

# SALVIA NEWS

Number 44



Official Newsletter of the  
**Victorian Salvia Study Group**

June 2011

# **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 a not for profit organization. Any monies received are used to run the Group's activities and for the planting and maintenance of our GPCAA registered garden collection.

LOOK FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR WEB ADDRESS [www.salvias.org.au](http://www.salvias.org.au)

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**Deadline for the next issue is 25<sup>th</sup> July 2011. Please send copy to Trudi.**



# SALVIA NEWS

## VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP

**W**elcome to your latest edition. Thank you everyone for your kind words of encouragement in my role of now preparing this newsletter for you each edition.

And for invitations to come here and there. Please forgive me for awhile if I don't accept all invites. I have a husband in hospital (mountain biking accident) who has suffered a spinal cord injury and my days are currently filled with work and travelling to the hospital each evening. I can't wait for him to get back home again. I miss him terribly and I long for some 'normal' lifestyle again. Although I'm sure it will be filled with rehab, physio and OT appointments even when he is home.

In the meantime we've had an amazing Autumn and the first entry into Winter has been beautiful. Enjoy your gardens while you can!

**Kathie Thomas:** e: [kathie@vadirectory.net](mailto:kathie@vadirectory.net) ph: 9754 8310

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### Message from Trudi:

I am suddenly about to be 80!! It has certainly surprised me. I also need a hip replacement which has turned me into a self pitying coward. The Queen has had two. I went out into the garden and with my industrial type four wheeled steel walker with blow up tyres, named Scarlett set off down the paths parting long branches of bluest blue, cyclamen pink, purple and red salvias and rich smelling herbs and a lush robust crowd of beauty all parting before my icebreaker styled walker. It smelt divine and such a riot of colour comforted me and the feel of the earth strengthened me.



We have all lived interesting lives. Apart from the raising children bit and the great being married bit I was reminded of the sculpture years when I was looking for photos to scan for the party.

There we were with politicians at "openings" and TV stars and the learned and great in their fields and authors and the wife of a man who worked on the Hubble. And all because as my big brother told me "you always liked making mud pies". When I got my hands into clay it was before the days of places to study or, perhaps, I just didn't know where to look. So somehow with a brilliant library I taught myself. I had an engineer for a father-in-law who built me an electric pottery wheel and a supportive husband who was also a metallurgist who could do anything or could find someone who could..

My first studio was the huge laundry room in an American designed company house, the next a shed in Victoria. I sold my pottery at the school fair and made money. The next thing was a full scale Exhibition at Emerald Gallery where people loved what I made and even forgave me for causing a squabble when I sold something twice. Commissions followed more Exhibitions. How did I drift into telling all this? Because plants have nourished me as companions as well as those relatives and friends who have loved and supported me. And because I want Bill to tell his story and the rest of you too. I am a firm believer in companion planting.

**Trudi Fry**

## Calendar of Events

- June 18th Sat**                    **RHSV Conference 8.30am – 4.00pm**  
Mt Waverley Community Centre, Millers Café  
Mt Waverley Mel:62 D12  
Salvias and other plants for sale.
- June 19th Sun**                    **Garden Visit Heather Lucas 11.00 am**  
3 Blich Crt, Heathmont Mel : 63 J1, Ph98795365  
Interesting Salvia garden. Bring a chair and lunch to share  
Bring Salvias to be identified.  
**Everyone interested in Salvias is welcome**
- June 20th Mon**                    **Knox Home Garden Club 8. pm**  
U3A Parkhills Campus. Park Boulevard  
Fern tree Gully Mel: 64 F11  
Lyndi will be speaking. Plants for sale  
**Bring Salvias to be identified.**
- July 18th Mon**                    **Wonthaggi Garden Club 1.30 pm**  
The Wonthaggi Workman's Club, Mel: Reg Map 912 R12  
75 Graham St, Wonthaggi  
Lyndi will be speaking. Plants for sale  
**Bring Salvias to be identified**
- July 21st Thurs**                    **Warrigal Ranges Probus Group 10.am**  
40 Shirley Rd, Neerim South, at the home of Caryl & Denis Ferdinands  
Lyndi will be speaking.  
Bring plants to be identified Mel: Reg Maps , Pg 912 , V6  
**Plants for sale**
- Aug 17th Wed**                    **South Melbourne Garden Club 7.45pm**  
Mary Kehoe Centre, 224 Danks St, Albert Park. Mel:2K, A 10  
St Kilda Beach Tram 112, Stop 136, cnr Mills & Danks St.  
Lyndi will be speaking .Bring plants to be identified  
**Plants for sale.**
- Sept 3rd Sat**                    **Pakenham garden Expo 9am**  
Pakenham Racecourse, Mel : 317 G8  
Stephen Ryan will be guest speaker.  
Be early, bring a list  
**Plants for sale. Plants to be identified.**
- Sept 29th Thurs**                    **Mansfield Garden Club 7pm**  
Autistic Centre, Highett St, Mansfield,  
Goulburn Valley Hwy, Mel: Reg Map, Pg 922, B11  
Meg Bentley will be speaking. Bring plants to identified  
**Plants for sale.**
- Oct 11th Thurs**                    **Croydon Horticultural Society & Garden Club 8pm**  
Croydon Senior Citizens Hall, cnr Mt Dandenong Rd, & Civic Place  
Croydon, opposite Arndale Shopping Centre. Mel:  
**Lyndi will be speaking, plants for sale.**

## **Having fun with Salvias**

Readers probably already know I enjoy putting in some seeds. Each year I get a few packets from Seedhunt in California, and usually plant the seed late summer or autumn, depending on when they

arrive. This year I have *S. engelmannii* (Californian native), *S. tingitana* (North Africa?), *S. apiana* (which is apparently difficult to strike from cuttings) and a pink form of *S. splendens* (which I expect to be



like Van Houttei in stature). Plus I put in some seed of *S. radula* collected from my own garden. Interestingly, of the last named, about 7 seeds germinated fairly quickly, and then very recently a whole lot more came up, so that I have a mixture of seedlings ready to pot up but most with only seed leaves.

