

# Salvia News

NUMBER 49



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

**Spring 2012**

# **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

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 AT OUR WEB ADDRESS: [www.salvias.org.au](http://www.salvias.org.au)**

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### **SALVIA NEWS SUBMISSIONS**

All copy must be received on or preferably prior to copy deadline

*Please post or email your copy to*

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**\*COPY DEADLINE for next issue, is Friday 9 NOVEMBER 2012**



# SALVIA NEWS

VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP

**W**elcome to the new Spring edition of Salvia News. What a wet winter we have endured. Our thoughts have been with those who have experienced severe flooding and hope you and yours are all safe, and that the cleanup is not too arduous.

In the area where I live, this year there has only been a couple of frosts to date. It's possible that there is more to come. I was warned against planting *Salvia Bethellii* and *Salvia Van Houttii* here, but wanted to give them a go. A couple of years ago I read in Salvia News to try spraying with Yates Drought Guard, which is also used for frost tender plants. It has been a success to date. I spray monthly through the winter months and the blooms speak for themselves.

With some warmth returning, everything is sprouting. One of the many chores waiting for attention at this time of year is the Pruning of Winter Salvias (page 5). Don't forget to pot up some cuttings and if you have too many, VSSG is always seeking more plants for selling. Just give Lyndi Garnett a call. It's a full Calendar of Events for the coming months (page 4), any additions and changes are regularly uploaded on the website; [www.salvias.org.au](http://www.salvias.org.au) Don't forget to have a look at what else the site offers. From this issue, we are pleased to now offer subscription of Salvia News online at a discounted rate, or hard copy via Australia Post. A new Subscription form for Salvia News can be found in this issue (page 14).

Our dedicated Subscription Secretary of many years, Bevan Whelan is retiring from the position. We are seeking a volunteer and ask interested persons to please contact Bevan direct phone (03) 5977 8104 for further information.

It's another full edition of Salvia News for you to enjoy. I am certainly enjoying hearing from you, and even getting to meet some of you. Don't forget to put pen to paper and send in your articles. Thank you to all those that do, whether it's a regular contribution or occasional. It's great that you make the time to share and it's much appreciated.

'Til next time,  
Happy Gardening,  
Beth

## WANTED

### SUBSCRIPTION SECRETARY

Victoria Salvia Study Group is seeking a volunteer to take over the duties of Subscription Secretary as Bevan is retiring after many years of service.

Access to a computer and telephone is required. Training will be given.

For further information please **phone Bevan Whelan (03) 5977 8104**

### Salvia News submissions

**Deadline for next edition (Summer) is 10 November 2012**

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Sept 1st / 2nd Sat / Sun**     **Pakenham Garden Expo 9am - 2pm**  
Pakenham Racecourse, Racecourse Rd, Pakenham Mel: 317 E8 (undercover)  
Guest presenter Stephan Ryan former host of ABC TV Gardening Australia  
Variety of plant and other stalls  
Salvias for sale, bring your list, bring Salvias to be identified
- Sept 10th Mon**                 **Mornington Garden Club 1.30pm**  
St Mark's Uniting Church Hall, 50Barkly St, Mornington. Mel :104 D12  
Lyndi will be speaking on Salvias  
Salvias for sale, bring plants to be identified
- Sept 16th Sun**                 **Wayne Burgess Garden Visit 11am**  
699 Mt Dandenong Rd, Kilsyth. Mel: 51 J6  
Beautiful garden full of Salvias.  
Bring a plate to share a chair and enjoy the garden
- Oct 21st Sun**                    **Meryl Waterhouse Garden Visit 11am**  
315 Pakenham Rd, Pakenham Mel: 315 D10  
A beautiful garden, full of Salvias, Roses, arbours and many other interesting plants. This garden is often open for the Red Cross.  
Bring a plate to share a chair and enjoy the garden.
- Oct 24th Wed**                   **Garden Day at Nobelius, 11 am**  
Nobelius Heritage Garden, Crighton Rd, Emerald,  
under the Packing Shed Mel: 127 G4  
Bring a plate to share, a chair, tools, plastic bags for cuttings  
Great opportunity to identify your Salvias.  
Lots of cuttings to take home, come and join in the fun
- Nov10th/11th Sat / Sun**       **Rose Show, Mt Waverley**  
Community Centre, Millers Crs , Mt Waverley. Mel : 70 E1  
Saturday opening 1pm, Sunday 10am  
Salvias for sale. Bring your list of Salvias to be identified
- November 18<sup>th</sup> Sun**             **Garden Day at Nobelius, 11am**  
Nobelius Heritage Garden, Crighton Rd, Emerald, under the Packing Shed  
Mel: 127 G4  
Everyone is welcome to come and join in the fun. Come for Salvia Identification, hone up on your Salvia names. Take home loads of cutting material.  
Enjoy the social occasion – just bring a plate to share and a chair
- Dec 9th Sun**                     **Xmas Party 11am**  
Meryl Waterhouse's beautiful Rose garden  
315 Pakenham Rd, Pakenham Mel: 315 D10  
A beautiful garden to have a Xmas party, full of Roses, Salvias, arbours and much more.  
All subscribers are welcome to come and join in the fun, get to know some of the other wonderful people in the group.  
If attending please ring Meryl : Ph 59411306.  
Bring a Xmas plate to share and a chair. There will be plants to take home.

