

Salvia News

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Official Newsletter of the
Victorian Salvia Study Group

Summer 2012/13

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

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SALVIA NEWS SUBMISSIONS

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

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***COPY DEADLINE for next issue, is Friday 8 February 2013**



SALVIA NEWS

VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP

Welcome to the latest edition of Salvia News. Summer is nearly upon us, many of us notice that there is a change to weather patterns again this year, whether it be a once off or changes that will become 'normal' only time will tell. Gardeners soon learn to adapt to whatever they are dealt and I notice that the Salvia species is remarkably resilient in their adaption to climate conditions too. Meg Bentley (author of 'A Manual for Salvia Growers') has reminded me several times that growth habit variations are often the conditions they are being grown in. Just another reason to visit gardens everywhere that grow Salvias to see for ourselves and take home ideas for own plots. Read about another two gardens; Meryls' Garden Visit page 13 and Splendid Salvias Page 14 and 15.

As you are aware, the Victorian Salvia Study Group (VSSG) is a branch of the Herb Society of Victoria (HSOV). HSOV members receive a monthly newsletter which of course includes End of Financial Year Statements. Any monies received by VSSG are used to run the Group's activities and for the planting and maintenance of our GPCAA registered garden collection that are often written about in Salvia News and outlined in Meg's Manual for Salvia Growers. VSSG subscribers receive a copy of Salvia News and an open invitation to join in the Groups' activities as outlined in the Calendar of Events. As there has been some interest shown in how the money is spent by VSSG you will find a Financial Statement for the Salvia Spectacular held earlier this year and Financial Statement 2011/12 on page 12 for your perusal.

Once again it's a full edition and its hoped you enjoy. Your comments are always welcome.

Bevan Whelen has successfully found a volunteer replacement for Subscription Secretary. Bevan and Meg will work together for a couple of months before the handover.

We wish to take this opportunity to thank Bevan for his numerous years in this position. Without his enthusiasm and vigilance in this area, we wouldn't have the growing subscription data base that ensures we all get our copies of Salvia News each quarter. Thank you Bevan.

At the same time, welcome to Meg Gadd, the new Subscription Secretary. Meg can be contacted on telephone (03) 95848005 or email meg_gadd@yahoo.com.au

As this is our last edition of the year, I wish you all a safe and happy Christmas Season.

Happy Gardening, *Beth*

SUBSCRIPTIONS

We were pleased to advise in the last issue that you now have the choice to receive Salvia News either via hard cover posted to you for \$15 per annum (4 issues) or on line \$12 per annum (4 issues).

When its time to renew your subscription you will be sent a Renewal Subscription Form as an insert marked 'Renewal Subscription' with your Salvia News. Please do not use the form that appears in the Newsletter which is for new subscriptions only. Should you have any queries, please contact our Subscription Secretary Meg Gadd on Telephone 9584 8005 or email meg_gadd@yahoo.com.au

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INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

As the group has made substantial gains this year, (see Financial Statements page 12) we intend to spend some of those hard earned dollars on

- Updating the website
- Upgrading our edges in our display garden at Nobelius Heritage Park, Emerald by replacing the timber edging with a new metal interlocking system that should last for some years.
- Upgrading our information sheet with a colourful collage thanks to Meg's creative skills
- Producing a portable pull up colourful poster of Salvias to be displayed at the various selling events during the year.

These are just a few items we wish to achieve in the next year.

Thankyou

Lyndi / VSSG Co-ordinator

This is your newsletter, and it's your submissions that assist in making it so interesting. We would love to hear from you; share your garden news, tell about a garden visit, a comment about the newsletter, do you have a salvia enquiry. Have you tried any of the things you have read about in Salvia News? This space is ready to include your news and views. Thank you to all those who already make submissions.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- 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. There will be plants to take home.
- Feb 24th Sun** **Blue Lotus Watergarden 11.30am**
Warburton Hwy, Yarra Junction ,
25 mins past Lilydale Mel: 288. H8
Magnificent lake and surrounds, full of water lilies,
Abyssinian bananas and other exotic plants are available to purchase
Come for lunch, cafe style or BYO lunch.
Don't miss a visit to this wonderful location
- March 9th /10th Sat /Sun** **Ferny Creek Plant Collectors Expo**
100 Hilton Rd, Sassafras / Ferny Creek Mel: 66 E12
9 - 4pm Sat and 10 - 4.00pm Sun
Salvia plants, seed and books for sale
Bring your list. Bring 11.5
- April 6th /7th Sat /Sun** **Tesselaar Gardening and Plant Expo**
357 Monbulk Rd, Silvan Mel : 123: B5
9am - 4pm Saturday and Sunday
Salvia plants, seeds and books for sale
Bring your list. Bring plants to be identified.
- April 20th Sun** **Glenda and Wendy's Garden Visit 11am**
Glenda Sellenger: 39 Lockhart Dve, Rosebud. Mel: 170 C5, C6
Wendy Smith :9 Cleek Crs, Rosebud: 170 D8
Absolutely 2 beautiful gardens to enjoy walking around.
(As Wendy's property is up for sale, if sold, we will just be visiting Glenda)
Bring a chair and a plate to share and a camera.
- May 19th Sun** **Russel Cheal Garden Visit 11am**
30 Charles Smith Drive, Wonga Park. Mel: 36 F7
A magnificent garden full of interesting plants.
Bring a chair, and a plate to share
- June 15th Sat** **RHS Conference**
- June 23rd Sun** **Plant I.D Day with Lyndi Garnett 11am**
844 Highbury Rd, Glen Waverley, Mel: 62 J10
Identification of different Salvias.
Plants, seed and Salvia books for sale
Bring a plate to share and a chair