Of last year's seedlings, a group of *S. taraxacifolia* has made a nice mat, and with dead-heading, is still sending up some flower heads. With *S. nilotica*, every seed must have germinated! I have belatedly planted a couple out – having given the rest away -so can't say yet whether it will be worth keeping. *S. pratensis* "Haematodes" bloomed just the once, probably owing to the very wet summer, so I am hoping for re-bloom next year with a mature plant. *S. canesens* (var. *daghestanica*?) has just sent up its first flower spike, with purple-blue flowers.

Looking around the garden, I notice *S. namaensis* on the nature-strip, and *S. microphylla* (Baby Sage) out the back. Both species seem to be somewhat overlooked plants, I think, and I have not seen them offered commercially, though they are tough and adaptable. *S. namaensis* has grown steadily in poor soil to about 2 ft, and virtually needs no attention. It comes from fairly harsh

## News from Stratford East Gippsland

We have just got over a 12 year drought and this year with showers and rain I can't believe the growth in the garden. The extra pruning and weed growth is out of hand. With such a large garden and not being at home every day this year is a challenge. For example I have a big area of garden (amongst many) down our driveway I call the salvia garden. This was completely weed free in February and a month later at the end of March I was horrified to see weeds had returned. I had re-vamped 2 beds with new soil and sheep manure and then planted 25 salvia plants. Before long I got what looked like a crop of oats. I am just not used to this. We have been in drought most of our married life and the garden is not used to

places in southern Africa, and might enjoy a dressing of lime occasionally. With its tiny yellow-green leaves, it makes a nice contrast with other plants, and I could imagine it looking fine against a small stone wall, or growing beside some steps. It could be gently trimmed to shape.

The Baby Sage has smaller leaves and flowers than many of the microphylla cultivars, and makes a good, spreading plant in my small garden. It is fairly late to start flowering, but then continues on almost until winter. My plant is getting a bit woody, but I hope that with judicious pruning I can get another season before replacement becomes necessary.

One thing that is not fun in my garden is finding salvias succumbing to grubs or caterpillars. Most salvias are trouble free, but a few get a moth-eaten look. I will persevere with *S. patens* cultivars, as they are rather special, but 'Black and Blue' will get the chop, even though it is contained, and *S. rubiginosa* (though I love the flowers and persistent calyces) might have to go the same way. There are safe sprays for a range of insects, but I haven't yet found anything good for caterpillars, which will return given half a chance. Who can afford to spray after every shower of rain, especially this year?

**Geoff Crowhurst**

Do you have Salvias you need identified? If so, take a photo and email it over to Lyndi on [highcon@hotmail.net.au](mailto:highcon@hotmail.net.au) She will let you know what you have in your garden.

moisture. I am even putting in cuttings straight into the earth. As the soil is warm and moist direct sowing is successful. The salvias and the rest of the garden are thriving. Not having to struggle to water to just keep plants alive means I have time and energy to enjoy gardening.

**Jane Lee**

**P.S.** Who ever wrote the articles in last Salvia News on plants and labels was so interesting and helpful. I was very interested to learn and read the differences in the Navajo and heatwave series. (That was written by a very modest person, obviously thinking I would know who to credit) I have investigated and it is Lyndi Garnett. She is very pleased you found it useful.

## Visit to Trudi Fry's Garden

One of the lovely pleasures of being a gardener and salvia fanatic is the visits to other people's gardens and the VSSG garden visit days. It is indeed lovely to see other people's gardens and to get ideas from them, but by far the most valuable and enjoyable aspect of these days is the people you meet and the friendships you make. I have always loved to talk and interact with people, something my reports from school days often

commented on. The warmth of sharing life's ups and downs and the knowledge you get from another gardener, be it about salvias or other plants is one of the treasures in life I never take for granted.

So when my mother and I were invited to a fellow salvia member's garden, Trudi Fry, it was a day both my Mum and I were greatly looking forward to. We had met Trudi at many of the organized events for the VSSG and I remember striking up a conversation with Trudi at the Roraima Nursery day out. She asked me if I would do an article for the newsletter and I said I would. I did my article and sent it to her and received an email back from her thanking me and asking if my Mum and I would like to visit her garden when she came back from a trip to Queensland. When she got back from Queensland we teed up Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> February to visit.

It was a lovely day spent chatting and walking around Trudi's garden. I was truly blown away by the wonderful artworks in her garden and asked where she had got the beautiful statue of a girl with a bowl in her arms, to which Trudi replied "I made it". Turns out Trudi is a well known artist and has made, sold and been commissioned to do many artworks. If you go onto the internet you will find many of Trudi's artworks for sale, e.g. an earthenware sculpture "titled Earth Women", a candlestick Eames Era, hand glazed earthenware panels that form a sculptural wall plaque and a pottery bowl with green, blue, brown glaze. Walking through Trudi's garden was a delight as not only was there many different types of salvia, but also lots of her artwork dotted around the garden. There were beautiful earthenware pots with succulents in them, two wonderful dragons (one blue/green glazed dragon and the other a copper bronze coloured dragon that seemed to hide amongst the plants), a sculpture of a person sitting crossed legged in a bird bath, many ceramic objects on ceramic pedestals that had leaves and plants sculptured up the pedestals and even the tiling in a corridor leading to the back garden with leaves etched into the tiles. Trudi lives in Selby, so the view from the back verandah of the house looking out over the hills was fantastic and in the front garden there are some huge rock boulder formations that are magnificent. My mum and I were allowed to take whatever cuttings of the salvias we wanted, of which all of my mum's cuttings took and only two of mine have taken!! We then had a lovely cup of tea and homemade cookies and met Trudi's next door neighbour, Kathie Thomas, who is now the Co-Editor of the newsletter.



