

SALVIA NEWS

Number 41



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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SALVIA NEWS

VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP

This is the best Salvia News ever!! Why? Well as always it due to you my friends and readers and most of all the writers. Geoff Crowhurst sent his article in at deadline and without me asking! He also sent some excellent suggestions. Now I suspect my begging phone calls are enjoyed by some people and I'll admit I like talking to them too getting insight into the lives of our wide spread group is rewarding. I know how busy everyone is and yet you are willing to scribble a few lines to share a joyful garden incident in drought and dust and feeding the shearers or sitting waiting for netball training to finish. Friendship is what our group is about enriched by our passion for gardens and for salvias. This time there are new writers adding to our diversity. Please feel welcome. Friends remain friends even if out of touch for ages. On voting day I met Donna who worked so hard teaching me and doing marvels with the derelict computer in the early days when I not only edited but printed and mailed. She is as lovely as ever and Jack is six and a half and a brilliant reader, with Donna as mother we are not surprised. It is wonderfully wet and bitterly cold. I have shifted the editorial office from the smallest room in the house (no, not the toilet the so called dressing room) to the big old oak dining room table and am basking in warmth and space in the living room with every flat surface deluged with paper.

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I am going to SEQ on Sept 30th. Deadline is 15th October for next issue. Please send copy to me as usual or to Editors

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sept 19th Sunday 11am Visit the Salvia Collection at Geelong Botanical Gardens

Geelong Botanical Gardens Geelong Mel:402 Q5

our Friends of GBG Café. Meet Des the curator of the collection & Bill Whitehead, oldest member and a major donator of many of the Salvias. Lunch in

Visit to Chris Tournier's Nursery, Mel : 911: D7

1985 Barrabool Rd, - towards Gnarwarre, 20 -30 mins Salvias for sale Ring Lyndi or Jillian if you have transport problems.

- Oct 17th Sunday 11am Visit to Cloudehill Gardens & Nursery in Olinda (Dandenongs)**
 89 Olinda - Monbulk Rd, Olinda Mel :122 A9 (opposite Howard Rd).
 World renowned gardens to wander through and nursery
 Lunch will be 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 :62D12
Sat. opening 1pm, Sun. opening 9am.
 Salvias and Roses for sale.
- Nov 9th Tuesday 2pm U3A Deepdene Uniting Church**
962 Burke Rd 45 k7
A salvia talk by Laurel Willis
- Nov 16th Tuesday Bridge Community Garden Centre**
 49 Durham Rd, Kilsyth Mel : 51 J4-5
 Karen Meeuwissen will be speaking
 Salvias for sale
- Nov 21st Sunday 11am Salvias available at Nobelius**
 Nobelius Heritage Park, Emerald Mel :127 G4
 Salvias available at Nobelius. Bring "want lists" to gather those plants
 that you have been wanting.
- 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 SUN Xmas Gathering Garden visit : Karen Meeuwissen**
325 Eacotts rd Hoddles Creek
mel: page 14,- q/r 9 (regional maps)

OUR NOBELIUS SALVIA DISPLAY GARDEN

Winter BRR. Real Hills Weather at last. Cold winds, rain and more rain. How has our garden handled winter. No apparent frost damage, a good deal of wind damage. A bunch of delinquent parrots and cockatoos have discovered salvias at Nobelius and have partied long and loud on

Salvia 'Romantic Rose' and other tall ones. We hope they settle down and become too busy nesting soon to have time to be hooligans.

Salvia involucrata 'Winter Red' and *S. corrugata* were flowering yesterday and just beginning to flower were all three *S. gesneraeflora* and *S. dorisiana*. All the other *S. involucratas* have just finished.

The garden has been tended regularly by the group usually Wednesday. If you would like to join in ring Lyndi at 9803 4534 it is fun and a learning experience. We have staked and tied and continued the pruning regime necessary for a forty metre double border. Pruning is ruthless for the big salvias and rather meticulous for the smaller ones and is carried out regardless of freezing, wet and windy conditions. Truly, it is fun, especially chasing the table cloths.

Because there has been such good rain the soil is wet to below spade depth. Some planting and fertilizing has also been done.

The GPCAA Plaque has been fixed to the Salvia Garden Sign.



Nobelius Heritage Park Emerald

The Nobelius Story - by Patrick Hoqan

At the age of 21 Carl Axel Nobelius emigrated to Australia from his native Sweden. As a gardener Nobelius would have heard of the opportunities that lay in Australia. He settled in South Yarra and got a job as a nursery assistant with the firm of Taylo & Sangster of Toorak. In 1886 with his savings and a loan from Taylor & Sangster, Nobelius bought 63 acres in Emerald in the area now occupied by the Emerald Golf Club.

At first he concentrated on establishing a small orchard of 15 acres. The rich Emerald soil encouraged the growth of strong, fibrous roots – necessary for transplanting young trees. The business expanded rapidly and by 1903 Nobelius was advertising 1 million trees for sale. The Nursery expanded to over 100 acres by 1909.

At its peak the nursery employed more than 80 people with most of the work occurring from late Autumn to early Spring. Nobelius travelled extensively throughout Australia and New Zealand promoting his business. He advertised widely and circulated a beautiful informative and attractive catalogue.

It was the Nobelius attention to Quality, Reliability and Cleanliness that ensured continuous orders from satisfied customers. During the depression of 1890 Nobelius lobbied the Department of Lands and Public works and encouraged them to create jobs by developing parks and Botanical gardens. Avenues of honour were also supplied from the Nobelius nursey. Hence the relationship of Nobelius with very many parks and gardens around Australia.

By the begining of the twentieth century Nobelius had established markets for ornamental and fruit trees in USA, South Africa, South America, Europe and parts of Asia. After the Boer War in South Africa many thousands of fruit trees were supplied by Nobelius to replace those destroyed during the war.