## Pruning of Winter Salvias

*Lyndi Garnett*

Now is the perfect time to prune those large leaf Salvias and take cuttings.

Many of these 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 coming 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 you 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 VSSG 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, 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 of these 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 pot into 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 so there is no re-potting needed and no shock associated with re-potting of 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 to settle the soil and eliminate the air around the cutting stem, so the cutting can then get on with the task of producing roots.

Place the pot/s of cuttings in a sheltered place, out of the wind and if possible a warm area. It is not necessary to place them in a heated propagating unit at all. Because of the cold weather, these plants don't transpire (lose water) as much as in the warmer weather, so leave them outside in the elements in a sheltered position.

To tell if the cuttings have rooted, you can either see the roots appearing through the bottom of the pot or you can tip up the pot, carefully taking the pot off the soil to see if there are any roots. If there are no roots, carefully place the pot back over the soil and firm the soil around the cuttings again, water again. Another indication that the cuttings have taken is that the cuttings are putting on new growth. But beware, there are some cuttings that seem to put on new growth, but rather these elongate their stems and leaves, but don't produce any roots.

Once the cutting/s has rooted you need to pot up. Carefully tip up the pot with your hand and fingers carefully positioned through the cuttings and tip out, carefully lay them out and gradually tease them apart, placing a cutting in a half filled pot of soil. When all the cuttings have been teased out, then proceed to cover the cutting with good potting soil and firming around the stem. Don't forget the label and water in.

Scatter around a little Osmocote and set them aside and watch them grow.

It's that easy, so have a go; you never know, you may have success where others failed, and give them away to someone to brighten their day.

## Garden Visit to Sue Warren's in Emerald 21 April 2012

*Heather Lucas*

I have often said that to me visiting other people's gardens is food for the soul. Gardens and plants seem to bring an uplifting of spirits and makes one feel good about the world – time to relax and forget about our at times hectic lives, with technology, work and running around after kids (for those who have kids) taking up a huge part of our time. There is also of course the interaction and friendships with our many members that attend, to say nothing of the delicious lunches that we have. So with this all in mind I picked up my Mum at 10.15 am to arrive at Sue's by 11 am. As many members will attest to, I seem to have trouble sometimes with getting to the gardens; my GPS doesn't always take me the right way. Once we were on our way to Karen Meeuwissen's in Hoddles Creek and the GPS said turn right onto some road which truly wasn't there, and it also seems to drop out and lose its connection which makes it very hard if you are totally relying on it to get you to your destination. So I have given up on the GPS and now go into Google maps on my computer and get the directions and print them out and then Mum and I follow them – far more reliable and we didn't have too much trouble finding Sue's.

The forecast temperature for the day was 26 degrees and it didn't disappoint us, it was hot and sunny with clear skies, perfect for a garden visit. Sue and her husband moved into their lovely home 4-5 years ago and she has since totally transformed the garden, especially the back garden. At the back of her house there is a lovely paved section with table and chairs and other garden furniture, then the garden goes upwards with a pathway of flat volcanic rocks as steps leading up to a large flat section. On each side of the pathway there are garden beds which have volcanic rocks with various plants, such as a beautiful orange/yellow lantana, bright orange nasturtiums, daisies, euphorbia, alyssum and many succulents planted in between the rocks. When she arrived there was only the rock wall garden on one side and the other had some wooden sleepers holding back the soil and plants. When the sleepers gave up the ghost and rotted, they were going to replace them with some more sleepers, but found that it was cheaper to purchase and build another volcanic



rock wall garden bed.

Sue's garden has lots of artwork and ornaments dotted around it and also a lot of pots (some very large) with maple trees, flax and cycads. When speaking with her husband, he told me that when they moved in there were 4 truckloads of potted plants!! When walking around the back garden I counted 15 bird ornaments and a couple of plastic snakes which looked rather real. She also had a number of ornaments that were made with wrought iron, tool and machinery parts – i.e. a monitor lizard, dragonfly and a flower arrangement made out of scissor and mower blades. Other artwork/ornaments included flying pigs, ceramic birds on metal stakes, glass bottles turned upside down and placed on stakes,

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## Elly & Leon Roos Garden in Upwey

Pat Anderson

On May 5<sup>th</sup>, something that feels like months ago as I sit down to think about it, the Salvia Group spent a delightful day visiting Elly's and Leon's beautiful garden in Upwey. Being late autumn, there were so many salvias still in flower. Yes, I know that winter can also be a wonderful time for salvias if you are lucky enough to have lots of winter sun and no frost, but for me, autumn is salvia peak time, and so this was a garden visit day not to be missed.

It was in fact a rather miserable day – cold, damp and showery – but the large group of enthusiasts who turned out was well rewarded, and quickly warmed and stimulated by both the garden and the household, by the range of colourful plants and by the delicious, hot vegetable soup that Elly had prepared.