We then bid our farewell and thanks for a truly wonderful day. Now I am panicking as I am the next garden visit day for the Salvia Study Group on Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> June – may the weather be good and the salvias that are flowering now, stay out for another couple of weeks. Hope to see you then.

**Heather Lucas**

### **Salvia "Blue Cloud"**

I'm finding the salvia manual a great reference. 'Blue Cloud' certainly knows how to grow here, it suckers quite a few feet from the base and suckers up into the grass away from the garden bed. I wonder if it is borderline too robust! The description of it smelling like burning rubber is accurate (when you prune it) but despite this it is a good strong grower. Here in our part of Brisbane we used to get frost before the rest of the estate was built (we were one of the first to move into this area) but now no frost. This will be a coolish winter for us but nothing drastic (down to 4 or 5 degrees at the most I think during mid-winter). The winter salvias certainly are beautiful, this year *S. Wagneriana* is particularly beautiful, grown into a small tree (easily 10ft high) and smothered in sugar pink flowers which carpet underneath it. All the *invulcratas* are at their best now and all are flowering, they love it here in S.E. Qld as long as it isn't too hot and that they get reasonable water. 'Blue Bird' flowered for the first time for me this year, a nice flower, looks a bit like a darker version of *S. polystachya*. I think the salvias must give some good food for the birds here like the Silver Eyes and the Noisy Miners have twigged onto the salvias as good food also. Often wish that us here in S.E. Qld could get some the beautiful salvias that are on the Salvia Study Group website through mail-order, am hoping that some of them might be available at the Nambour Garden Expo here in early July. Otherwise they are fairly hard to come by but a certainly worth the hunt!

**Kathy Basiaco**

### **A Great Year**

We've had a wonderful year here in the western suburbs (Niddrie). After a dozen years of average rainfall about 300-400mm rain, this year we've had about 600mm. Everything has grown fantastically. I used to

observe in gardens in the Dandenongs, Sedum "Autumn Joy" growing to about 60cm, and have now seen similar growth in mine. My annual clean-up in the garden took four people and a 6m bin to make it presentable. My salvias all put on a lot of growth, even without supplementary irrigation. Something I've noted in gardens with a number of salvias, is the presence of the native Blue-banded bees. This year there weren't as many, probably due to the cooler summer. I have about 30 different salvias flowering in the garden at the moment. Happy gardening.

Fran

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## Some new Salvias

As the number of keen collectors of salvias has grown locally and as the network of salvia collectors around the world has expanded through more overseas travel and the internet, so too has the number of species of *Salvia* in our collections. Similarly, as salvias have become more popular with gardeners in general, so too have the wholesale nurseries got into the act, importing new species and cultivars as well as discovering and developing them in Australia.

To add to the complexity (and confusion!), many individual gardeners are discovering new forms and crosses, naming these and spreading them around without any reference to accepted protocol. But that is another story. Thankfully this situation is mainly, but not exclusively, confined to groups of salvias that readily hybridise, such as the *S. greggii/microphylla*, and the *S. nemerosa/superba/sylvestris* groups.

So, what is new? For the purpose of this article, I will restrict my descriptions to species and cultivars that I have acquired over the past four years, while excluding the last-mentioned two groups. Lyndi Garnett wrote a comprehensive account of the *S.greggii/microphylla* group in the last issue of this newsletter and the catalogue for Lambley's nursery is good for the other group. Obviously some readers may have had some of the plants I will describe for longer than I and others may have recent acquisitions which I do not yet have. Hopefully they will write about them also.

Somewhat consistent with the general worldwide distribution of species, the species I have acquired over the past four years are from the following regions:

The Americas	South Africa	Asia	Europe/Mediterranean/Middle East	New cultivars
36	3	7	8	18

In addition, I have seedlings of some others and more seeds waiting for the Spring before sowing, while I am also aware that some people have

species like *engelmannii*, *exserta*, *paucisserata*, *cyanicalyx*, *raymondii*, *sessei* and a few others.

The descriptions below are brief **but I have marked the "must have" ones with a "\*"**. More detail and pictures may be viewed on the internet at sites such as [www.robinssalvias.com](http://www.robinssalvias.com). Note these descriptions refer to their performance in our Warrandyte garden with thin, poor, natural soils, much competition from tall, straggly gum trees and some winter frosts.

\**S. amethystina* subsp *ampelophylla*: Gorgeous plant from Columbia with large leaves, tall growing, producing an inflorescence of some 30cm of blue flowers of about 1 cm each. Seems to produce flowers at any time of the year except mid winter, but then dies, so it is necessary to keep propagating new ones. Probably not an annual in Columbia.

*S. amplifrons*: From Bolivia. Not a spectacular plant, growing to about 40cm, but small inflorescences of white flowers and lime green leaves

\**S. arenaria*: really good performer from S. America. Dark green leaves, purplish underneath. 50cm x 40cm. Prefers part shade. Red flowers for most of the year. Caterpillars also like it.