Note: Don't forget to check the website www.salvias.org.au on a regular basis for any changes and of course new events added. You will also find a load of information on the website that may be of interest. All subscribers of Salvia News and Herb Society of Victoria members are invited to attend our events, meet other gardeners and enjoy new friendships. We look forward to catching up with you.

Dwarf Forms of Salvia

Lyndi Garnett

There are quite a few dwarf forms of *S. involucrata*, *S. karvinskii* and *involucrata x karvinskii*. These dwarf forms only grow approx. 1 – 1.2m H, most have perennial growth rather than forming a shrub, most can spread to form a good clump which requires being cut down at the end of Summer/Autumn.

All these forms have very long flowering periods, almost the whole year and become very hardy once established. They enjoy a sunny sheltered position out of danger of frost damage.

These include : *S. 'Bethellii'*, *S. 'Winter Red'*, *S. 'Joan'*, *S. 'Ripe Raspberry'*, *S. 'Mulberry Jam'*.

Notes on the flowers:

In the taller forms of *S. involucrata*, and *involucrata x karvinskii*, many of these shrubs have arching branches. The flowers (corolla's) all appear to be facing upwards in one direction, but are in fact situated in whorls all around the stem.

In the dwarf forms which grow to approx 1.2m H the stem grows straight up so that the flowers (corolla's) can fan out evenly around the stem. If the plant has to compete for light through other shrubs of course it will grow taller and might develop arching branches so that the flowers will also assume that position of facing in one direction of upwards

- *S. 'Bethellii'*

This is a straight dwarf form of *S. involucrata*. Growing to only 1 – 1.2m rather than the 4m tall spp, it makes a good alternative if you haven't the room to grow the tall spp.

'Bethellii' flowers more or less the whole year, with the main flowering period being late spring / summer.

The flower head is much shorter than the tall spp, but the corolla's are in a whorl all around the stem, rather than facing in one direction as in the tall spp. The corolla is the same colour and size.

While it is best to cut it right down each year, wait for the new growth to appear. This will indicate how well the clump is forming and where it is in the garden

'Bethellii' enjoys a sunny sheltered position – not full summer sun, nor does it like to be too dry.

If you are wanting to take cut flowers inside, then take them in full bud, as they can drop easily if too advanced.

Tip cuttings of new growth are easily taken or a rooted piece can be potted up

- *S. 'Winter Red'*

'Winter Red' is a *S. karvinskii* dwarf form. It grows to 1 – 1.2m on rather lax stems that form a very good clump, especially at the base of trees or shrubs that are likely to be blown out of the soil from severe winds. It

helps to protect the base area of such trees and shrubs. It can form very large clumps, so is best planted in a large area so it can spread, but is easily cut back if it grows too large.

The leaves are a nice mid green, velvety and the same shape as the 4m tall form. The leaves colour up nicely during the cold months, adding to it's charm.

Flowers mainly appear in late Autumn/ Winter. The flower stems are long with long interspaces between whorls of beautiful bright red tubular corolla's. These appear in a whorl around the stem.

'Winter Red' enjoys a sunny sheltered position. If given too much shade, it will become quite lanky, but can be pruned easily to encourage new growth. It doesn't enjoy full sun in summer nor a dry area for any length of time. Tip cuttings or rooted pieces are best taken from new growth.

- *S. 'Joan'*

'Joan' is a dwarf form of *S. involucrata x ?*. Growing to 1 – 1.2m, this forms a good clump which is very drought hardy when well established.

Leaves are a light green, thin textured and fairly smooth.

Flowers are a beautiful clear cerise colour on a short green flower stem. The calyxes are essentially green with some colouring on the

Dwarf Forms of Salvia *continued*

exposed sides. The corolla is tubular with a small hood and lower lip.

'Joan' will flower the whole year but appreciates being cut down more or less to the ground each year. New shoots appear from the base of old stems. – it's not long before it's back in flower.

It is easy to propagate, either by tip cuttings or by pulling out a rooted piece of stem.

If the clump grows too big, then pull out the offending stems and cut back to reasonable patch size

'Joan' likes a sunny position – too much shade and it grows weak and lanky.

- S. 'Ripe Raspberry'

'Ripe Raspberry' is very similar to 'Joan', but with a few good observations, you can tell the difference between the two plants.