Transport was a major problem for Nobelius to transport his trees from Emerald to Narre Warren a distance of 25 kilometers, where they were repacked and put on a rail wagon for Melbourne. Nobelius petitioned for a rail link between Ferntree Gully and Emerald and hence the Puffing Billy railway came into existince. The packing shed beside the Salvia plot is where all trees were shipped to their world wide destinations. A fumigation facility was built below the packing shed and all bare rooted stock was treated before getting bound into bundles for the narrow gauge rail trip to Fern Tree Gully where they were again loaded on to the main track heading for Melbourne.

The outbreak of World War 1 devastated his overseas markets and the nursery never really recovered. The death of his wife Emily in 1911 was also a severe blow. After his death in 1921 the nursery was sold and although his sons continued to play a part in the business it would never operate quite the same

as it had under its founder. Eventually sections of the property were sold off and the reason that Emerald Heritage Park remains today is in no small part due to the tireless efforts of Mr Gus Ryberg – who lobbied for years to have the park bought by the Municipal Council as a place of significance and enjoyment for future generations.

THE GARDEN IN WINTER

Pity my garden is too small to grow the big winter flowering salvias, though the Keirs have a nice plant of *S. lavenduloides* in flower now, and which they keep shortish with pruning. If I shifted my patch of *S. coahuilensis*, it could go there. I do have *S. microphylla* ‘Huntington’ which has flowered all winter on the nature strip, and I might add Pineapple Sage next year too. *S. semiatrata* keeps flowering though still in a small pot. I hope it repeats the effort out in the garden.

Of the four salvias I grew from seed last summer I have just planted out *S. canescens* and *S. taraxacifolia*. I only got a few seed of the former, with four surviving plants. As it needs a lightish and well-drained soil, I hope it likes the raised bed it is in – with a bit of sand dug in. There are more plants of *S. taraxacifolia*, which has grown very well in tubes. Betsy Clebsch gives it quite a rap. I look forward to seeing the flowers later on. I got seed of *S. pratensis* ‘Haematodes’ because I had seen the species in the flower meadow at Malmaison on the outskirts of Paris. I’ve also got a small plant of *S. pratensis* itself, so it will be interesting to compare the two. The last seed grown plants are of *S. nilotica*, which I will plant near *S. napifolia* and *S. verticilata* ‘Purple Rain’, as all are supposed to be similar types. *S. nilotica* could be weedy, but it won’t have room to spread at my place.

My garden has down time in winter, apart from the two camellias. There are plenty of things to trim, or prune harder, like the *Rosa mutabilis*, which is a small tree anyhow. It is said that you can see the bare bones of a garden in winter, which is more or less true of mine, though with one more Tea rose to cover the fence, the bones won’t be too bare. The Tea roses are evergreen, and ‘General Gallieni’ is already sporting buds, having only needed pruning to keep him from coming over the path.

August is an interesting month, with plants starting into new growth – a *reticulata* iris in flower, and also a dwarf dark purple bearded one which came from Karen’s. The tree peonies are showing buds, though the flowers won’t be out for some time yet. I’ve trimmed back all the old tops on the *S. patens* cultivars, and had to spread snail bait to protect the new shoots. And inside the north-facing glass doors, there are pots of rooted salvia cuttings sitting on a little table, awaiting the warmer weather for potting up. Although it is damp and cold outside, the promise of spring is enough to keep me imagining all the growth and colour to come. Surely you can’t be a true gardener without also being an optimist.

Geoff Crowhurst

Notes from Gruyere. Winter 2010

Gardens of any description are always on the move and just lately there has been such a lot going on in ours. The winter flowering salvias are in their glory at the moment and the Wattle Birds know it too when I see broken stems on many of the plants. The Crimson Rosella also played havoc with the salvia

flowers by chewing off the flowering stems and just letting them fall to the ground, creating a carpet of blue from the remains of *S. mexicana* 'Limelight' or crimson from the stems and blooms of *S. involucrata* 'Timboon'. I can't blame them for this since they have such a delightful fragrance to the inflorescence and 'Timboon' is also such a good grower in the garden and puts up a great show whether in full bloom or not and could be well utilized as a feature shrub or in a shrubby border. It has been a very long time since I have been forced inside because of the wet weather but who can complain. I think the more rain we have right now and through to Spring the better off our gardens will be before summer.

Speaking of fragrances, I happened to be tying up some wayward stems of *S. 'Blue Bird'* and couldn't help noticing the fragrance of the blue flowers, well not quite fragrant but different. I was a little unsure at first and had to seek out other plants of this salvia to see if they 'smelt' the same or was there a difference in full sun compared to this specimen in part shade but no, they all smell the same, just like celery would you believe! Although quite agreeable it was unusual coming from a salvia flower since most salvia fragrances can be categorized in the fruity, herby or camphor / medicinal aromas but the aromatic celery is a new one to me. I don't know about anyone else but to me fragrance can play an important role in the ID of a plant and not only that, it is nice for the pure pleasure alone of smelling any perfume that a plant has to offer!

One area of the garden is taking on a new shape and this is because of the removal of a wide spread *Salvia microphylla* 'Hot Lips'. It has served its purpose in the garden where it was originally planted but I don't like the underground runners coming up through other plants throughout the garden. I have decided to dig up all the runners and clumps and replant them in an area where they can grow and spread to their hearts content, preferably as an edging to a dryer garden and keep it clipped low. I now have extra ground in which to plant out some of the newer salvias and preferably those that can take the hot summer sun and dry periods. Cleaning up in the garden needs to happen sooner rather than later here and with spring fast approaching it won't be long before the bush wrens and blue wrens seek out the long grass growing in amongst the salvias and other plants to find appropriate nesting spots. It has caught me other years when I am forced to leave some areas well alone because the Mother birds carry on if I am getting too close to their well hidden nests in the long grass.

This damp weather has been so good for the garden making it an ideal time to divide clumps or move plants around and they settle in so much quicker when they get a rain shower on them and give them time to get established long before the summer months. There are some wonderful winter blooming salvias out at the moment, usually the taller ones like *Salvias wagneriana*, *karwinskii*, *corrugata*, *involucrata*, *involucrata* 'Pink Icicles', 'Romantic Rose', 'Timboon', *gesneriiflora* 'Red Rambler' and a few flowers opening on 'Costa Rican Blue' which usually flowers here in the spring.