\**S. carnea*: Another excellent plant from Mexico growing to about 1m x 1m, also long flowering, but with small leaves and producing long stems of small pale pink flowers from late March to December.

\**S. caudata*: An autumn-flowering plant from Mexico, growing to 1.2m, with smallish, velvety, indigo flowers

*S. caymanensis*: a collector's item. Not a great garden plant. Small plant, with tiny blue flowers. Evidently rare in nature

\**S. clinopodioides* (formerly known here as 'Michoacan Blue' – not so new really). Gorgeous blue flowers in large whorls on tall stems in autumn. Winter dormant and doesn't emerge until summer, having spread some distance from its origin.

*S. columbariae*: A small annual from SW USA, with prickly blue flower heads, for about 3 weeks in early summer. One of the chia group setting plenty of seed.

\**S. curviflora*: A Mexican 'must have' for any salvia garden, growing to 1.2m with tall inflorescences of 2.5 cm magenta flowers. Winter hardy here.

*S. dichlamys*: Not spectacular. A Low plant with smallish red flower in May – June.

*S. fluviatilis*: Tall, uninteresting plant with tiny, pale blue flowers in May-June.

*S. gilliesii*: In form, a bit like *S. melissodora*, with small, pretty blue flowers, but with a more limited flowering time from Jan – May. Deciduous.

*S. gravis*: Frost-tender plant from ? S. America with large magenta pink flowers in winter (if the frost doesn't finish it off first)

*S. gracilis* & *S. grewifolia* – new plants, haven't flowered for me yet and have not been tested out of doors through winter. Also, *S. gracilis* may be a synonym for *S. carnea*.

*S. henryi*: In the same grouping as *S. roemeriana*, but an annual.

\**S. ionocalyx*: A Mexican plant with medium, purple-backed leaves and gorgeous purple-red flowers in late winter to spring. Will survive outside if in a protected place.

*S. keerlii*: Another Mexican, with small, greyish blue flowers in summer, reaching 1m. I have 2 plants, one formerly called 'Lassie', - possibly has a slight difference in leaf shape.

\**S. littae*: A floppy plant from Mexico, flowering from May, with furry magenta flowers. A bit tender. I believe a more upright form exists.

*S. miahuatliensis*: Very tall plant with arching stems carrying red flowers in early winter. A bit like *S. adenophora*. Haven't had this long enough to know if it will make it through the winter here outside.

\**S. myriantha*: A great performer from Mexico, growing to 1m+ and flowering (violet, with white) from winter through to early summer. Very smelly leaves

*S. ombrophila*: From Brazil, a large plant, flowering sparsely with small, pink and white flowers. Prefers part shade.

\**S. oxyphora*: Tall, upright growth, producing heads of large, furry pink flower. Frost tender

*S. pallida*: A bit like *S. uliginosa*, but with larger, more indented leaves, and not invasive

*S. serpyllifolia*: At last I think I have the right one. Small, wine coloured flowers and tiny leaves. Previous ones had obviously crossed with *S. microphylla*.

*S. setulosa*: A Mexican plant, similar to *S. glechomifolia*. Small blue flowers, Jan – May  
*S. SL411*: From Peru. An interesting plant with red flowers, but short lived. Not yet identified  
*S. species* from Catamarca: (Argentina) Flowers in summer. Light blue

\**S. species* from Guatemala: This one resembles *S. urica* but the flower whorls are closer and it flowers in late autumn. Also the stem is sticky and the leaves do not smell of burnt rubber

*S. striata*: Short-lived, small, dainty, summer-flowering plant from the Andes. Tubular flowers can be pale pink or red.

*S. summa*: Small, lime-loving plant with tubular pink flowers, related to *S. roemeriana*. Mine died without setting seed

*S. stolonifera*: From the cloud forests of Southern Mexico, a sprawling plant with tubular brick red/orange flowers in April.

*S. unknown species* – various = more details later

*S. vitifolia*: from the cloud forests of Mexico, a tall plant with hairy, vine-shaped leaves and an inflorescence not unlike *S. macrophylla*, with individual blue flowers shaped a bit like *S. patens*. Needs part shade.

*S. x westeriae*: a hybrid of *S. orbignae* and *S. haenkea*, from Bolivia. Evidently comes in various colours. Mine has yet to flower after three years!

### **South Africa:**

*S. aurita* var *aurita*: a much better plant than *S. aurita* var *galpinii*, growing to about 20cm, with pale blue flowers, similar in form and habit to *S. repens*

*S. radula*: tough, erect plant, with white flowers in summer, resembling *S. disermas*, but not floppy.

*S. schlechteri*: small plant, with finely dissected leaves and small pale blue flowers in summer

### **Asia:**

\**S. bowleyana*: clumping plant, with flowers similar to those of *S. miltiorrhiza*, but pink and yellow in early summer.

*S. campanulata*: another summer-flowering, lemon flowered Chinese plant

*S. castanea*: basal foliage and must be kept well drained and dryish through winter, but gorgeous, chestnut-coloured flowers in summer are the reward.

*S. chinensis*: a bit like *S. japonica* in leaf but puts out a very tall flowering stem in late autumn. Flowers smaller, bluer and more closely spaced than in *S. japonica*

\**S. glabrescens*: I love this one. About 30cm with purple flowers in late autumn (except mine seem to be pink and pink with white)

*S. moorcroftiana*: a bit like *S. castanea* – in that its roots rot easily, and I think that has happened to mine.

*S. nipponica* var *trisecta*: Another pale lemon plant with flowers similar to those of *S. nipponica* ‘Fuji Snow’ but without the variegated leaves. Winter doemant.