'Ripe Raspberry' is a dwarf form of a *S. karvinskii* x ?, growing 1.2 – 1.5m, although primarily a perennial, this can take on a shrubby form or just give out arching branches.

Leaf shape and size are similar to 'Joan', but they are hairier with a more rounded apex, slightly darker in colour and veins very evident.

Everything about the flower stem and flower is darker than 'Joan'. The Calyxes are a dark pink. The flower stem is again short. The tubular corolla's are a dark cerise with a small white spot in the throat.

Once established, it will be quite a hardy Salvia. It enjoys a sunny sheltered position – not too shaded, nor dry for any extended periods.

It may flower on and off for most of the year, but it's main flowering period is Winter through to early Summer.

Like the others, it is easy to propagate, either by tip cuttings or by pulling out a piece of rooted stem. It needs to be cut down each year or at least pruned to a bud if it has grown into a shrub.

- 'Mulberry Jam'

'Mulberry Jam' is a very slender upright Salvia, growing approx 1 – 1.2m. It looks wonderful in a prairie situation, where it

shows it's head above grasses or other smaller shrubs, so it is best planted in a few clumps in the middle behind smaller plants in the front of a bed.

Everything about 'Mulberry Jam' is darker than the other dwarf forms. The stems are dark coloured, the leaves are similar in size and shape to the others, with a pointed apex, but a darker green.

The flowering stem again is short and in a whorl around the stem. Calyxes are a dark wine colour, the tubular corolla's are more of a magenta wine colour – hence the name of 'Mulberry Jam'.

When pruning the stems, it is best to wait for the new growth to appear in Spring as this Salvia is easily lost.

'Mulberry Jam' likes a sunny sheltered position – not too much shade as it becomes weak and won't survive the winter. Tip cuttings are easily taken in Spring from the new growth.

Editor's Note:

I have been caught out thinking that dwarf plants meant small, short, low growing. The Dictionary says that dwarf; an animal, plant or man, abnormally small in size. In other words, smaller than the original species and that is where my interpretation went haywire! I particularly like S. Limelight but don't have the space to plant one. I jumped in and purchased S. 'dwarf' Limelight and planted at the front of the border. Within months it was about 80cm tall and still growing. I thought it must have been incorrectly tagged, but soon learnt it was my interpretation of its name that caused the problem. I have since found another spot for it. I am very pleased to learn more about Dwarf Forms of Salvias and now understand that this species of dwarf grow to over a metre which is still much smaller than the original. Thanks Lyndi.

I would love to hear of your experiences of Salvias in your garden or that you have potted, that we may share. Drop me a line via Australia Post or email me at beth.c@bigpond.com. (if emailing, don't forget the dot after beth and before the 'c')

S.E. QUEENSLAND NEWS

Lynn McAllister

Welcome to November! It is hard to believe we are already well into spring. Soon it will be summer and Christmastime. After our lovely wet start to winter, the last few months have been very dry here in south east Queensland. The water tanks were emptied weeks ago and the garden is now on town water and showing signs of stress. Nothing pep's up the plants like a real shower of rain and I so hope there will be one soon.

This difficult weather has shown the salvias to be real troopers with only a couple of the *Salvia* 'Heatwave' series suffering more than their titles would suggest. 'Glimmer' is glimmering no longer and 'Blaze' looks as though it has been. They have been getting an extra hosing for the last couple of weeks and look as though they will recover. I have had only mixed success with the microphyllas and continue to take cuttings and try them in different locations around the yard.

Several of the salvias that started flowering in winter are still providing some lovely colour in the garden. *Salvia* 'Mulberry Jam' has been flowering non-stop since July. Mine is in a west facing mixed bed and has quite small flowers compared to others I have seen. I suspect a move to a cooler part of the garden might be in order. The fuzzy bright pink flowers are just lovely, good enough to eat! They were set off particularly well recently when the nutmeg bush (*Iboza riparia* now called *Tetradenia riparia*) burst into flower behind it. *Salvia* 'Phyllis Fancy' just doesn't know how to take a rest and I have to prune regardless or it will take over. It performs well here in semi-shade or western sun provided it gets a regular drink. I love the almost black and white contrast of *Salvia discolor* which continues to flower, enjoying the dry sunny position on the west facing rock wall.

At the end of last summer, I rearranged the day lilies (*Hemerocallis spp.*) to create a mixed garden, my idea being to contrast the pale cream, yellow and pink day lilies against the different varieties of red salvia that perform quite well in our humidity. The bed is north west facing but receives dappled shade in the afternoons so reducing the intense summer heat. So far both

day lilies and salvias seem happy with the new arrangement, but the heat of summer will tell. *Salvia miniata* has reached nearly a metre tall and is topped with very bright cherry red flowers over lovely light green foliage. The differences in the red tones of *Salvia gravida*, *univerticilata*, *elegans* 'Golden Delicious' and *darcyi* become apparent when viewed in close proximity. There is also great variety of form and colour in the foliage, from the almost yellow of 'Golden Delicious' in the sunshine, to the noticeably greyer tones of *Salvia darcyi*. *Salvia blepharophylla* 'Sweet Numbers' is about 40 cm tall and wide and has been shy to flower in its original quite shady location. I am hoping the extra light, or the new company, in the mixed collection might bring out more of the short, large lipped bright red flowers, this summer. *Salvia* 'Mystique', even though a more reserved, duller red, has earned its place being a top performer elsewhere in the yard. It puts on a great show of short, full-lipped, fuzzy flowers.