Meg Bentley.

My Little Garden Patch in Melbourne.

I must admit to being a bit of a procrastinator, I've been saying to myself for a little while now (about the last 12 months) that I must send in an article to the Salvia Newsletter. One of the joys in my life besides my family and friends, is gardening and in particular anything to do with salvias. I eagerly await the Salvia Newsletter and normally take it out into the back garden with me, sit down at my table and chairs with a latte' (or red wine), light an incense stick (another passion of mine) and read the newsletter from cover to cover. If I don't get time to

read it before bed, I'll take it to bed and read it then. So I thought that I really should contribute to something that gives me so much joy and just have never got around to it.

Then yesterday, Sunday 15th August, I picked up my Mum and went to the salvia day at Roraima Nursery. During our tea/lunch break we were all chatting and I told Trudi Fry how much I loved the newsletter and she said, "Why don't you write an article for me!!" and there it was, so no turning back now, an article I will do.

My first experience of salvias was when I read an article by Jane Edmanson, titled 'Sage Advice' in Gardening Australia dated July 2003. I was hooked; I wanted to purchase some of these lovely plants. I joined Sue Templeton's, Salvia Association of Australia and purchased my first salvias from her in 2006. Receiving her newsletters fuelled my enthusiasm for salvias and I went to as many of her trips/days out as I could with my Mum. I went to the Ringwood Library and borrowed the book by Betsy Clebsch 'A Book of Salvias' and must have kept renewing my loan of it for at least 6 months, then bought the new book she had out 'A New Book of Salvias'. At a plant fair I met some ladies from the Victorian Salvia Study Group and then joined same in 2007. I have been greatly inspired by visiting members of both associations' gardens and must admit that a garden day trip to the Mornington Peninsula to see Wendy Smith and Glenda Sellenger's gardens in Rosebud was inspirational, they have superb gardens. Since then I have visited Pat Anderson's garden in Warrandyte and if I could even have a garden that was half as good as hers I'd be happy.

I live in Heathmont, Victoria and have a normal suburban garden block, which is full of different salvias. Like most gardeners my garden is a work in progress, with areas that look like a jungle and then areas that I am very happy with. I am so obsessed with salvias that I even have a list of all my salvias, with where they are in my garden, height, width, colour, when they flower, etc., plus an album with photos of my salvias. At last count I have around 198 different salvias (I can't wait for the Pakenham Garden Expo, so that I can reach 200+)!!

Plants that have been brightening up the winter months in my back garden along the back fence have been *Salvia elegans* 'Purple', *S. involucrata* 'Bethelli', *S. 'Ripe Raspberry'*, *S. involucrata x karwinskii* and *S. gesneriiflora* 'Tequila'. A great tip that I received from Lindy Garnett when I went to the Plant Identification Day at her lovely garden, was to tie up to the fence the taller growing salvias (*elegans* Purple, *involucrata* Bethelli), which I rushed back home and did and what a difference, instead of hanging over the path and breaking the stems every time I walked past, I now have a wonderful display of cascading stems and flowers. I have also been amazed at how tall my *S. confertiflora* and *S. purpurea* have grown, both growing up through 2 maple trees and coming out above the top of the branches, which would be about 10-15 ft (3-4 metres) high. Also growing up into the maple are *S. curtiflora* and *S. gesneriiflora* 'Tequila', which are both still flowering now (August). Then how lovely it is to see the spring growth of tiny green leaves poking their heads up through the soil on *S. patens* Blue, *S. nipponica* var. *trisecta*, *S. guaranitica* and *S. verticillata* to name a few.

Two of my favorite salvias are *S. oxyphora*, with magnificent bright hot pink flowers and dark green foliage and *S. madrensis*, with beautiful yellow flowers and heart shaped leaves. I have 2 *S. oxyphora* plants, both in semi-shade which they seem to like, flowering from summer to autumn and 2 *S. madrensis* flowering autumn to winter, also in semi-shade.

My pet hate with regards to purchasing plants, is when you purchase a plant and eagerly await for it to bloom and then you realize that they have labelled it incorrectly. I recently purchased *S. 'Blue Abyss'* and couldn't wait to see the bright blue flowers on smoky blue calyxes, that turned out to be the mauve flowers of *S. leucantha*, which is assumed to be one of the parent plants.

I am really looking forward to Spring and being able to get out into the garden to cut back and prune the plants in warmer weather, this last week has been bitterly cold and windy in

Melbourne leading up to spring in 2 weeks time. Looking forward to the Pakenham Garden Expo and the visit to the Geelong Botanical Gardens in September, perhaps I'll see you there.

Heather Lucas.

A Garden in Tyabb

Here we are only a couple of weeks from Spring and Winter is still very much with us. At this time last year I wrote that winter had not been kind, our heavy soil becoming very wet and waterlogged. This winter has not been any kinder as we have had an extra 200 mm. compared to the same time last year. One bonus has been that our small dam has overflowed for the first time in about 15 years and if the extra fresh water has diluted the salt content I may be able to water the garden during the hot months.

With the wind and the rain the best thing in the salvia garden at present is the rosemary which is flowering beautifully. Of the salvias, *S. 'honeymelon'* is quite beautiful and *S. munzii* is in full flower. *S. semiatrata* is as beautiful as ever. *S. gravida* had just begun to flower but has since drowned. I had this planted in one of our rare protected areas but it is also an area that pools water after excessive rain – lesson learned!

Last year we planted *S. myriantha* for the first time with mixed success. Two thrived but were then blown out of the ground; a couple of others did well for a while before collapsing (prior to the winter rain). The ones that have survived to flower and seed have produced several seedlings. One I kept in a pot (“Yes it is too big for a pot”) and seedlings came up in some of the nearby pots. I would be interested to know if this has weed potential.