#### **Europe/Mediterranea/Middle East:**

*S. sclareoides*: not unlike *pratensis* with stems of blue flowers in summer, but with narrower leaves. From Spain

*S. cadmica* (which turned out to be either *virgata* or *forskaohlei*, depending on the source)

\**S. canescens* var *daghestanica*: small, silvery-leaved Middle Eastern plant, with 20cm flowering stems of lovely blue flowers in late spring and autumn.

*S. cyanescens*: short lived maybe, but pretty stems of pale blue in spring and autumn.

*S. dominica*: had a nice small shrub for 2/3 years, attractive leaves and white flowers with brownish marks in early spring, but it curled up and died.

*S. kopetdaghensis*: fairly uninteresting, sprawly plant with small flowers in summer

*S. nutans*: this one eludes me. The snails love it and I cannot seem to get it to flower, although I know others can. Beautiful nodding blue inflorescence.

*S. pisidica*: tiny Turkish species that didn’t flower, was hard to keep and it died!

#### **Cultivars:**

\*‘Celestial Blue’: Hoping for great things from this new release which is a cross between *S. clevelandii*, and all its beauty and the easier-to-grow *S. leucophylla*

*S. coccinea*: ‘Purple’ - not very floriferous (and late), ‘Forest Fire’ – red, with black calices, ‘Coconut Ice’ – pale pink and white, and ‘Apricot’ – from a peninsula nursery, looks like ‘Brenthurst’, but with a dark calyx

\*‘Desley’ – somewhere between ‘Black Knight’ and ‘Van Houttei’ and gorgeous

\**S. iodantha* ‘Pink Mink’: like the species but with fatter, furry flowers

*S. leucophylla* ‘Imperial’: supposed to have bigger, better flowers, but mine hasn’t flowered yet and my original plant has lovely big flower in any case.

*S. leucantha* ‘Pink Velour’ and ‘White Velour’: OK forms, but I prefer ‘Midnight’

*S. macrophylla* x *rumicifolia*: a common cross. A large plant. More floriferous than *S. macrophylla*, with leaves shaped like those of *rumicifolia* but larger.

\**S. ‘Magenta Magic’*: I love the colour of this one. A bit like *S. ‘Waverly’* although it tends to be floppy rather than a compact shrub

\**S. ‘Meigan’s Magic’*: beautiful, especially as the summer progresses and the contrast between the white flowers and the purple calices increases. Otherwise similar in habit to ‘Phyllis Fancy’

*S. mexicana* ‘Black Calyx’ (new name pending): another form of *S. mexicana*, somewhere between ‘Minor’ and ‘Lolly’

‘*S. Mystic Spires*’: supposed to be a dwarf form of *S. ‘Indigo Spires’* but will get larger in its second year if allowed

\**S. pratensis* ‘Rose Rhapsody’ and ‘Swan Lake’: nice forms if you like this species

*S. patens* ‘Pink Ice’: I love all colours of this species. Comes true from seed

\*‘Wendy’s Wish’: No garden is complete without this wonderful all-the-year-round performer and it is readily available in many nurseries.

So there we have some brief descriptions. I repeat that for more detail and for excellent photographs, check Robin Middleton’s website – [www.robinssalvias.com](http://www.robinssalvias.com) – even though some of the growing habits refer to English conditions. Hopefully we will get adequate stocks of these for you to buy in due course.

**Pat Anderson**

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## Laurelle’s Garden

I couldn’t believe the stunningly wonderful lushness of my garden on returning home after five weeks enforced absence. Just where to start. Blooming with gusto, *Salvia.madrensis*, *S. iodantha*, *S. ‘Bluebird’*, *S. involucrata* ‘Bethellii’, *S. chiapensis*, stunning *S. ‘Desley’*, and many more. Perhaps the most delightful, at the front gate capturing the attention of every passerby, is beautiful *S. semi-atrata*. Never ever without a display, never ever watered and living beneath an enormous Banksia it doesn’t benefit from rain either.

Speaking with other gardeners they too delight in the lushness but maybe there is a small winge attached. There is too much to be done to ensure the display continues for a lengthy period. I generally deadhead the entire garden on a daily basis as I do arrange ‘bouquets’ normally, unfortunately that delight will be on hold

for a while. Still I estimate if I manage one shrub/plant daily it should be Christmas before all are trimmed to my satisfaction. Of course I'll need to forgo blooms but six weeks should show some colour again.

Most of the heritage roses I have bloomed wonderfully, though the lengthy, wavy growth, some at 15' will get a haircut when I can encourage youthful working hands to obey my instructions as I sit supervising the pruning. The bulbs I had planned to move to other positions are much too advanced maybe next year.

I admit to being enchanted by the lushness, however I'm still convinced that there is absolutely no need to water anything, the tough will survive, the bulbs don't mind and the roses may not bloom to perfection but then, not too many of us are expecting to win first prize at the local for our exhibit! The exception are plants in pots so perhaps I'll tumble all mine out and find spots for them to be happy in the garden like us they thrive on company I believe. Isolated specimens of anything in a garden always look quite sad I think.

Quite look forward to seeing the growth after winter. As we had a little summer we are due for a short winter...Spring "She is a coming".

**Laurelle Willis**

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## Autumn Notes from Gruyere April 2011

Everything here in Gruyere has grown madly and I guess it has too in your own gardens. The Central Pond is now complete and planted around with *Abelia grandiflora* (dwarf) *Magnolia* 'Little Gem', *Lavandula* 'Grosso' and a trailing *Convolvulus* for over the edges. Two maples *Acer cappadocicum*, seed grown and *A. saccharinum* have been planted each side. Frogs have taken up residence under the stone capping and come out to sing and swim in the evenings.