New to the garden for 2012, and planted back in April, is *Salvia forskahlei* which has grown very well over winter and is already in flower. Such lovely pale speckled blue-mauve flowers over the rosette of mid green foliage. I suspect this one has quite enjoyed the drier weather, and may struggle when the humidity hits, but it is worth a try. Also *Salvia purpurea* which has reached 1.5metres already and, although it should be an autumn flowerer, has developed several heads of buds (but none has opened as yet). Yet again, I am trying the spring flowering *Salvia* 'Omaha Gold' but this time in a moist semi shaded spot. It is already over a metre tall and has had several heads of delightful blue-purple flowers with more still to come. I do hope we get some rain soon. I think we will hear the salvias sing with delight when we do!

Happy gardening to all, from southeast Queensland

***Salvia leucantha*, the species, forms and offspring**

Pat Anderson May 2012

THIS hardy (to about -4degrees) salvia, which has been around in Melbourne gardens for years, is generally referred to as Mexican Sage. Like many common names, this can be most confusing for it is not the same plant as *Salvia mexicana* (nor any of the forms of the latter), so it is better, as always, to stick with the botanical name, *Salvia leucantha*.

As the common name implies, this species comes from Mexico, in particular from the subtropical conifer forest of central and eastern Mexico. It is a middle-sized shrub, depending on growing conditions, or more correctly a herbaceous perennial, which develops many flowering stems to about 1.2m from its rootstock during its growing season, so that it can spread fairly rapidly to a width of a metre or more.

Note: I use the term “herbaceous” in the botanical sense, referring to plants with non-woody, green stems. Some people in this newsletter, and in the horticultural industry in general, appear to use the term in place of “winter dormant”.

The leaves of *Salvia leucantha* are linear-lanceolate and greyish green, hairy underneath. The attractive inflorescence grows up to 30cm long and, in the case of the species, the individual flowers are arranged in whorls with white corolla tubes emerging from purple calyces, both covered in fine hairs. The name *leucantha* means white flowered. (See Figure 1)



Figure 1: *Salvia leucantha* the species

According to Betsy Clebsch, the plant has been in cultivation since 1846, and because it is so easy to propagate by division of excess stems, it is usually shared, rather than bought or sold. There are a number of cultivars, however, which may appeal more to gardeners and the newer ones of these tend to be sold.

One of these is sometimes referred to as *S. leucantha* ‘Nioke’ or ‘Nioka’ on Di’s Delightful Plants catalogue. Sometimes it is simply referred to as *S. leucantha* ‘Mauve’. This has the same calyces as the species, but the corolla tube is also mauve. (See Figure2)



Figure 2: *Salvia leucantha* 'Mauve' ('Nioke')

More attractive still, as well as lighting up a winter garden, is the purple form, known variously as *S. leucantha* ‘Purple’, or ‘Magenta’, or ‘Midnight’ (in the USA), or even ‘Harry’s Red’ (Lambley’s catalogue). (See Figure 3)



Figure 3: *Salvia leucantha* 'Magenta' ('Midnight', 'Purple', 'Harry's Red')

There is another form of *S. leucantha*, called ‘Santa Barbara’, which is supposed to be a dwarf
(continued on page 10)

***Salvia leucantha*, the species, forms and offspring**

(continued from page 9)

form (80 x 90cm). In my experience, it doesn't seem much different from the 'Mauve' form, although I haven't really compared them for height, side by side in the ground.

Two new forms were released a couple of years ago and were readily available in places like Bunnings. These were *S. leucantha* 'Pink Velour' (see Figure 4) and 'White Velour' (see Figure 5). Both forms have white calyces and hairy (velour) flowers and the colour name refers to the corolla. The white form can make quite a statement in a drab garden in late autumn to early winter.



Figure 4: *Salvia leucantha* 'Pink Velour'



Figure 5: *Salvia leucantha* 'White Velour'

Many salvias hybridise very easily within groups and it appears that *S. leucantha* has done just this, producing a range of lovely plants. *S. 'Waverly'* (Figure 6), with *S. leucantha* and most likely *S. chiapensis* as parents, is a must for every garden. It is tough and it flowers for most of the year. The flowers resemble those of *S. leucantha*, in shape, but the leaves are shinier and the plant is more shrubby. Plants that never stop flowering always cause a problem for pruning, but the easiest solution is to take out one third of the stems to quite low to the ground and then, when the shrub fills out a bit, remove another third. This way it can be easily maintained.