Of course not all salvias have to be in flower to be attractive. In the southeast corner of our garden is an old *S. canariensis*, at least 12 years old, with a twisted deformed base but at least 2m. tall and 3.5m. in diameter. The foliage is quite beautiful and it would be worth growing just for that.

Salvias that I like but are a problem here in the heavy soil are *S. chamelaeagnea* and several *S. involucrata*. These spread quite rapidly and threaten to dominate. Do other people find the same problem? I have to choose between letting them loose because I admire them, or taking to them with a mattock and spade. I have been doing the former – maybe because controlling them is just hard work.

Just prior to our garden being open last November, one of the *Salvia News*' subscribers, Wendy Smith, gave a talk on salvias to the Mt Eliza Morning Garden Club (some 300 members). That talk, followed by the emphasis placed on salvias in our garden (including having an outstanding salvia stall stocked by Jillian Barkell and Wendy), seems to have significantly increased awareness of salvias in this area. Certainly at the Garden Club more people are growing and asking about them.

Bevan Whelan

How well do synthetic hormones improve root development in cuttings?

Over the years, *Salvia News* has published various pieces on the subject of propagating salvias from cuttings, such as the excellent one by Meg Bentley in the winter edition of 2009 (no. 37). While salvias are, on the whole, one of the easiest genera to propagate by cuttings, the best results will be gained by paying attention to various factors:

1. The propagating medium. Is it well drained?

2. The type of cutting: softwood/semi hardwood/tip/side shoot...
3. The time of year relative to the type of cutting
4. The cutting material – ideally should be healthy and vigorous (unlike the tatty, late-winter material I will soon be pruning off some of my plants)
5. The propagating environment: softwood cuttings are much more tender than semi-hardwood cuttings and need to be kept humid. Success in winter really needs bottom heat
6. Hygiene: I have become a bit sloppy recently with washing pots etc and the results are telling me so!!

What are some other tricks of the trade? One is **the use of root-promoting hormones**.

Auxins are a group of hormones that regulate a range of developmental processes in plants. These are able to stimulate the formation of adventitious roots, which is what we want from our cuttings. A plant produces these in the growth tip in much greater amounts when a shoot is elongating rapidly than at other times of the year. So, during periods when auxins are not being produced much, propagation can be enhanced by the use of synthetically-produced hormones.

Synthetic hormones for root initiation can be bought in various forms: as powders (mixed with talc), as liquids (dissolved in alcohol and diluted in water, I think) or prepared as a sticky gel. There are several brands available in retail nurseries, and prices vary, as do the actual constituents and concentrations. Some preparations are more suitable for different sorts of cutting material. Then there is the question of how to apply these. Should the cuttings be dipped in the liquids or gels for 5 seconds or left soaking for hours, for example? Many people also advocate honey as being a source of hormones. I don't know whether or not this is true but honey may well aid root formation by containing some anti-bacterial compounds which in turn contribute to the success or otherwise of the process.

In late April, as the weather was cooling off and plant growth had slowed almost to a halt, I decided to examine the effect of some of these products on a couple of salvias that have given me problems in the past, as well as some Australian natives. The products I tried were:

1. Honey
2. Clonex gel (3g/litre IBA)
3. Rootex liquid (4g/litre IBA)
4. Multicrop "Take Root" powder (0.5g/kg IBA + 0.5g/kg NAA)
5. Richgro "Root Strike" powder (8g/kg IBA)
6. Yates "Plant Cutting Powder" (0.05 g/kg IAA + 0.02 g/kg NAA)

(Where **IBA** is indole butyric acid, **NAA** is naphthalene acetic acid and **IAA** is indole acetic acid)

I selected 24 tip cuttings (semi-hardwood) of similar size and quality of each of 4 taxa (4 of each treated with one of the 6 preparations). The species were *Salvia canariensis*, *Salvia thymoides*, *Goodenia* (prostrate form) and *Correa reflexa*. They were left in a sheltered spot with a friend while I went away for a month – with no bottom heat and no special conditions.

Results: I eventually tipped the cuttings out at the start of August and gauged success or otherwise by how soon roots had appeared from the bottom of the pots (reported by friend) and, more particularly, the size of the root development.

For the **correa**, each preparation yielded 3 or 4 out of 4 rooted cuttings. Only one cutting had a really well developed root system, and that was from the batch dipped in the Richgro powder.

For the **prostrate goodenia**, Richgro powder again won the competition, producing 4 sets of well developed roots, followed by Rootex liquid and Take Root powder, Clonex, then Yates powder. Only 1 cutting dipped in honey produced any roots.

Salvia thymoides was a complete disaster! Every cutting died. I think this is a really tricky one, like *Salvia clevelandii* and maybe November is the only month to hope for any success?

For *Salvia canariensis*, the best results again came with Richgro powder (all 4 cuttings excellent), followed by Rootex liquid, Clonex gel, Take Root powder, honey and Yates powder.

This little experiment was clearly not comprehensive enough to make any bold conclusions. However, it has demonstrated that Richgro powder, with the highest concentration of IBA, and designed for hardwood cuttings, gave me the best results for this batch of cuttings in winter. I generally use Rootex liquid when I am doing batches of cuttings during the warmer months and I know other people that prefer Clonex gel (which is more expensive). I think it would be well worth doing some further tests at different times of year, with different types of cuttings, and of course, adding a control batch with no extra preparation at all. After all, these products cost money so it is important to use them to their best advantage.

Pat Anderson

Photo Day with Patrick Hogan & Visit to Lyle Phillippe's Roraima Nursery.

The photo day with Patrick Hogan held at the Nobelius Display Garden, Emerald on 18th July was very informative and certainly produced a lot of questions on different camera's, new technology and computer programmes. A big thank you to Patrick Hogan for being so patient with all our questions and for braving the elements. It was a rather windy day, I thought at one stage that we might be blown off the mountains, and the rain held off and started just as I was driving home. It was a very enjoyable day, with lovely people and food and was attended by around 13 people. The display garden had several winter flowering salvias in bloom, amongst them *S.involucrata* x 'Romantic Rose', *S. squalens*, *S. karwinskii* 'Winter Red' and a beautiful *S. corrugata* (what a lovely royal blue flower). Considering that this garden is not watered, the taller salvias were flourishing and reaching for the skies. I had not been to the Nobelius Display Garden before and am greatly looking forward to going back and seeing it in full Spring/Summer display.