The Satin Flycatcher, Willy Wagtail and other birds have splashed and dipped into the water and the Kookaburra sits on the side of the pond waiting for a feed but there are no fish yet! It always gives you a good feeling when part of a garden becomes complete. But there are many other areas that need a huge amount of work especially the 'side garden' area that had a huge tree come right across and smashing everything in its path. The clearing for this is under way at the moment and has actually opened up quite a big space for a 'new' garden and there will be room for ornamentals, natives and salvias of course.

One other part of the garden still under progress is the 'Potted' area where many species and cultivars have been potted up or repotted and placed onto pavers beside the pathway for visual effect, not to mention that it is the best 'level' spot.

These past seasons have been wonderful for so many birds, butterflies, dragonflies and lots of small spiders and of course the pesky Cabbage White butterflies. One can find areas where these



have been by the results of small green grubs and it is not just in the vegetable garden that one finds them but amongst the salvias too. The rabbits have still been around but not to pest proportions, thank goodness and the large Brushtail Possums have just about destroyed the large maple in the back garden. What the heavy brush tails can't reach the smaller Ringtail possums come along and having introduced their babies to the foliage, promptly devour all leaves within reach. For years there has been a ringtail nest in the fernery wedged behind the cupboard and the window and the other day as I was pruning in that area I noticed six sets of eyes watching me and yes, that the family devouring the maple.

The Propagation Day here at Gruyere went very well and great to see so many new faces and meet folk who were so interested in wanting to know more about salvias.

This time we covered the topic of plant division among the herbaceous perennial salvias showing where and how to divide plants. There was a beautiful enlarged photo of the root system of the Chinese Red Sage *Salvia miltiorrhiza* including the follow up of these plants after their division and how they were growing.

Other salvias covered were *S. azurea* and *S. lyrata* and included those that were ideal for layering, *S. hirtella*, *S. macrophylla*, *S. grvida* and *S. elegans* 'Honeymelon'. These all showed how the wet weather had encouraged the plants to form 'aerial' roots and under these conditions the weight of the damp foliage laying prostrate across other plants had sent these roots down towards the soil. They can then be snipped off the parent plant and

pruned back a bit and potted up or planted directly into the garden.

There was assorted propagating material for everyone to take home with them. In spite of the

cold weather it turned out to be a very good day. Thankyou all for coming and a special thanks to my granddaughter Katerina for her energetic help!  
**Meg**

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## The Sky's the Limit

Or should that read the sky is the limit?? It can become quite confusing when talking about salvias with cultivar names that include Sky or Skies of which there are several but here are the correct names.

*Salvia* 'African Sky' a cultivar from *S. chamelaeagnea* and *S. scabra*

*Salvia* 'Greek Skies' a cultivar of *S. fruticosa*

*Salvia* 'Argentine Skies' a form of *S. guaranitica*

### Bore Water

Bore water or Artesian water has been used in many gardens just like tank water and an essential commodity when mains water is not available. Some gardeners use it as an added extra to water their gardens but for others it is a necessity. It is a subject that doesn't get much coverage in our newsletters and I would like to know more from our readers. How does bore water effect your garden and plants?????

Recently I made a visit to some wonderful gardens along the Mornington Peninsular, that of Wendy Smith and Glenda Sellenger and what fantastic gardens they were. It is always interesting to see how gardeners cope with the soil conditions, climate and the elements that presents itself especially where the soil is so sandy and where bore water was in use. Wendy's use of colour, texture and variety of plants in the garden was an absolute delight and gave one the feeling of an extended cottage garden.

Wendy and I happened to notice in one area where the bore water was used, plants that were growing in full sun were unhappy and had brown markings around the edges of the leaves and were not robust whereas the plants growing in part shade out of the direct sun were healthy and lush yet watered with the same bore water.

Does this mean that in full sun the salts in bore water can burn the foliage and what effect does the wind also have? Just what effect does bore water have on plants in general and are ornamental plants more prone to burning than indigenous native plants or vice versa? I would love to hear from all readers that have had to cope with this problem and how they have come to terms with it!

Ferny Creek Rare Plant Sales weekend went very well and salvias are still maintaining a tremendous interest. What great weather we had, warm and sunny on the Saturday and the day started off well on the Sunday with light cloud building and a storm pending right up until time to pack up and then the heavens opened up. Many folk went home drenched and so did the plants but all in all it was a good weekend. The following weekend was Tesselaars Rare Plant Sale and another fruitful weekend with many salvias sold and much advice given and shared around. It was great to catch up with our friends from Gippsland way who must have some wonderful gardens to visit going by the amount of plants purchased. Plant stalls on both Rare Plant Occasions showed great diversity covering everything from dry climate plants to water feature gardens, herbs and gardening books etc

Our thanks go to all those wonderful helpers who assisted us with the salvia stalls on both occasions with a special thank-you to the wonderful donation of plants; your help is always appreciated. **Meg**

## News from South East Queensland

Just before Christmas, we'd had three months of rain. I remember feeling quite smug then, because not much in my little plant world had been lost to all that rain. Another three months rain, of a much greater intensity (as we all know

too well) has told a different story. Despite excellent drainage, I just don't think plant roots ever really got a chance to dry out in all that time, and many plants simply succumbed.

Smaller salvias, especially the microphyllas were hit hard, with only two outstanding survivors – *S Heatwave* 'Blaze', and an unnamed seedling I've had for a while (perhaps it deserves a name now??). A couple of others are still alive but do look worse for wear. Cuttings have been taken for some insurance. Greggiis have suffered too, with the alba being the strongest survivor.