Figure 6: *Salvia* 'Waverly'

A similar plant, with flowers of a more bluish hue, is *S. 'Phyllis' Fancy'*, named after Phyllis Norris who spotted the plant in an arboretum in California. (See Figure 7)



Figure 7: *Salvia* 'Phyllis' Fancy'

***Salvia leucantha*, the species, forms and offspring (continued)**

Another tough, autumn flowering plant is *S.* 'Anthony Parker', which has indigo blue flowers and calyces and is reputed to be a cross between *S. leucantha* 'Midnight' and *S. elegans* (presumably in the USA). (See Figure 8)



Figure 8: *Salvia* 'Anthony Parker'

More recently, in Australia, *S.* 'Meigan's Magic' has appeared. This flowers for a much longer season than *S.* "Anthony Parker". It came, I believe, from Robyn Powell's Tupelo Grove property in the Adelaide Hills, and is very attractive because of the contrast between the white of the corolla and the dark purple calyx. (See Figure 9) I should point out though that the sharp contrast is only reached in autumn. Before this, the calyces are paler and the effect is more like that of *S.* 'Phyllis' Fancy'.



Figure 9: *Salvia* 'Meigan's Magic'

Also coming from Robyn's garden is *S.* 'Blue Abyss'. This one looks a bit like *S.* 'Anthony

Parker' but has the advantage that it flowers for much longer.

One other beauty is *S.* Magenta Magic', which appeared on the market 2 or 3 years ago. I love this one for the colour and texture of its flowers magenta of course. Unfortunately it has a rather lax, floppy habit, so I grow it close to other plants which will support it, or next to an arch where I can tie it a bit. I think it is worth the bother. (see Figure 10)



Figure 10: *Salvia* 'Magenta Magic'

In summary, it is interesting to see how one species can give rise to several forms that are quite markedly different, as well as hybridising with other species to generate even more lovely things for we garden plant collectors.

SALVIA IDENTIFICATION

If anyone has Salvias that they can't remember the name of or plants they can't identify, please email a photo to Lyndi Garnett, VSSG Co-ordinator for identification.

highcon@hotmail.net.au

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Irene Robinson / Treasurer

SALVIA SPECTACULOR FEBRUARY 2012 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

OUTGOINGS

Plants Purchased for resale	\$2,647.58
Potting Supplies & Potting Supplies	\$1,038.50
Plant Tags	\$80.75
Hire Hall	\$1,050.00
Postage, Stationery & Photocopies	\$389.09
Manuals & Books	\$978.00
Teas, lunch	\$264.50
T-Shirts	\$882.00
	\$7,330.42

INCOMING

Plant Sales	\$6,252.00
Books, Manuals	\$1,383.00
Teas, Lunch	\$1,308.00
Raffle	\$241.00
Door	\$2,695.00
T-shirts	\$48.00
	\$11,927.00

PROFIT

\$4,596.58

VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP

FINANCIAL STATEMENT INCOMING & OUTGOINGS 2011-2012

BALANCE AS AT 30TH JUNE 2011 \$5,140.42

Stall Hire	\$1,905.00
Plants Purchased for resale	\$6,401.50
Potting Supplies	\$1,955.69
Printing	\$2,906.84
Postage, Stationery & Photocopies	\$1,320.19
Manuals & Books	\$3,554.00
Miscellaneous	\$2,403.96
TOTAL	\$20,447.18

INCOMING 2011-2012

Plant Sales	\$15,797.35
Manuals, Books Calendars	\$4,512.50
Subscriptions	\$1,806.00
Door takings (Spectacular)	\$2,695.00
Miscellaneous	\$1,499.00
TOTAL	\$26,309.85

BALANCE AS AT 30th JUNE 2012

\$11,003.09

Meryl Waterhouse garden Visit

Patrick Hogan

315 Pakenham Road - that should be no trouble to find. Well that's what I thought before going up and down the road several time. Meryl had the good sense to put out a *Salvia* Group sign and made finding the house easier. Meryl's garden is located at the back of her house away from the main road and in a quiet flat and slightly wet underfoot conditions. Meryl moved into the house 18 years ago and her son helped her set out the original frame work of the garden. The only trees from the original site are a couple of *Eucalyptus* that add height and form to the garden.

Meryl's garden is a delight to wander in with lots of winding paths and a vast array of trees and shrubs along with sculptures and some interesting garden phrases in terracotta. Aside from the obvious good collection of *Salvias*, which include *Salvia* 'Hot Lips', 'Salvia Black Knight', *Salvia karwinskii*, *Salvia* 'Meigans Magic' and *Salvia* 'Costa Rican Blue'. This year is a particularly good year for the *Echium* species and visitors to Meryl's garden could look at some very fine specimens of *Madiera* (*E. candicans*) as well as a slender blue variety and a reddish variety that looks like *E. wildpretii*. Lots of *Clematis* are housed throughout the garden and some specially designed beds provide a trailing trellis for their growth and display. Colours of *Clematis* range from the standard alba range to some bright pink and purple colours – all in full profusion.