Elly has been a salvia enthusiast for years, and for those of you who are relatively new members of the group, it should be pointed out that Elly was a very active contributor to the group in its earlier days. But Elly is not just a plant collector. She and Leon are also landscapers, with a great eye for the developmental potential of their steeply sloping block. Elly in particular is constantly changing things around to try to achieve perfection and she uses salvias in combination with other flowers and foliage plants to achieve the garden scapes or paintings that she wants. She is also a great one for

experimenting with the potential of individual salvias. Who else would have thought of creating a “fence” out of *Salvia chiapensis*? Yes, around the lower end of the first lot of steps descending from the back door, and on the right hand side, she has encouraged *S. chiapensis* to grow up through a fence of chicken wire. She keeps this clipped so that the effect is a green fence that is continually flowering. Her latest experiment is with *Salvia melissodora*. Not content to let this beautiful shrub just chug away, she is training one stem up and along, where it

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## Garden Visit to Sue Warren's in Emerald

(continued from Page 6)

a cherub, Viking, 2 roosters, an old dead wooden tree with owls, a koala and kurrajongs wired onto the limbs. Her house and garden in total is just over 1 acre and at the top of the back garden was a row of olive trees and a row of camellias cut into a long hedge. Surrounding the entire back garden were heaps of very large gum trees. Sue said that in her garden she likes planting plants in groups of 3 or more and she had groups of Wendy's Wish, Silas Dyson, Penny's Smile and African Sky. Other salvias in her garden included Leucantha's, Meigan's Magic, Waverley, Anthony Parker, Elegans, Indigo Spires, Splendens and Magenta Magic. There was a beautiful row of Greggii Pumpkin and Sensation – quite magnificent. The front garden had a large lawn area with lots of gum trees, with the driveway going up the centre of the block, with lots of Leucantha's and Hot Lips at the top of the driveway. Also in front of the carport was a garden bed with the most magnificent Meigan's Magic in full bloom. Besides the pots

of all sorts of plants, there was a collection of bonsai that apparently her son was very keen on, but has since lost interest in. There were also lots of native plants in her garden.

Another delightful aspect to the day was that Sue's husband is a mad keen collector of Robur tea pots and tea service sets. He had an entire wall with shelving in a lounge/den area that had all sorts of tea sets, made from silver as well as some ceramic tea pots. He loves the old collection items and has plaques and pictures of anything to do with the Robur Tea Company. He also was constantly making us pots of tea (proper tea, not tea bags) which was really lovely and went down very well with the lovely scones, jam and cream. So at around 3pm we said our thanks and goodbyes - a truly lovely and enjoyable day, house, garden and host.

## ***Elly & Leon Roos Garden in Upwey***

*(continued from page 7)*

gives the impression of a smaller-flowered wisteria.

It was on an earlier visit to Elly's place that I got the idea of creating a low salvia hedge. She was using *S. scabra* as a low hedge to edge one of the beds in front of the house, rather than lavender which is commonly used this way. This 'hedge' has long since gone because, as Elly explained, this species self-seeded too much, but it encouraged me to try a low hedge of *Salvia namaensis*. This latter incidentally, was quite effective for a while, but became a bit woody through lack of attention to clipping. I might also add here, that I was at "Finngrove" only yesterday – the garden of Arja Toivanen, who used to have the nursery in Hurstbridge, and in whose property the *Salvia* hybrid "Finngrove" first appeared. Here, I saw a lovely dense hedge of the very plant, *Salvia* Finn Grove", looking even more effective than my former hedge of *S. namaensis*. Not only that, but Arja's husband had plans to train this into a hedge with a triangular cross section.

As a border edge, Elly has used *Salvia chamaedryoides* effectively on the raised beds below the wall on the first "landing" going down the block. This gives months of delight from spring to autumn, with its silvery leaves (when not wet) and gentian blue flowers, but it does tend to sucker and needs some attention to control it. Behind this, were some attractive plants of *Salvia* 'Anthony Parker' and behind this again, was a wonderful *Salvia* 'Costa Rica Blue', with its branches of big blue flowers climbing up between the branches of two roses –

a crepuscule and a 'General Galleni' (hope I've got that right!)

One of several take-home messages for me from Elly's garden was that if something isn't performing well or is too labour-intensive, then get rid of it and replace it with something more suitable. For example, there used to be an attractive *Buddleja crispa* half way down the hill – the one with the silvery leaves and masses of pink flowers in spring. Elly explained that this buddleja was just too labour-intensive, requiring hard cutting near to the ground every year. Not only that, but Leon finds this one really aggravates the respiratory tract when pruning it. I too can only manage it if I wear a mask to do this. So, Elly has removed it and replaced it with an equally attractive *Cassonia paniculata*. How sensible! There are other salvias that she has also culled over the years, not because she doesn't like them, but because there are many other lovely things that perform better. For example, she used to have some large plants of *Salvia karwinskii* and *Salvia iodantha* in the front garden, next to the fence. She loved these, but they grew very tall and filled the metre-deep bed. In place she has an *iochroma* and a double *abutilon*, both of which are also tall, but with woody bases, they can be pruned in such a way that they can be under-planted with other things.

The garden is a paradise of rare and unusual plants, clever landscaping and artistic features in timber, metal and mosaic and one not to be missed when the opportunity arises. Thank you Elly and Leon for letting us share it and your hospitality.

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For New and Renewal Subscriptions, see Page 18 of this issue.

