn along with a little bit of moisture after the trying times of summer and it is always a joy to see this change in the larger leaved salvias from either the tropical / sub tropical or the cloud forest areas of South America or Mexico.

This may not happen in every garden since climates and micro-climates vary so much but I do enjoy seeing others' gardens in bloom over the spring / summer seasons while mine will just lay in a state of 'hibernation' or heat 'torpor' until the elements change. It is then when my garden brings joy not only to me but to anyone who visits and will continue blooming through winter into spring. With constant nipping off the spent flower stems new buds emerge and start to bloom and so it goes on!

While the seasons are so mixed at present you may find that some of the herbaceous perennials or clumping salvias like the *S. nemerosa* cultivars and *S. pratensis* may start to reshoot from the basal clumps. If so, it is not too early to divide or take off a few side shoots to propagate but if the new leaves are only very small, wait until they are bigger and then divide the plant. Do watch out for slugs and snails though, they are quick to spot new growth and devour it in one sitting. Cutting a clear plastic drink bottle into deep ring sections and standing them over the emerging shoots will help stop the critters from eating the new shoots and this can be done with any emerging plant shoots and seedlings.

I am delighted to hear comments from everyone on how well their *Salvia* 'Violet Eyes' is doing. It appears that the growth gets better in its second year and a good flush of flowers can be seen above the rest of the foliage in the garden. It doesn't grow as tall in my garden but that is normal here and I would suggest that to any of the height recommendations given for here in Gruyere you may need to add a few more centimeters in your garden, especially if you have good friable soil and access to moisture.

There was a great turnout at Lyndi's plant Identification Day on May 16th and it was good to catch up with a group of salvia enthusiasts who travelled all the way from Sale and surrounds. I think many folk received Lyndi's talk with great interest, writing down as much info as possible relating to the differences between species and cultivars of the microphyllas and the greggii's. There is always something new to learn at any ID day. Lyndi's well laid out garden gave many of us new ideas of coping with tall plants in small spaces and utilizing the front nature strip. Thank you Lyndi and Michael for your hospitality and sharing your day!

Meg Bentley

NEWS FROM HOBART- AUTUMN

The record breaking temperatures of summer in Hobart extended through autumn with a continued spell of fine weather and fewer cold fronts than usual with consequent little rainfall. This spell of equable temperatures, though, has resulted in the first five months of the year yielding only 100mm of rain.

In early June, at the RTBG, tall shrubs of *Salvia madrensis* and *S. puberula* are approaching their third month of flowering while *S. iodantha* and *S. purpurea* have flowered for two months, all having appreciated the relatively calm conditions with reduced incidence of blustery winds as well as their somewhat protected positions. The more wind-hardy, flexibly-stemmed *S. adenophora* has slowly revealed, throughout May, red flowers on the first of its terminal inflorescences at the tip of two metre long arching stems. Certainly, a quick recovery from the drastic reduction of a metre's width of root-

ball, adjacent to a path, that this vigorous and rather invasive salvia was subject to in February! The aromatic *S. dorisiana* is also developing terminal buds and should flower soon, benefiting from an overdue pruning and clump reduction performed in late March to attain some form of control and containment. Though similarly vigorous in growth, its rapid spread results more from the layering of stems than its spreading stolons.

Particularly full of flowers are the related *Salvia* 'Phyllis Fancy', *S.* 'Anthony Parker' and some plants of *S.* 'Waverly' in a more sheltered position. These perennials are hybrids that have *S. leucantha* as one of the parent species. Most impressive is *S.* 'Phyllis Fancy' which pruned to near ground level in late winter attains a rapid growth rate during summer to reach a graceful height of two metres with slender and pliable stems resistant to damaging wind gusts. Plants of *S.* 'Costa Rican Blue' are also in full bloom although that which I have regularly pruned through spring, summer and autumn is more attractive and compact, still exceeding two metres in all directions with blue flowers on many laterals. Especially beautiful is *Salvia guaranitica* 'Large Form', the form of the species that does not have spreading roots but a compact shape requiring no pruning until spring in our climate. With dark blue corollas and dark green foliage, these plants, at nearly two metres high, are well positioned with an easterly, sheltered aspect.