Roses take up a large part of Meryl's garden and even though we were a few weeks early – some Roses put on a magnificent show – in particular one old fashioned rose "Souvenir De Mme Ledine Venemo". Other plants that caught my eye were a delightful *Ginkgo Biloba* tree and a magnificent *Polygonatum multiflorum* (Solomon's seal) with its slender white flowers on an arched light green stem. Throughout

the flower beds were a vast array of *aquilegia vulgaris* "Granny's Bonnets" with some unusual pink and double varieties. Other trees that caught my attention were a 10 year old *Aesculus carenea* (Red Horse Chestnut) in flower, a flowering *Robinia* and *Cotinus* the American Smoke Bush .

Before finishing with the garden there was one small sign that caught everybody's attention which read "Here lies Willy Listen ? The last boy to run over the flowerbeds. RIP."

A fantastic BBQ was provided by Keith and we had just completed eating outside when it started to rain a little and we adjourned indoors. To see the table of deserts laid out was indeed a wonderful sight and I saw lots of people looking with amazement and confusion on the range of choices.

A very big thank you to all who helped on the day and as we left with cuttings (of *Salvias*, courtesy of Meg Bentley) and with a few extra Kilos from Meryl and Keith's food; we all said we would be back for the Christmas party – which Meryl has agreed to host on Dec 9th 2012.

All in all a very rewarding and peaceful day with good food, good friends and good gardens



Splendid Salvias

With kind permission of journalist 'Holly Kerr Forsyth' as seen in The Weekend Australian, October 13-14.

ONE suspects that Barbara Wickes' garden looks stunning throughout the year. This is due to good design, of course, but also to her extensive collection of salvias, which bloom in a parade of colours throughout the seasons.

Wickes has gathered an extraordinary collection of salvias since she and husband Rex moved in 1988 from a cottage garden surrounding a Federation house in Brisbane to Buderim, in the hinterland behind Queensland's Sunshine Coast. Their Mediterranean style house enjoys a northerly aspect from all living areas, and the site slopes gently from the house to a dam overflowing into the creek that forms one boundary to the garden.

The garden was designed in several stages, and soil preparation – with the addition of truckloads of chicken manure and mulches of lucerne hay – is a key factor in its success.

Garden beds were created by placing thick layers of newspaper and biscuits of hay over existing grass. Along with the paths, they were designed by laying out ropes and hoses. Paths have been created wide enough to accommodate a ride-on mower and trailer.

A half circle lawn, wrapped with a dry stone wall (made of stone from the nearby Glass House Mountains), is at the centre of the rear garden. Hedges have added structure to the garden: *Backhousia citriodora*, a rainforest tree, is just one of the native species that can be well pruned into hedge. "It looks superb," says Wickes, "and is wonderful to pick for tea and drying to make a lemon powder." She has also hedged with *Phyllanthus multiflorus*, a shrub that grows to just 1m, and with *Austromyrtus dulcis*, native to the east coast, from central NSW to north Queensland. Once construction was complete and the shape of the garden was in place, it was time, Wickes says, "to fill in the picture".

She admits to having been bitten by the collector's bug after discovering how successful salvias are in the subtropics: there are now more than 100 species and varieties in her collection.



Barbara Wickes

Members of the *Lamiaceae* family, with the characteristic square stem (and sometimes rampant habit), salvias "cope with dry conditions as well as wet and humid summers", Wickes says. "They are such versatile plants. Most provide colour throughout the year but the majority are at their peak through our mild winters."

Favourites include the lilac *Salvia* 'African Sky', blooming with the clear red *S. gesneriiflora*. The tall growing 'Costa Rican Blue', with its cerulean spires, is always popular. 'Bluebird', also reaching 2m, flowers throughout winter with pale blue double blooms.

There is *S.* 'Phyllis Fancy' which blooms continuously with iridescent pale blue flowers, along with 'Romantic Rose' and the upright 'Timboon'. *Salvia leucantha*, with woolly foliage and blossom, includes 'Velour Pink'. Nearby *S.* 'Ripe Raspberry', growing to 1.5m and with large, deep pink flowers, grows with the new 'Penny's Smile', with *Nicotiana mutabilis* and with fragrant, very double pink tea-rose 'Duchesse de Brabant'.

A grove of tropical birch (*Betula nigra*) is, after a dozen years, a feature at more than 16m high; a woodland effect has been created by under plantings of crocus, jonquils and lilies.

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Splendid Salvias *(continued)*

Old fashioned and climbing roses, which cope with the humid, subtropical climate, are mixed through the garden and under planted with perennials such as catmint (*Nepeta spp.*), *Tulbathia violacea*, *Verbena bonariensis* and Chinese forget-me-not (*Cynoglossum amabile*). Self sown annuals are encouraged.