Enquiries please contact Bevan Whelan (03)59778104

# Salvia disermas forms

Pat Anderson

## Forms of *Salvia disermas* currently in circulation

There have been various plants in circulation locally for some years under the name of *S. disermas* and/or *S. rugosa* and information and photographs available on the internet are inadequate to settle our queries. Reference to the Flora of South Africa, vol 8 – Lamiaceae, makes it clear that *S. disermas* is a very variable species, and that *S. rugosa* is a synonym for *S. disermas*. Furthermore, Meg sent herbarium specimens of both the white form of *S. disermas* and the plant known as *S. rugosa* to Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens in 1999 for identification, receiving a reply confirming that these were both forms of *S. disermas*. This is also confirmed in Betsy Clebsch's book. It was agreed therefore that the name 'rugosa' should be discontinued.

The group examined the 6 plants available and made the following observations:

### ❖ Form 1

Plant acquired by Graham and Velda Ellis by seed from Silverhill in 1993 *Salvia disermas* Shrub to 1m, upright (the image in Betsy Clebsch resembles this plant form).

Leaves grey, very triangular in outline, but biserrate/lobulate margins, 50 – 60mm long, by 40mm at the base, petioles 30mm near base, becoming smaller higher up the plant to sessile at the base of the inflorescence, hairy on both surfaces, less pronounced on upper surface, and prominent on veins on lower surface especially.



Leaves of *Salvia disermas*

Stem, green and hairy

Inflorescence: 200mm, verticils of 6 flowers,

20mm apart, persistent bracts, acuminate

Calyx ribbed, very hairy and sticky, 6/7mm in

length, full with seed, 2 fine points at tip of

upper lip, points at tip of lower lip longer

Pedicel 2mm

Corolla 15mm long, white. Upper lip hooded on

emergence from the calyx, hood - 8mm, tubular

within the calyx, lower lip, cupped median lobe

Stigma white and exserted



Stem of *Salvia disermas*

Stamens also exserted

**Summary: A good garden plant.**

### ❖ Form 2

A more lax plant, reaching a max of 60cm. Pat has a plant of this form acquired as *S. disermas*, others have a similar plant acquired as *S. rugosa*.

A very good specimen grows in the Geelong Botanical Gardens. The image of *S. disermas*, in Christian Froissart's book, resembles this plant.

Leaves; light green, oblong lanceolate, rugose, 60 - 80mm by 25 - 35mm, margins

biserrate/lobulate, very short hairs on upper surface, longer on lower surface, especially on veins. Oil glands on both surfaces Stem: very hairy

Inflorescence: 70mm, 5 verticils of 6 flowers, 30mm apart, spaced evenly

Bracts: wide, persistent, acuminate

Calyx: fat with seed, ribbed, 12mm long,

laterally compressed towards opening, 3 tiny

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## Salvia disermas forms

(continued from page 9)

points at tip of upper lip, 2 longer points to lower lip,

Pedice: v short, 1mm

Corolla: white, with tinge of pink on hood.

Slightly larger than in Form 1. hood 9mm, tube within calyx also 9mm, lower lip 4mm



**Summary: a garden-worthy plant for hot dry areas. Ref: Disermas 'Slimleaf'**

### ❖ Form 3



This pale pink form was sold in Australia as *S. eigii* for some time. It begins as a clumping form, and then the stems fall over. Annette Wright acquired seed of *S. disermas* from Silverhill, resulting in this form

Leaves: thin texture, not rugose, triangular, 120-140mm long, by 80 – 100mm wide at the base.

Margins lobulate. Upper surface has small groups of short hairs and glands, lower surface also has fewer hairs than in Form 1. Hairs not uniform in length.

Petiole long – 100mm – sessile at base of inflorescence.

Inflorescence: 150 – 160mm, verticils of 6 flowers spaced at 40 -50mm intervals, getting closer towards the top

Bracts: large, persistent, wide, acuminate

Calyx: green, very hairy, sticky with oil glands, ribbed. 3 points at tip of upper lip, 2 on lower lip



Corolla: soft pink, larger than other forms. 20 - 25mm in total, hood 10 -11mm, lower lip 5 – 6 mm, whitish, median lobe markedly cupped, prominent lateral lobes "rolled"

Stigma: pink, exserted

Stamens: not exserted

**Summary: a good groundcover plant beneath a tree/ shrub to fill a space. Good in shade or sun, frost tolerant. Refer : Salvia disermas 'Pale Pink'**

### ❖ Form 4



Small shrub at Geelong Botanical Gardens (origin unknown to this group)

## Salvia disermas forms

Leaves: mid green, deltoid/cordate, with blunt tip. Both surfaces rugose, hairy, glandular

Petiole: 40mm – also hairy and glandular

Inflorescence: 150(+) mm, verticils spaced at 40mm, getting closer towards top, lower verticils on a 100mm pedicel, containing only 3 flowers

Bract: at base of inflorescence



Large: 15mm long by 10mm wide Calyx: prominent ribs, very hairy and glandular, 12mm, laterally compressed towards end, upper lip turning upwards, 2 points at tip. Lower lip with 2 points

Corolla: white, 18 0 20 mm in total length, hood 8 – 10mm

Stigma exerted, white

Stamens: white

**Summary: a more compact plant – 40 – 60mm high, but useful because it is white.**

**Tentative name suggestion: *Salvia disermas* var *compacta***

### ❖ Form 5

A very tall plant with small purple (mauve) flowers, of unknown origin. Possibly a cutting from a seedling at the old garden at Nobelius about 8 years ago.

Leaves: oblong/lanceolate, margins biserrate/lobulate, rugose, lower surface very hairy and slightly glandular, but not sticky. Smells a bit like *disermas*.