My herb garden just disintegrated, causing me to think that it was mainly those in the Lamiaceae family that suffered. However, putting paid to that idea, I have a patch of *Stachys byzantina* (Lamb's Ears), which have never looked better. Truly, how does one know? They should have been the first to go I would have thought. Artemisias have also surprised me by not turning black and keeling over.

Larger salvias fared better in general, but many stems were snapped in the heavier weather, so they don't look so great, but are still alive at least. Coming into bloom now are *S involucrata*, *S 'Romantic Rose'*, and *S 'Sugar Pink'*. These were all planted in an area of dappled shade and in reaching out for the sun; they are encroaching considerably out onto pathways and must therefore be moved for next season. My husband is quite pedantic about the necessity for clear, manicured pathways, and, acknowledging that he does have some rights to an opinion, I will accede. It's very annoying though!

Throughout our long wet summer (and its still raining), *S 'Miegan's Magic'* has not missed a beat – she is a super salvia in every sense of the word. She takes up plenty of room, but no large space could be better filled. *S mexicana* 'Limelight' has

done quite well too - *S 'Wendy's Wish'* has also been lovely. Some of these newer salvias are just so good!

*S 'Magenta Magic'*, although slow to start, has had constant flowers and doesn't seem at all bothered by the humidity. If these salvias cope as well with extended drought, which no doubt will happen again, then we'll really know how good they are. One thing is certain about our climate, and that is its unpredictable extremes.

Much of the better weather recently, (and we have had a few beautiful autumn days) has been spent cutting back the rampant growth all over the garden. It just keeps on coming! We won't need to be paying for mulching material for a long time, that's for sure.

In closing, could I just mention that writing trivially of a few lost plants hasn't been a comfortable exercise when considering the true tragedies experienced by so many others during recent events. Heartfelt sympathies go to those who have suffered, and I wish them the luxury of also being able to worry about small things like gardens. How lucky we are to have them!

**Adrienne Starkey – Ormeau (just south of Brisbane)  
The Perennial Poppies Group Inc**

**A comment from Barb Wickes:** I am also finding *S 'Magenta Magic'* a wonderful plant and now it is beginning to layer which is a bonus – lots more of this lovely plant to transplant elsewhere!

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## The History of The Perennial Poppies Group Inc

In November 2000 a group of like-minded folk gathered at Buderim at the home of Barbara and Rex Wickes to discuss forming a cottage garden group. The aim of the group: **to share knowledge and develop a study group on cottage gardening in south-east Queensland by meeting with each other every two months in different member's gardens.**

Serious plants people are encouraged to participate. An emphasis is placed on correct identification of plant material as many plants are referred to by their common names and thus confusion can occur. A prime example of this is the butterfly bush. Several plants are referred to by this name e.g. buddleia, *Clerodendron ugandense* and gaura.

Many members who were or are garden owners with Australia's Open Garden Scheme were asked to join the group because of their great interest in this style of gardening.

The membership of 150 includes people from Tamborine Mountain, Gold Coast, Beaudesert, Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast. The group has limited full membership to 150 as more than this would not be manageable in a private garden. Journal membership is unlimited and members are welcome to attend 'Come

& Share Days', garden rambles and tours and the Christmas lunch.

The group puts out an informative journal every two months providing members with gardening information relevant to the area. Journal membership is open to anyone interested - application can be made to the treasurer.

Gatherings (Come & Share Days) are held in 3 areas on alternate months for both full members and journal members e.g.: Southside/Tamborine and Beaudesert areas, Northside/Westside and Sunshine Coast and Hinterland. All members are invited to enjoy a casual day visiting a member's garden at no cost - BYO everything. Details are published in the journal.

A group of salvia enthusiasts formed a sub-group and they meet occasionally throughout the year to discuss new releases and trial plants with the aim of promoting them to the general membership. A booklet has been produced listing salvias that do well in the region and this is updated regularly.

As yet a website for the group has not been established.

**Come & Share Days are held as follows:**

Southside/Tamborine etc	First Friday in the month
Brisbane	Second Friday in the month
Sunshine Coast	Third Friday in the month

## **The Poppy Group News from members after the floods**

Some of our members have been affected badly by the floods – two in the Brisbane Valley had their homes inundated from the overflow from the Wivenhoe Dam and gardens badly affected. Others in the Kenmore (western suburbs) area have had a lot of damage to their gardens. It is amazing though to hear of plants reshooting weeks after they have been covered by mud. This year has certainly been a trial for all gardeners and our best wishes to go those affected so badly.

### ***From Margaret McDonnell – Morayfield***

My salvias have all come through the wet summer in good condition. This is due to the fact that I live on a hill and they haven't had to contend with wet feet for long periods of time. *Salvia* 'Mystic Spires' normally flowers well, but this summer has just about 'flowered' itself out. It just doesn't stop. *Salvia* 'Josh' became so energetic, I had to remove it from its spot as it was beginning to smother everything else. I've now put it in a place where it has room to spread but the ground there isn't as fertile and so it will probably be a bit easier to contain. *Salvia oxyphora* has spread a bit and is flowering well. Whilst it does spread, I don't find it invasive as some others do in our group. The winter flowering salvias are all readying themselves and putting on good growth. The down side to all the rain is that it has '**spoiled**' my salvias. Previously they have to survive predominantly on rainwater, only receiving water from our dam when really necessary. They've become so used to receiving

rainwater at least once a week, that a spell of a few hot days really had them thinking that they were dying of thirst. It will be interesting to see if they toughen back up again. I hope so!