Fragrant and repeat flowering climbing varieties of roses, such as ‘Crepuscule’, the cream noisette ‘Lamarque’, ‘Marie van Houtte’, ‘Cecile Brunner’ and ‘Mme Alfred Carriere’ are just some in the collection. “We fertilise with organic fertilisers and spray seaweed on to the leaves regularly to help prevent black spot and mildew,” Wickes says.

Shrubs such as the Chinese fringe flower (*Loropetalum chinense*), with its burgundy foliage throughout the year and its hot pink flowers, have been woven into the garden beds and tie the rich colour schemes together.

Perfumed plants, such as the climbing frangipani (*Chonemorpha fragrans*), *Osmanthus fragrans*, stephanotis, jasmine, *Michelia*, ‘Coco’, and *Buddleia* ‘Spring Promise’ are scattered through the garden.

“In our climate a great deal of time is spent in the outdoor living spaces, so when selecting plants for this area, fragrant species were on top of the list,” Wickes says. “There is rarely a time of year when a walk through the garden does not reveal some fragrance.

Editor’s Note: *Barbara and Rex Wickes garden was open on October 20 and 21. Barb tells me that they had 850 people through over the weekend!*

Barb also mentioned that "Holly Kerr Forsyth's new book, "Country Gardens, Country Hospitality" is out now.

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Sound Alike Salvias

Lyndi Garnett

As with so many similar sounding plant names, Salvias are not immune to being mixed up with one another. There are many, many similar sounding Salvia names. Some people have a fixation with some names, while others may not hear the names correctly, hence a lot of confusion with the maze of similar sounding names, especially with so many having similar endings and beginnings of names.

Such names as *confertiflora*, *curtiflora* and *curviflora* – *muirii* and *muelleri* – *sinaloensis* and *coahulensis* – *lavandulifolia* and *lavanduloides*, 'Raspberry Royale', 'Raspberry' and 'Ripe Raspberry', *dolomitica* and *dominica*, 'Blue bird' and 'Blue Cloud', *aurea* and *aurita*, (*aurita* var *galpinnii*), *tubifera* and *tubiflora*, *sonomensis* and *somalensis*, 'Marachino', 'Cherry' and 'Marachino Cherry', *coccinea bicolor* and *greggii bicolor*, *longistyla* and *longispicata*, *purpurea* and *purberula*, 'African Sky' and 'Argentine Skies', 'Meigan's Magic' and 'Magenta Magic', 'Mystic Spires' and 'Indigo Spires', *microphylla* and *macrophylla*, *repens* and *reptans*, *virgata*, *viscosa* and *villosa*, *canescens* and *cyanescens*, . With so many similar sounding names, it's no wonder that people get confused.

Much of this confusion with similar names is dissipated when you know your Salvia, unfortunately it is often a case of “growing the Salvia to know the Salvia”.

To sort out some of these names, I'll briefly describe them which will help separate each one.

confertiflora – a slender shrub approx 1.5 – 2m, with long orange spikes.

curtiflora – a tall shrub, 2-2.5m with small burgundy flower spikes, that grows better in a shady sheltered position.

curviflora – a compact upright shrub, 1.2 – 1.5m with masses of cerise tubular flowers, each slightly curved.

muirii – a small shrub, 40 – 60 cm with very small grey leaves, often used as a hedge with sky blue flowers with a large white bee line down it's lower lip

muelleri – a spreading perennial to 40cm, with wavy leaves and violet flowers.

sinaloensis – another small densely spreading perennial to 20cm, the dark pointed leaves often colour to burgundy in Autumn. Flowers are a bright blue – It can be herbaceous during the colder months.

coahulensis – a small spreading perennial to 15cm with bright green leaves, often mistaken for a *greggii* type Salvia. Flowers are a dark blue purple .

lavandulifolia – a small shrub 20 – 30 cm with small thin grey leaves – *S.officinalis* in a miniature form. It has compact growth with mauve / blue flowers and is equally difficult to keep during the colder months.

lavanduloides – a mid-sized shrub, 1 – 1.2m, with open and upright growth, leaves are long and dark green. Flowers look like grape hyacinth type flowers – small blue /mauve in compact heads .

'Raspberry Royale' (*greggii*) a small shrub to 40cm, *greggii* shaped leaves, flowers are a raspberry pink with a dark coloured flowering stem and calyx.

'Raspberry' - (a little known Salvia) a small *microphylla* / *greggii* cross, to 40cm, leaves are *microphylla* shaped. Flowers are a similar raspberry colour with the same coloured flower stem and calyx.

'Ripe Raspberry' – a mid-sized Salvia to 1.2m, often confused with 'Joan'. Leaves are a darker green and slightly hairy. Flowers are a darker wine colour.

dolomitica – a mid-sized perennial to 1m with a wonderful medicinal aroma, grey leaves and light pink flowers in spring/ summer.

dominica – a small mid-sized Salvia to 1m with strongly aromatic hairy hastate leaves, with creamy white flowers in delicate airy whorls.