Petiole: very hairy, 40mm at lower leaves to sessile at base of inflorescence.

Stem: very hairy (white hairs) but coloured in the lower part.

Inflorescence: branched, very long – 630mm, inter-verticil spacing 50mm, getting smaller towards the top

Bract at base of inflorescence: large, crenate and very acuminate Bracteoles to verticils persistent



Calyx: colouring on upper surface. Very ribbed, 8 – 9mm, 3 points to upper lip, hairy, glandular, 2 points to lower lip very long and prominent

Corolla: upper lip very hooded, light mauve

Lower lip darker – purple, with cupped median lobe. Small – total length 11mm (hood 5mm), lower lip 5mm, with paler bee-line markings

Stigma purple

Stamens: hidden

**Summary: flowers very small, barely open.**

**Inflorescence very long .**

**Question: could this be a hybrid? Possibly a cross with *Salvia verbenaca*?**

**Refer: *Salvia disermas* x 'Purple'**

### ❖ Form 6



(continued page 12..)

## Salvias at Nobelius

*Patrick Hogan*

Expert advice was on hand to answer any questions on Salvias - at the recent Salvia sale day in Nobelius Heritage Park at Emerald. The Salvia group were very happy with the day and as a result, lots of Salvia plants should be planted giving enjoyment to their new owners. (photo taken by Patrick Hogan)



## A great day - Salvias at Nobelius

*Beth Clisby*

It was cold and very wet underfoot but the sun did come out, and as the mist disappeared everything was sparkling on this day in July for Salvias at Nobelius. I didn't arrive until about 12.45pm and there were already quite a number of people about. Lyndi and Jillian were busy assisting customers. They were amply assisted by Pat Jenzen (cashier), Heather Lucas, Michele Foord, and (Elly's friend) Yvonne, a salvia enthusiast who lives near Nobelius - a great little team who made the shopping for salvias a pleasure for everyone who visited. Cardinia Shire Mayor, Councillor Ed Chatwin and partner were just some of the many who enjoyed the Salvia garden, making their purchases with help from those who had the knowledge to answer questions and assist customers with their choices. As always there were books, newsletters, seeds as well as plants available for sale.

The wet grass caused my wheels to lock and the wheelchair just slipped quietly down the slope, thus I didn't have the mobility this time to move about. Cars were parked everywhere including along the driveway which prevented wheelchair access from that direction. I could see through the pines that there were quite a few people enjoying the Salvia garden but couldn't take a look to see what was in bloom. The atmosphere is always great at Salvias at Nobelius, the warmth of the sun making it even more pleasant, gardeners just kept coming. It was good to catch up with Patrick Hogan, VSSG photographer who is recovering from surgery, and his wife Eileen before departing with my purchases. Thank you Lyndi and Jillian, it's always a pleasure to visit the Salvia garden at Nobelius Heritage Park.

---

## Salvia disermas forms

*(continued from page 11)*

A bit like the plant described above, but upright, less tall and flowers dark pink.

Leaves: lanceolate/cordate, margins biserrate/lobulate, 100mm long by 60mm wide. Rugose, but soft and velvety underneath. Minute glands.

Petiole: 60mm, sessile at base of inflorescence

Stem: hairy, coloured up to branching inflorescence

Inflorescence: stem green and hairy, strong, upright, 480mm, verticils spaced evenly at 40mm

Bract at base of inflorescence: 50mm long, 40mm wide and very acuminate

Calyx: green, hairy, glandular, ribbed, 3 points on upper lip, 2 on lower lip, also less pointed  
Corolla: hood deep pink, lower lip paler pink with purple bee-line markings. 18 -20mm long, with hood 8mm are hairy. Lower lip 5-6mm, cupped median lobe.

Stigma pink, barely exerted

Stamens white, not exerted

**Summary: a good, garden-worthy plant, with strong upright stems and not too tall.**

**Suggested name: *Salvia disermas* x 'Dark Pink'**

## SPRIGS Meeting in New Zealand

Pauline Bassett



Salvia Display Garden at Auckland Botanic Gardens

As an aftermath to the Salvia Spectacular, Kate suggested that she could put together a slide show for SPRIGS members. SPRIGS is the Salvia, Plectranthus and Relatives Study Group (absolutely nothing to do with rugby!) which meets usually twice a year. Members keep in touch more regularly by email.

Planning got underway and we met Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> May at the Auckland Botanic Gardens, in the Unitec classroom at the Children's Garden – a marvellous venue. About 25 people attended, the most ever at a SPRIGS meeting. The slide show of the Salvia Spectacular and the nurseries we visited in the Dandenongs was well received, with much discussion and lots of notes taken. Members also participated in a 'show and tell'. Some of us brought cuttings in buckets and a considerable amount of plant material was distributed. *S. macrophylla* with purple-backed leaves was envied and a form of *S. confertiflora* with pale lime-green bracts was snapped up by Kate. Also a lucky number plant swap – we all went home groaning with plants and cuttings. Salvia flowers were displayed in vases in front of a bay window in the classroom and this attracted much comment and was a useful aid in identification of the Salvia collection at the Botanic Gardens.