The visit to Lyle Phillippe's Roraima Nursery on 15th August was an absolute treasure of a day. Being predominately a nursery of cacti and succulent plants, I was not that enthused, but thought it would make a nice day out to break up the gloom of winter. The day was cold and rainy in Melbourne when we left for Lara (near Geelong), but as we drove the rain ceased and when we got to the nursery it was fine and remained so and started raining as we drove back to Melbourne later on in the afternoon. This nursery was a lovely surprise, beautifully laid out, with 3 acres of display gardens, eclectic art, pots and lots of drought tolerant plants. The nursery also has a large variety of natives, perennials, ferns, palms, and bottle trees. There were unique metal sculptures created by a local Geelong artist for sale and on display around the gardens, amongst them a metal cacti plant, dragon and emu. There were also salvias on sale, which was a bonus for me and I purchased a *S. apiana* and *S. microphylla* 'Peg' to add to my collection. At one stage I saw Lyndi with a trolley full of plants, she knew exactly what she wanted and as she came in a van, she could have bought several trolleys full!! There were 9 of us who ventured out, two being a new couple, who we hope enjoyed the day as much as we did.

Heather Lucas

INDEED!!PREGNANT!!

As a result of a telephone conversation with Trudi and her response, I was prompted to check the Oxford Dictionary AND....S. grvida is indeed the pregnant Salvia! Absolutely well named although one does wonder how names are chosen. Many quite large individual flowers make up the six inch flowering length but adding to the attraction are the bracts which are apple green surrounded by a cerise border beneath the cerise flowers. Some others are describing the colour as burgundy or hot pink, so that's in the eye of the beholder. My plant is loving an exceptionally wet but well drained scoria area with the protection of a fence and is also facing due North enjoying as much sun as this Winter has offered it. The growth thus far is only of small shrub dimensions but it appears its potential is for 12 feet, so a 'tree' annually. Incidentally there are five flowers (in the wings) so it's about to be an eyecatcher indeed. As well, the quite large hairy leaves are delightfully perfumed. Laurelle Willis

THE BIOLOGY OF *Salvia divinorum*

Disclaimer: The following article is offered in the context of providing information about the botanical characteristics of *Salvia divinorum*, the occurrence and hallucinogenic properties of salvinorin A in this species, and associated botanical and scientific issues. It is emphasized that growing or importing *S. divinorum* or the production of salvinorin A in/into Australia without the approval of the Therapeutic Goods Association is highly illegal. Readers are referred to an article entitled "*Salvia divinorum* legal information" at the website <http://www.shaman-australis.com.au> for further information. The author and the editor reject any responsibility arising from the use or abuse of the information in this article.

A few years ago a mouse visited our kitchen and set about eating some seeds of *Salvia reflexa* which Pat was drying out in a bowl prior to storing them in our fridge. Normally a mouse takes off like greased lightning when it is disturbed but, to my amazement, this bloke simply looked up whimsically and grinned. It was quite clearly glazed to the eyeballs, suggesting that the seeds of *S. reflexa* contained an hallucinogenic factor.

This incident caused me to look into the occurrence of toxic and hallucinogenic factors in *S. reflexa* and salvias in general (see *Salvia News* No 26, Spring 2006). It was then that I learnt about the hallucinogenic properties of *S. divinorum*. Readers of **Salvia News** might be astonished to know that this plant, one of the worlds' 900 species of salvias, contains **the** most powerful naturally-occurring hallucinogenic compound known. Most hallucinogenic compounds such as those found in the opium poppy and other hallucinogenic plants are alkaloids (eg morphine, mescaline and cocaine); they contain nitrogen and are synthesised by plants from amino acids. However, the hallucinogenic compound found in *S. divinorum*, known as salvinorin A, is chemically altogether different (Perry *et al.*, 2000; Valdes *et al.*, 1994). All salvia fanatics will be aware of the strong fragrant aromas associated with salvias. These are attributable to a group of volatile compounds called terpenoids which are released when the leaves are bruised or crushed. Salvinorin A is also a terpenoid and, as discussed below, this makes its hallucinogenic properties quite unique and are of considerable scientific and medical interest.

The leaves of *S. divinorum*, collected from vegetative plants, have long been used by the Mazatec Indians in Mexico to induce visions. *S. divinorum* does not normally flower in cultivation and it was only relatively recently found in its native habitat in hot humid areas at high altitude in Oaxaca province in Mexico and the floristic characteristics described.

It is interesting to note that authors of books on salvias have been very coy about providing descriptions of *S. divinorum* until quite recently. The first edition on salvias by Clebsch (1997) does not mention *S. divinorum*, perhaps because at this time (1997), information on *S. divinorum* and salvinorin A could only be found in the scientific literature which is not readily accessible to gardeners and horticulturalists. Sutton (1999) appears to be the first to list *S. divinorum* but he comments that his book is "for gardeners rather than seekers of alternative states of being" and provides no botanical information. However, the

more recent texts by Clebsch (2nd edition 2003) and Froissart (2008) provide good descriptions of *S. divinorum*. In summary, the flowers have a purple calyx and a white perianth and occur in whorls. The plant is a perennial, roots readily, and is easy to propagate from rootstocks. However, some authors have reported that they have found it difficult to induce flowering under cultivated conditions.

Botanically, *S. divinorum* belongs to the *Salvia* subgenus *Calosphaea*, section *Dusenostachys* (Froissart, 2008). This snippet of information could be of great interest to anyone interested in understanding the phylogeny and evolution of salvias for it raises the question whether other members of this section, or any other section within the genus *Salvia*, also contain salvinorin A. The issue here is that the genes for making salvinorin A are most likely to be found in very closely related species which have arisen from a common ancestor containing the necessary genes. This idea is amply illustrated by onions and garlic and their relatives; these very closely related plants produce, as their aroma indicates, very closely related compounds which we do not normally associate with other plants. Given that there about 900 species of *Salvia*, a survey of the occurrence or absence of salvinorin A (and compounds chemically related to it) in salvias might provide information that is useful in understanding the phylogeny of *S. divinorum* in relation to other salvias, especially those belonging to the subgenus *Calosphaea*.