The development of delayed new plantings during summer of *Salvia hirtella* and *S. confertifolia* has been impressive with their speed of growth, reaching a height of 0.8m, with the support of stakes, within two months. While just as rapid, the growth of *S. corrugata* is more lax and so tends to spread more horizontally, making it an effective initial groundcover with its ability to layer. Tip pruning to promote vertical development is a technique particularly useful for this species.

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

John Daniels

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IDENTIFICATION DAY

There was plenty of useful information at the enjoyable Identification day held in Lyndi Garnett's *Salvia* rich garden. *Salvia* enthusiasts and friends were invited to bring their 'mysteries' for ID and all went away with accurate names for their treasures.

We all managed to over indulge in the 'shared plates' for lunch and all acquired salvias we desired. Me who needed nothing, not much space in my suburban plot, acquired yet more and of course they are all planted and the future jungle will simply be shared at some point with others.

We welcomed the Sale ladies, thanks Jane, and other country visitors from afar, as well as a new enthusiast and her family. There are many future events, please check the calendar in the front of this News. We will look forward to meeting you and remember we often have plants available at our gatherings. Laurelle Willis

SALVIA VARIETIES OFFERING WONDERFUL DISPLAYS IN WINTER!

My very suburban sized garden below the Dandenong Ranges complacently survives the summer weather to make a wonderful autumn/winter display.

We all know the cheerful *Salvia leucantha* with purple flowers, (other colourways are available), that seems to be at its peak in autumn but in fact begins flowering as early as Spring through Summer. Although I only have two plants a neighbour has encouraged this 'gem' into a trimmed hedge and backed it with white Iceberg roses and what a display indeed.

Looking amazing is *S. confertiflora* with it's stunning dark burnt orangey/brown coloured velvet calyxes with flowers of strong orange/red. It is always well into flower by late April in this clay soil.

Salvia involucrata "Bethelii" has finally been removed from the entire side fence and a small planting only allowed at the front of the house. But isn't it an eyecatcher! Every visitor always wants a piece and of course obliging is an absolute joy, what else does one do with unwanted material except give it away. That said, I'm very happy to include it in my list of wonderful plants.

Soon to make a delightful display will be *S. corrugata*, another that commences flowering as early as Spring through to Winter with the strongest most vibrant blue flowers on a shrub sized plant. It does prefer more sun than my planting under a large oak provides but still I can usually manage a few sprigs for posies.

Salvia "Anthony Parker" provides strong dark violet purple flowers, a perfect foil against grey foliated *Artemisias* and with tip pruning a second even third flowering is assured.

Certainly there will be gardeners out there happy to grow *S. iodantha*, a very tall 15' cerise joy but it does need protection from wind and *S.* "Blue Bird", a very pretty soft blue that also requires staking and tying and looks well against white walls.

And who could possibly resist *S. discolor*, very sticky silver leaves and wonderful almost black flowers from silver calyxes and seemingly never without flowers, any season, any weather, a delightfully lax shrub to perhaps 4 feet.

My choice above all others is *S. semiatrata*, a decent shrub of perhaps 3/4 feet simply smothered in mauve/plum/purple toned flowers, with interesting rough textured pebbly leaves to enhance the vision.

But of course there are so very many and we'll all have our individual favourites, find time to come along to the Pakenham Sale day in August (check the calendar) and of course enjoy the collection at Nobelius (Emerald). The display is stunning at any season.

The list is endless, but perhaps the descriptions offered may encourage you to seek out the plants to enjoy in your own gardens.

Poppy Mollison.

COMMUNICATING WITH YOU DEPENDS ON ACCURATE INFORMATION ON YOUR SUBSCRIPTION FORM WHICH IS ENCLOSED.

SalviaNews

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