After a shared lunch we spent some time with Nicola (Nicky) Reynolds who is the Curator of the Salvia collection at the Botanic Gardens. The Salvias were looking magnificent – huge mounds of the different forms of *S. leucantha*, clumps of *S. madrensis*, *S. microphylla* in its many forms – most notably 'Marachino' which seems to hold its colour better than others and stands out like a beacon. *S. microphylla* 'Cerro Potosi' was another eye-catcher. I also picked out *S. urica* and *S. muelleri* for their abundant flowers and abundant bees.

The flower beds in the Salvia section at the Botanic Gardens suffer from poor drainage and wet feet – they are really at their best in the autumn and can look fairly desultory at other times. Nicky wishes to change this situation and plans to reconstruct the area, starting in about a month. Plants will be renewed by the Propagation department and the beds are to be raised and new soil added. Hopefully it will give the whole area a lift.

Certainly I would encourage any Australian Salvia people to visit the Botanic gardens if ever they are in Auckland.

Kate, Nikki and I ended the day by cleaning up the classroom and removing the last of the plant material. I went home with even more cuttings than needed but was happy to pot them up yesterday. Many were flowering pieces and I now have two vases of flowers in the house – a mix of *S. microphylla* 'Marachino', *S. Mexicana* 'Limelight', *S. confertiflora* and *Salvia* 'Indigo Spires' in one and *S. iodantha* and *S. microphylla* 'San Carlos Festival' in the other. It was an excellent day and Kate is to be commended for coming up with the idea. Thank you to all the participants and to Nicky for arranging such a wonderful meeting venue at the Botanic Gardens.

### Note:

Kate Jury is the SPRIGS contact  
bkjury@xtra.co.nz

## **WANTED – NEW SUBSCRIPTION SECRETARY**

Victoria Salvia Study Group is seeking a volunteer to take over the duties of Subscription Secretary as Bevan is resigning this position after many years of service. Access to a computer and telephone is required. Training will be given.

Interested persons **please contact Bevan Whelan(03) 5977 8104**

# Salvia News

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## THOUGHTS ON SALVIAS - - *microphylla* and *greggii*

Elwyn Paton

Tamborine Mountain

The Perennial Poppies Group Inc

Recently, I have been pondering upon the *microphylla* and *greggii* salvias in my garden. We would assume that these Mexican beauties would flourish here in southeast Queensland, but somehow they don't do all that well for me on Tamborine Mountain, certainly not as well as our *involucratas* and *karwinskiis* that self seed and generally go berserk. I am aware that other areas of southeast Queensland have better results particularly with the seedling *microphyllas* that have developed in the area. *Greggiis* are known to be quite brittle and do not like our summer humidity and rain.

In a pile of discarded magazines at our Botanic Gardens, I spied a copy of 'The Garden' (Nov. 1993) with a description of a plant and seed collecting expedition made by James Compton, Martyn Rix and colleague John d'Arcy, setting out mainly to locate the yellow-flowered *Salvia greggii*.

They began their search at Saltillo at 1,800m in the eastern sierra, (Sierra Madre Oriental), in a series of high ridges with peaks of 3000m to 4,000m and travelling east ending in a beautiful tree clad escarpment facing the Gulf of Mexico. It is green and lush from the moisture laden winds from the sea but quickly becomes a more arid inland plateau to the west.

At this stage of the story, I needed to get out my atlas to locate Saltillo where they searched in a valley near a village called Jame. They sighted *Salvia greggii*, a typical scarlet-flowered form found by the trader Josiah Gregg near Saltillo in 1870. It is widespread in northern and central Mexico. (high and dryish).

"The pass was full of other interesting plants- *Philadelphus maculatus*, fragrant *Mahonia gracilis*, *Dahlia merckii*, and more exposed was a shrubby relation of the blackberry *Cowania plicata*. Around it was sheltering the vibrant yellow flowered perennial poppy *Eschscholzia Mexicana*.

(These findings may give us a clue as to the climate that these plants like).

As they travelled east they came near the top of a pass at 2,400m. They noticed that the colours of *Salvia greggii* were changing from red to orange and pink. In the same place they saw another

salvia - *S.microphylla* growing on the edge of the forest or in the lee of large boulders. It was widespread throughout Mexico and very variable. The typical flower colour of this species is red but in north-east Mexico they saw only bright magenta-pink flowers.

Now, for everyone who has trouble identifying *microphylla* and *greggii* species, James Compton who tells the story says that "In botanical terms the two species are distinguished by a pair of papillae (small protuberances) which are present in the flower tubes of *S.microphylla* but not in *S. greggii*.

From the top of the pass, the flower colours of the salvia became more and more varied until they had collected seed of almost 30 different colour forms from deep plum-red, crimson, scarlet, magenta, orange, buff, pink and finally two shades of yellow-, clear sulphur and soft cream.

On close examination it was obvious that most of these plants were hybrids between the two species.

This hybrid is new to science although crosses between *S. greggii* and *S. microphylla* have occurred in cultivation. Later James Compton published a description of this hybrid which was named *Salvia x jamensis* after the village and valley in which it was first found.

Now all of this leads me back to my garden which is a mere 600m above sea level and 4 degc to 5 degc cooler in summer and winter than the surrounding areas where I have some success with plants such as *S. 'San Carlos Festival'* and *S. microphylla grahamii*.

Even though I am roughly on the same latitude south as North Mexico, the height above sea level there makes the change in temperature quite significant.