Readers of **Salvia News** might be interested to know that on the 29th March 2009, the magazine supplement to the *Sunday Telegraph* (a UK newspaper) contained an article with the heading “It looks like a cross between a sage and a mint. It smells like herbal tea. Its also a more powerful hallucinogen than LSD. So why is it perfectly legal in the UK, USA and in other parts of the world?” It is clear from the article that *S. divinorum* has become a popular material for “experimentation” and has a significant following in both UK and USA, although it is now evident that some states in the USA are moving towards “scheduling” this species. A look on the internet under *S. divinorum* reveals a long list of international suppliers of dried leaf material and leaf extracts. Given that some countries, including Australia, have moved to “schedule” *S. divinorum*, it seems rather remarkable that it is freely available in others. I concluded from the article in the *Sunday Telegraph* that there are several reasons. Perhaps the most important is that salvinorin A (and hence *S. divinorum*) is not regarded as addictive in the way that the alkaloid opiates from poppies and other plants are. Further, the level of fatalities that can be directly attributable to *S. divinorum* or extracts prepared from it does not appear to cause concern. Also, the article in the *Sunday Telegraph* indicates that many people find a “trip” on *S. divinorum* can be most unpleasant though it is mercifully of fairly short duration. Apparently many first time users find that this in itself is enough to cause them to refrain from further “experimentation”. Nonetheless, various boards of review in various countries have concluded that salvinorin A is a substance of abuse and merits “scheduling” which, means it is illegal to possess or grow or process *S. divinorum* without permission.

The hallucinogenic properties of compounds such as morphine (from poppies), LSD (from mushrooms) and salvinorin A (from *S. divinorum*) arise as a result of binding to sites in the brain called neural opiate receptors. Morphine, which is widely used as a painkiller, binds primarily to the μ opiate receptor which leads to euphoric and addictive behaviour. It is for this reason that the medical administration of morphine is kept to a minimum and the growth of opium poppies for the production of morphine in Tasmania is tightly regulated. Whereas the alkaloid hallucinogenic compounds bind to the μ opiate receptor, salvinorin A, with its totally different chemical structure, binds to a different opiate receptor known as the κ receptor. Very importantly, whilst binding at this site leads to hallucinations it does not appear to be associated with addiction. This raises the question whether salvinorin A (or possibly non-hallucinogenic compounds derived from it) could be used as a non-addictive treatment to block the κ receptor for use in the management of alkaloid addiction (opium), depression, and the symptoms of psychoses. Currently, one concern amongst neuroscientists investigating these very exciting issues is that “scheduling” *S. divinorum* and salvinorin A could impede the study of these questions since they will find it difficult to attract the finance and necessary permission to work with an illegal plant/substance (Brown, 2009).

Finally, on a local note, salvia fanatics should be aware that *S. divinorum* and salvinorin A have been “scheduled” in Australia and here again readers are referred to the website given in the disclaimer at the beginning of this article. Nonetheless, a few years ago I saw *S. divinorum* and various other salvias for sale on a plant stall at a gardening function. Most of the salvias were offered at a price of about \$3-\$5 but the plants of *S. divinorum* had no price tag. Out of interest, when I enquired about the price for

S. divinorum, I was told \$45! So I can only conclude that there is a subculture of demand for *S. divinorum* much as there is for other illegal hallucinogenic plants. In this regard I am pleased to report that the Salvia Study Group does not have any stocks of *S. divinorum* and has never offered this plant for sale. Similarly, I do not know of any member of the Group who grows or has previously grown this species.

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John Anderson

SALVIAS IN THE WINTER GARDEN. APOLLO BAY

At the time of writing, late August, we have had 310 ml+ for the month and are likely to beat the 91 record which was 332 ml for the month, so with over 1100 ml for the year so far we are very wet and windy as well. Luckily we don't get as cold as most, rarely below 10 degrees as we are so close to the coast. We are also 300m above sea level. So how are the salvias faring?. Mostly very well, I have pruned, fed and mulched the long salvia border, using sawdust as the sons have a new spot mill here, the blackwood sawdust contrasts well with the green of the salvias. Lots of gravel has been needed as well and sand for the plants who dislike the heavy wet clay. The tall old bushes of *Salvia involucrata*, *S. puberula*, *S. Karvinskii*, *S. gesneriiflora* 'Tequila', and *S. sprucei* that hide the shed are trying hard to look pretty, but *S. semi atrata* at the beginning of the row pinky purple, and *S. 'Honeymelon'*, bright scarlet, at the far end are at their best. *S. 'Bluebird'* has nearly finished, I left her 4m long wands at pruning to give the birds a feed. *S. corrugata* had a great show, but grew too tall again. I have planted Trudi's *S. africana* 'Lemon Steps' to fill in a gap near *Tagetes lemmonii*, the tree Marigold so the gold and terracotta should look good together.

In the main herb garden the *Salvia officinalis* which was wild collected from Dalmatia has started flowering, a neat bush with usual purple lilac flowers, but the white form nearby is feeling the cold, *S. adriatica*, a baby of *S. 'Greek Skies'*, nearly died here, but has sent out good bushy new growth. I just don't dare cut it in wet weather for fear of letting in rot. This also applies to the original parent *Salvia fruticosa* from Mark Dimiotis, which is doing well, below the house, together with *S. 'Berggarten'*, *S. lavandulifolia* and *S. 'Bluey'*, the small bushy sport of *S. ictyria*. I mulched them with heavy gravel last year, which also blocked some snake holes I hope. *S. microphylla* 'Huntingdon' nearby has been cut back hard, but still has some flowers. It is the hardiest, more so than *S.m 'Margaret Arnold'*, The *S.greggii*s are just sitting and sulking, after being their best ever over summer. On the central raised beds in a very spoilt position *S. 'Wendy's Wish'* is wishing it was warm and *S. 'Silkes Dream'* has gone to sleep and may never wake. At the bottom of the garden, near where multitudes of purple, pink and white hellebores are blooming under the plum tree, *S. rubiginosa* has gone wild, climbing the Orange Verbena, with masses of wine red calyx, blue flowers, and *S. dorisiana* is blooming sending out her fruity fragrance whenever there is sun. The predominant colour in the garden at present however is bright yellow, from the daffodils and jonquils, the lemons on the tree and the huge trusses of *Senecio Petasites*, Velvet Geranium. Soon it will be all the bluebells and forget me not.