### ***From Carol Kerkin – Kingsholme***

My goodness, what is 'Mother Nature' trying to tell us with the way that 2011 has started off? Those of us who have only been affected minimally certainly have nothing to complain about. Here we have not had it tough. Washed driveway, denuded paths and dead plants was all we had to contend with. We had two underground springs that have not run for the past 20 years that have been running non-stop since late November. Consequently, plants that have been sitting in running water have either thrived (Louisiana iris) or just dropped dead. Two mature *Michelia* 'Bubbles' in a row of six were lost.

Where the salvias are concerned the silver leaved varieties have mostly 'gone-to-God' - *Salvia discolor*, *Salvia* 'Cookie' and *Salvia* 'Marine Blue'. Thankfully I have cuttings coming on in pots. *Salvia mexicana* 'Major' dropped dead almost overnight, but I must admit it was sitting in the path of the aforementioned spring. Some of the microphylla and greggii varieties have also gone the same way. One sad loss was *Salvia* 'Silkes Dream' but luckily a friend generously handed over some cuttings and I only need one to strike. Our larger, winter flowering salvias have gone berserk. Some I will admit, do need taking

out and replacing completely as they have gotten quite old and woody but on the whole they are growing before our eyes. Most years I don't like to cut them any later than the end of February so that I don't miss out on the flowers but I am afraid that this year I just MUST. Can't wait for the weather to cool down a tad now that autumn is here. I am itching to get some of the poor plants that have been struggling in pots for the last few months into the ground. (And I am ashamed to say that includes plants bought on the Poppies trip last November.)

***From Elwyn Paton – Mt Tamborine***

So far I have not lost any salvias in the huge wet. They didn't look very well though and it wasn't until the main deluges finished that they grew green and lush BUT no flowers. I think that some of the storms dumped so much nitrogen on the garden that they had no option but to grow big and green. I have noticed that I am getting quite a flush of flowers now though – (1<sup>st</sup> March).

I am involved with the Mt Tamborine Botanic Gardens and here it is another story. Quite a lot of microphyllas and even some splendens have been lost, *Salvia* 'Wendy's Wish' is dying branch by branch. *Salvia uliginosa* (Bog sage) is loving the wet! A deep trench has been dug, a drainage pipe put in and gravel and even after a fortnight the drain is still dripping in the perennial garden. I think that the wet has activated a long forgotten spring up on the hill as we have also lost three of our precious standard cherry trees.

***From Penny Hegarty - Nambour***

Some of the plants that did well at my place include cannas, gerberas, roses, crotons, azaleas and camellias. I have light to very heavy clay in most areas and was surprised the gerberas did so well.

*More next issue...*

*Also in next issue – AGHS Conference Profile and article by Dr Michael Simpson*

## TAKING SALVIAS TO THE COUNTRY

Lyndi hand-passed a speaking engagement to me – for the Bol-darra Garden Club. If you haven't heard of it, I certainly hadn't either. The hyphenated name derives from Bolinda and Darraweit Guim, both very small centres past Bulla. The hall I was to find just off the Romsey and Lancefield Rd, past Clarkefield, which is really notable only for its railway station and pub – the Bendigo line sweeping in an arc before reaching Woodend. Well, arriving at the hall after what seemed a long time, I found the garden club members finishing luncheon, which they have from time to time before their meeting. There was a bench full of produce and flowers for sale, from which I selected some tomatoes and a fine bunch of nerines.

When the members assembled at the other end of the hall I had my turn, having already set out containers of salvia flowers and some plants for sale. The best way of beginning I had decided, was to go from the known to the unknown, and I had brought samples of salvias 'Bethellii', *leucantha* and *splendens*. Mention of *officinalis*, *farinacea*, *uliginosa* and *elegans* brought nods of recognition from some members. I then indicated the very large number of salvia species and the wide geographical area they come from, and the quite different growing conditions for various species. Next was explaining the different growth habits – herbaceous, soft-wooded and shrubby, and that species may grow from only a few inches tall to fifteen feet or so (in the right conditions).

Being somewhat restricted in what I can grow myself, I thought it better to concentrate on species and hybrids that I was quite familiar with, and the flowers on display helped. There were plenty of questions, and afterwards all the plants I brought were sold, some from our stall at Tesselaars, and some I had propagated myself, with proceeds from the latter going towards the cost of a village well in Cambodia. As a 'thank you' I was given an interesting dark leaf euphorbia, and then added to that with another variety when I won the day's raffle! The garden club members were very friendly and appreciative, so my excursion to the country really proved most enjoyable.

**Geoff Crowhurst**

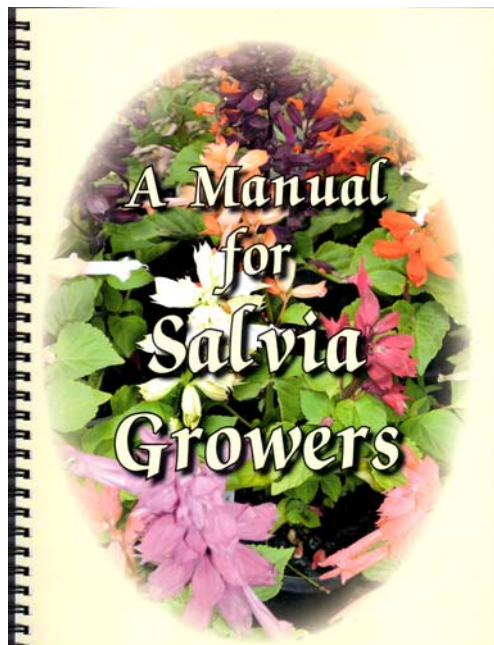
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