Shortly after reading this article, I received my copy of the May "English Garden" and an article written by David Wheeler who has a garden on the Welsh borders and is a fan of *microphylla* and *greggii* salvias and lately *xjamensis* and apparently they do very well for him. He acquires many of his salvias from William Dyson who is curator at Great Comp Garden and Nursery.

(continued on page 16)

**THOUGHTS ON SALVIAS - - *microphylla and greggii***

*(continued from page 57)*

He finishes his article saying —“All the young shrubby salvias in my garden, mostly from William (Dyson) sailed through last winter, but the Welsh borders in March is not Mexico” After finding how high the places where greggii and microphylla grow, maybe the Welsh borders could be found somewhere in the high Sierras of Mexico.

The Kingaroy and Nanango districts are places in Qld that we know have good results with *S. microphylla* and *greggii*. These places, north west of Brisbane are much higher and dryer and quite cool in winter.

Now these stories remind me of geography lessons learnt long ago in high school. Our teacher had a tidy way of assessing the crops likely to occur in any country that we studied, where we may find coffee, tea, copra, sugarcane, wheat, corn, barley, rye, sugarbeet, olives, grapes or cork growing.

This, of course applies to agriculture but over years I have begun to realize that this was also valuable information for horticulture and gardening. It takes a little understanding of the

climate in which you live and garden and is listed as follows.

- The LATITUDE on which you live.
  - The PREVAILING WINDS (which is determined largely by your latitude)
  - The PROXIMITY TO THE SEA and lastly and certainly not the least
  - The HEIGHT above SEALEVEL
- This list is rather simple and we all know aspects of it but don't often think to apply it.

I can't help thinking that the recent crop of 'Heatwave' salvias that have been released may have given us in (SEQ) the wrong impression. Perhaps if they had been named 'Coolwave', we may have had a different approach to them entirely.

Well, I trust that this little epistle hasn't bored you all to snores. It is something that I have needed to get off my chest for quite a while.

I wish you lots of successful gardening.

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## Salvia microphylla

Pat Anderson with Meg Bentley, Lyndi Garnett - May 2012

Those of you who have subscribed to this newsletter since before 2006 may recall an article I wrote back then on how to tell the difference between a *Salvia microphylla* and a *Salvia greggii*, and whether or not it is acceptable to call any hybrid formed by these two parent plants a *Salvia x jamensis*. The short answer to the latter question was, "Yes, you can".

As to the former, in summary, while the flowers of both species are similar, the leaves of a *S. greggii* are narrow, smooth-edged and with smooth surfaces. The leaves of *S. microphylla*, on the other hand, are more heart-shaped, rougher and with toothed edges. Those of *S. jamensis* are somewhere in between.



a) *S. greggii*



b) *S. microphylla*

Another distinguishing feature is the presence of a pair of papillae (2 tiny finger-like growths) inside the base of the corolla tube of *S. microphylla*, and generally in any offspring with this as a parent, but not in *S. greggii*.

Furthermore, most forms of *S. microphylla* are taller than those of *S. greggii*, tend to spread laterally from underground shoots—almost to the point of nuisance value in the case of *S. microphylla* 'Cyclamen'—and are generally more robust.

Back in 2006, we (a group of Study Group members, including Meg, Lyndi, Jillian, Arja and I) had examined everything we had in our collections at the time and intended reporting the results in subsequent issues. Well, after six years, there has been such a proliferation of forms of these plants that this would take up a

whole newsletter. I keep a table of new forms as I hear about them and it has now reached nine pages! In any case, many of them are look-alikes, with different names. This in turn, has got us wondering about whether we are losing the wood for the trees and whether or not we can define the original species still.

Recently, with this in mind, we (this time just Lyndi, Meg and I) dug out all the source material we had and searched the internet. Now, with the proliferation of information on the net over recent years, you would imagine that this would simplify matters. The reality is the opposite, for a lot of information is contradictory and some is plain wrong.

The earliest description of *S. microphylla* was made by a botanist named Kunth in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Then in 1939, Epling published a comprehensive work on the *Salvia* species of the new world in which he describes *S. microphylla* as displaying considerable variation, especially in the foliage, as though the species was in the process of evolving into possibly three geographical races. Adding to the confusion are the various other names that have been thrown into the ring: *S. grahami* in the USA, as *S. microphylla* was named by Bentham, *S. neurepia* by Fernald, and then *S. microphylla* var *wislizenii*, named by Gray, as well as a few more synonyms.

Out of all this, and going by the ruling that the first recorded name and description is the one that stays, we decided to stick with the findings of James Compton in a 1994 publication (1) whereby the species consists of type and two varieties as follows:

***Salvia microphylla* var *microphylla*** (the type): leaves generally less than 2.5cm long, ovate or elliptic, with an acute or obtuse apex. This plant grows to about 1.2m, becomes a bit woody and spreads readily. The red flowers, smaller than those of the variety below show two small papillae in the base of the corolla. Flowers opposite, in pairs on elongating racemes 10 – 20cm long. The plants we have in Victoria came from Judi Forrester of Otway Herbs, brought in to Australia by seed from NW Seeds, Arizona. (Note: any seeds of plants that are apt to hybridise can be a source of complications, but

(continued on page 16)