I visited Meg recently with my mother, mid week as nursery life makes weekend trips tricky. and what a pleasure to see both her and Gary, the multitude of well tended pots under the protection of a large tree, lots of new projects taking place, and to be able to just talk Salvias with someone who loves them. I also had a good look at the Salvias at the Geelong Botanic Gardens to compensate for not being able to meet you all there in September. Many have been pruned hard, all looking shipshape and our trees in the rainforest section growing tall and shading the ferns. I have been thinking about the

process of establishing my collection, in relation to the Salvia Study Group, and hopefully will write about that next time.

Judi Forrester

Correct Naming of Salvias for our Newsletter.

Some of us are unsure of the correct procedure for writing salvia names when we want to include an article in the Salvia Newsletter.

We don't want you to be put off and think it is going to be difficult. We all have to start somewhere. It is not a hard thing to follow, once you know and understand the way to go. Here are a few easy tips that may help, firstly:

1. The use of italics gives the name the required slanted script.

Italics are used for naming the plant genus and the species, this can be seen in the following salvia name and you should always begin with a capital letter and the species name is still in italics but no capital letter.

Salvia involucrata

This salvia has many cultivars and varieties, so these are written in low case not italics. If it has a cultivar name it should be started with a capital letter and single quotation marks as follows:

Salvia involucrata 'Ripe Raspberry'

If the parent of a particular cultivar is not known or it is impossible to link it with a certain type or species then it can be written simply as:

Salvia 'Ripe Raspberry'

There are so many salvia cultivars to remember but if you follow the simple way of *Italics for Genus and species* and lower case for the cultivar names and starting each name with a capital letter will make it much easier

Some other examples are:

Salvia elegans 'Pineapple'

Salvia karwinskii

Salvia 'Violet Eyes'

Salvia gesneriiflora 'Tequila'

Salvia microphylla 'Margaret Arnold'

Salvia wagneriana

You might like to make up your own list of salvias for a bit of practice.

Meg Bentley

Gardening in South Gippsland

The area I garden in, called Boolarra South, (the nearest town being Mirboo North), is located on top of the Strezlecki Ranges. It is a high rainfall, very windy, frost-prone area, mainly dairying and cattle grazing country, though more and more good farmland is being sold for tree plantations.

I was first introduced to salvias about four years ago when I was invited by my sister-in-law Lyn Gadd to a talk at the Bannockburn Garden Club on Salvias by Trudi Fry and Jillian Barkell. I came home with a few plants, plus some cuttings from Lyn's garden. Since then, I've purchased a few more, but mostly grown them from cuttings obtained from many kind gardeners. My success rate from cuttings is probably only about 50 - 60 %, but I really enjoy trying to grow them. I have 3 large composting enclosures (at different stages of decomposition), plus an unlimited supply of cow manure (gathered from the paddocks), so that when the cuttings are ready for planting, they go into a rich mixture of soil and compost, plus water crystals, and generally grow well, except for wind damage at times, which means staking the taller species.

Those salvias that have flowered well over this wet Winter period (over 130 mm just for August so far) include: *Salvia* 'Megan's Magic', *S. microphylla* 'Huntington', *S.* 'Indigo Spires', *S. rubiginosa*, *S. scutellaroides*, *S. guaranitica* syn *S. ambigans*, *S. purpurea*, *S. iodantha*, *S.* 'Waverly', *S. wagneriana*, *S. elegans* 'Honeymelon', *S. curviflora*, *S. chiapensis*, and *S. leucantha* 'Velvet Pink'.

I'm looking forward to seeing which salvia plants and cuttings take off over Spring and Summer, and give me a different splash of colour, as many are coming to life with new growth now from their base.

Meg Gadd

I have an idea for the newsletter. Perhaps you could get people to write up short pieces on one of the salvia species/cultivars that they grow, as everyone's experience is different, depending on their garden microclimate, soil, etc. People could include where the plant comes from & natural conditions, as this info. is easy to find. A bit about pruning, watering etc. The interest is in the detail. If the idea works, then a page or so could be included in each newsletter. Geoff Crowhurst

I think this is a great idea and I look forward to hearing from more people. It is the way to learn. Trudi

Salvia microphylla 'Mystique'

It pays to keep track of your plants for example where each one came from or how you acquired it in the beginning. These 'origins' help to give a background to the identity of any cultivar that may arise in your garden (or anyone else's).

Many years ago I planted *Salvia microphylla* 'Grahami' known as the Graham Sage', of course it has since had a name change and is now known as *Salvia microphylla* var *neurepia*. It is the old *microphylla* with the medium to large soft green leaves and large reddish corolla with a large lower lip and some likened its fragrance to 'Blackcurrant' which was also one of its common names when sold.

This hardy salvia was planted down the driveway in full sun and eventually threw a seed across the driveway on the lower side. The seedling grew and flowered after a year or two. It was different to the parent plant with leaves slightly larger and the flowers quite small, in compact heads with 8-10 sets of

whorls and approx 6 flowers per whorl opening from bottom to top. The calyces were also smaller and green with a touch of brownish red at the tip of the opening and eventually they would drop off when the flowers were finished. The whole raceme of flowers produced a delightful fragrance when you brushed your hand up over the stem.

At this stage rather than give it a number it was given the name of 'Mystique' because one couldn't be sure of its parentage at that time, although the leaf looked like a *microphylla* leaf but one couldn't be too sure. A few years later I planted a rooted cutting of the same *S. microphylla* var *neurepia* (from the driveway) into a garden on the opposite side of the property where it flourished and produced a seedling nearby which grew well and flowered the following year. It was very interesting to note that this young seedling also produced the leaves and flowers including the same fragrance of the salvia named 'Mystique' and to see how this little exercise evolved from beginning to end. It also showed me that its parent (or at least one of them) was indeed the *S. microphylla* var *neurepia*.

Meg Bentley.

A note on the **Photography Talk at Nobelius.**

It was a very interesting talk and demonstration by Patrick Hogan about using digital cameras and photography in general for plants in the garden. (Patrick, as you may know did the photographs in our previous *Salvia News* for the official Opening Day). His explanations and ideas were very easy to understand and many folk came away enlightened, enthusiastic and eager to 'have a go'. It was unfortunate that the day was so windy but a nice lunch was shared by all and we managed to finish off before the rains came. Thank you Patrick for sharing your knowledge and time with us on Sunday:

Pruning and Propagation for Winter

Now is the perfect time to prune those large leaf Salvias and to take cuttings. Many of the tall large leaf Salvias may have finished or are almost finished flowering. They may be looking a bit bedraggled from the wind, or Wattle Birds crashing into them, many clumps may have old canes that need taking out. Have a look at your plant and decide what needs to come out. Old canes can be pruned right down to the base, of course if there are new growths coming from the old canes fairly low down, then prune to those new shoots.

Usually always prune to a bud or new shoots, but it may not be possible to find new shoots happening on large plants, so you will have to prune to where you think there should be a bud or prune to a suitable height and wait for that new growth to appear. While you are taking out the big old canes, don't forget to clean out the clump of weak, old, dead or crossing branches, the same principle as pruning a rose bush. If you are like me and cannot throw away any pruning – (you just have to take all those cuttings), well now is the perfect time. If you find yourself with too many plants to pot up, just give them to a friend or give them to the group to sell – we can always use some more pots of whatever you give us. (just phone and we can organize to pick up) Don't even think about taking cutting of the small leaf Salvias e.g. *greggii*'s and *microphylla*'s, they will only sit and sulk in this cold weather. They are best taken in the warmer months.

Taking Cuttings

Take tip cuttings, anywhere from 8 – 14cm long, strip off the lower leaves and any flowers and buds. (we want the energy in the cutting to go into producing roots and strong growth – if there are flowers or buds, then the energy goes into producing that flower and not roots. If the cutting does root with a flower, then it is likely to be weak and may not survive any shocks or stress.) Nip out the top bud of leaves as this promotes bushiness.

As many large leaf Salvias have hollow stems it is best to take the cutting by cutting through the node, or at least leave a heel. Dip the cuttings into a rooting gel or powder and put into a pot of ordinary potting mix. Plant the cutting deeply so that there is at least one node below the surface. This all goes to help produce roots. Many people prefer to plant one cutting to one pot – this can take up a lot of space. The idea here is that the cutting will continue to grow in that pot, no repotting and no shock associated with repotting for the plant., but some people don't have a lot of room e.g. me, so I put a number of cuttings in one pot and tease them out and pot up into individual pots when rooted.

Always water the pot of cuttings or potted up plants in well – this is to settle the soil and to eliminate the air around the cutting stem, so the cutting can then get on with the task of producing roots.

News from Hobart- Winter

A grey day of gentle soaking rain with the bright yellow blooms of silver wattles laden with moisture at the commencement of spring belie the dryness of the year so far, generally, in south east Tasmania. With 'dying' areas of grass at the RTBG requiring irrigation during winter, rainfall from mid-August has fortunately made up, somewhat, the deficit.

Despite the lack of rain, temperatures have been relatively mild, although the *Salvia gesneriiflora* 'Tequila' and *Salvia involucrata x karwinskii*, at home, have only started flowering recently in the lower, more frost-protected parts of the plant. Growing at altitude above 2,000m in Somalia, *Salvia somalensis*, in contrast, has shown no evidence of frost damage. This aromatic, pale green shrub grows to 1.5m and has small, pale blue flowers, predominantly in summer, that are a bonus on an attractive foliaged plant.

Through the winter, I have had couple of plants of *Salvia viridis* continue to bloom sporadically. The seed of these were sown late in November last year and the plants flowered in autumn with predominantly pink 'bracts' or coloured 'leaves' at the tips of the inflorescences. This is the main aesthetic feature of this small annual, with a few being dark blue and the odd white form of the plant. The tip colour of each particular plant, noticeably, is also that of the upper lip of the corolla, although such flowers are relatively insignificant. These salvias are from a packet of seed from New Zealand and wrongly labelled as 'Clary Sage', 'Summer Bouquet Mixed'. Clary Sage usually refers to *S. sclarea*, a robust aromatic herbaceous salvia, but more impressively colourful, with growth to 1.5m. This bold leaved plant has large, persistent, predominantly cream, green-veined and pink-edged bracts that are a highlight in early summer. Pruning to the ground in autumn is required to remove the ragged remnants of the season's display and encourages the crown to persist into a second or even third year.

In early November last year I sowed a pinch of seed of *Salvia hispanica*, a chia species, into a couple of pots and they germinated vigorously. Planted into a polystyrene box on the deck and into a couple of spots into beds these plants grew rapidly with water and fertilizing through summer. Requiring staking with increasing rigour at each successive passing of cold fronts, the plants commenced to form terminal buds simultaneously on all laterals by April. However, it was at the apex of these plants from which the first pale blue, densely flowered inflorescences emerged at 2.5m in the beds and 1.5m in the polystyrene box, belatedly, but unsurprisingly, since the frosts of early May brought this all too brief flowering to an end.

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

John Daniels

john-daniels@bigpond.com

John said in his email that they were having "misty moisty weather". Something nice to dream of when summer is frying us. Trudi

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