## Salvia microphylla

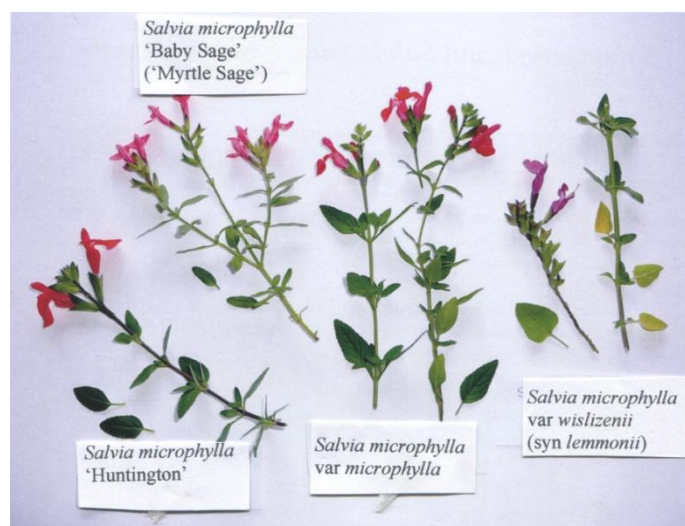
(continued from page 15)

our plants conform to the description of James Compton at least)

**Salvia microphylla var neurepia** : leaves larger – up to 5cm long, elliptic, apex obtuse or acute. This is the form that was widely called Graham’s Sage in horticulture in the USA, and consequently here too, as it has been around in gardens for many decades.

**Salvia microphylla var wislizenii**: this form has the most stable characters, deltoid, acuminate or acute leaves, narrow caudate bracts and more congested inflorescences, with flowers more pinky red/magenta than the others. This form does not spread and it tends to lose its leaves in the cold weather here. This is almost certainly synonymous with *Salvia lemmonii*, named in 1886 by Gray, who later decided it was a variety of *S. microphylla* after all. James Compton thinks it not significantly different enough to warrant its own specific rank, but that it should probably be elevated to subspecies status (Note: sub species rank applies to variations due to geography; in this case, the western Sierra Madre in Mexico and Arizona). The plants we have come from seed of *S. lemmonii*.

There are so many cultivars available in Australia, involving *S. microphylla* as a parent: ‘Cyclamen’, ‘Cerise’, ‘Hot Lips’, ‘Huntington’, ‘Margaret Arnold’, ‘Maraschino’, ‘Martine’, ‘Musk Pink’, ‘Pink Blush’, ‘Red’, ‘San Carlos



Festival’, some of the ‘Heatwave’ series, ‘Sweet Laura’ – the list is endless – but one more plant that deserves a mention is the rather different, **Salvia ‘Baby Sage’**. More confusion here, because this appears on some internet sites as synonymous with *S. microphylla*. It appears to be a form of *S. microphylla*, from its leaf shape and the presence of pronounced papillae at the base of the corolla tube and its spreading habit, but everything about the plant is small. The leaves are generally less than 20mm long. The flowers are smaller (15mm), a more watermelon red, with the bottom lip cupped, but not deeply indented. Our plants all originated from one bought from Phil Bear in Olinda in the early 1990s. This is a mystery one. Its smaller leaves are a good fit with the botanical name, “*microphylla*” (small leaves), but the original descriptions of the type species have larger leaves than this!

Figure 1 below is taken from Meg’s book on p. 25. It shows some types of *S. microphylla*, including *S. microphylla* var *microphylla*, *S. microphylla* var *wislizenii* (syn *lemmonii*), *S. ‘Baby Sage’*, with its very small leaves and *Salvia microphylla* “Huntington” with its black stems.. To complete this account, Figure 2 is a separate image of *S. microphylla* var *neurepia*. This was the one formerly widely referred to in the USA as ‘Graham’s Sage’

**Figure1 (left). from Meg Bentley:**  
Some examples of *Salvia microphylla* forms

**Figure 2 (below):**  
*Salvia microphylla* var *neurepia*



### References and further reading:

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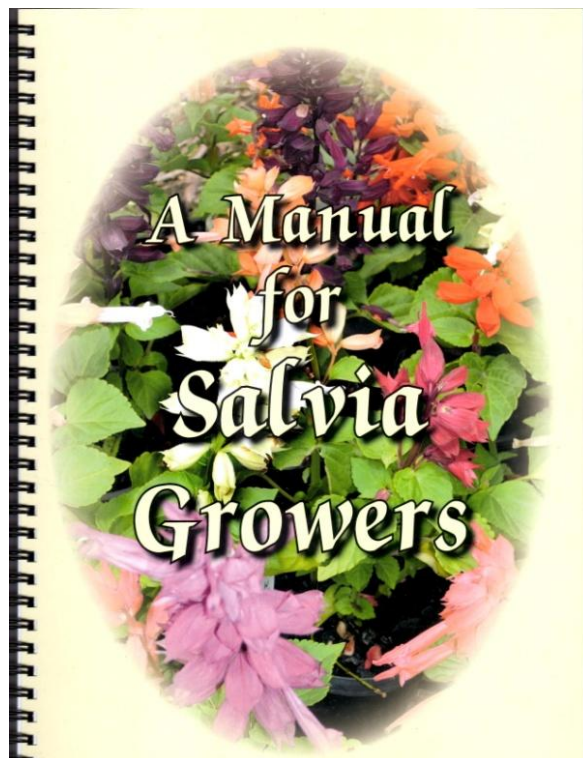
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