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Sound Alike *Salvias* continued

'**Blue Cloud**' – is an upright mid sized perennial to 1.2m. Leaves are lanceolate, often colouring to a dark green with purple overtones. Flowers are a sky blue spike, looking like a blue cloud. This *Salvia* can spread .

'**Blue Bird**' – is a tall upright *Salvia* to 3m. Leaves are large and cordate, flowers are a dense brush of pale blue small flowers, high above the shrub.

'**Blue Abyss**' – a shrub to 1m, very similar to 'Anthony Parker', but with a coloured stem and bluer flowers.

'**Blue Ribbon**' – a form of *S. urica*, but with bluer flowers to 1m. The lower lip tends to be cupped rather than normally hanging down.

'**Christine Yeo**' – a low sprawling spreading perennial to 40cm with small rugose cordate leaves and pink / mauve flowers.

'**Christine's Surprise**' – a strong growing upright perennial to 1m, showing the distinctive stripe along the stem. Small cordate leaves and cerise flowers, a profuse and long flowering period.

somalensis – an upright stiff perennial to 1.2 m from Sth Africa with bright long green leaves and big spikes of pale blue flowers.

sonomensis – a low spreading perennial from California to 30cm. The leathery obovate leaves are aromatic, with lavender blue flowers in many whorls around the stem.

tubifera – a tall upright shrub, to 2m with large cordate leaves and pink/ red flowers, flowering in Autumn – Spring.

tubiflora – is a low bushy shrub to 50cm with broad soft hairy grey / green leaves and thin, long tubular, bright red vermillion flowers with the stamens protruding. The flower buds are hairy, terminal and have a tight formation.

longispicata – a robust bushy shrub to 2.5m, with large dark green cordate leaves on long stems and a profusion of pale blue flower spikes.

longistyla - a bushy upright shrub to 2m, cordate leaves with long tapering tips. Flowering in winter, producing long spikes of long narrow green calyxes and long narrow dull red flowers.

'**Mystic Spires**' – This is the dwarf form of 'Indigo Spires'. The leaves are exactly the same, but grown hard in full sun it will remain dwarfed.

'**Indigo Spires**' -A mid sized lanky shrub, that should be grown among other shrubs to keep its structure.

microphylla – these are small shrubs, 40 – 60cm, with often a spreading habit. Flowers are often brightly coloured in reds and pinks.

macrophylla – is a mid-sized shrub, to 1.5m. Leaves are large and ovate, Flowers are true blue, with sticky stems, calyx and seed capsules.

'**Marachino**' is actually *microphylla* 'Marachino'- this is a bushy shrub to 1m, extremely similar to *microphylla* 'Cerise', but the flowers stay that beautiful crimson with dark flower stems and calyxes.

'**Marachino Cherry**' – is the same as above 'Cherry' – is a small shrub to 40cm with greggii type leaves. Flowers are a bright post box red colour.

repens – a groundcover from South Africa, forming a rosette with long lobed , bright green and tough leaves. Flowers are sky blue with a large bee line on the lower lip.

reptans – a hardy perennial to 60cm, with dark bluish long thin leaves, in clusters around the stems. Flowers are a mid blue and very small, but a large flared lower lip.

'**Greek Sage**' – is *S. fruticosa*, a tough shrub to 60-80cm, with velvety trilobed leaves and pale pink flowers.

'**Greek Skies**' – a tough shrub to 60cm with pointy rugose leaves and pink / mauve flowers. This is a cross x between *S. officinalis* and *S. fruticosa*.

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Sound Alike Salvias

(continued from page 17)

greggii bicolor - a small sprawling shrub to 40cm, small greggii leaves with a bicolor flower of cream and pink together – beautiful

coccinea bicolor - a small upright bushy shrub, cordate hairy leaves, flowers are semi tubular, with the hood being almost white / light pink and the lower lip being a brighter coral pink.

'**Argentine Skies**' (*guaranitica*) – an upright herbaceous perennial, leaves are cordate, slightly hairy, flowers are a pale sky blue. This also has tubers that need to be contained with a bottomless pot.

'**African Sky**' - a dense shrubby bush, very hardy to 1m. Leaves are rough, rounded and lobed. Flowers are profuse that are a blue /mauve / sky blue

viscosa – a herbaceous rosette perennial, leaves are large and long, slightly lobed and rugose. Flowers are maroon and white on a sticky flower stem to 60cm, long flowering time.

virgata - a herbaceous rosette perennial, leaves are large, long and thin. Profuse blue/mauve flowers that are densely packed along an often coloured stem.

villosa – a small shrub to 30cm, needing good drainage, a sunny sheltered position and frost tender. Small blue/ green leaves that are hairy. Flowers are slender, with wiry stems and bright violet / blue small flowers.

canescens - a very small clumping perennial to 20cm, the leaves are long and thin, white and woolly. Flowers are violet / purple with brownish / purple sticky bracts on stems to 45cm.

cyanescens – a small perennial in the form of a rosette. Leaves are ovate, with masses of white silky hairs and entire margins. Flowers are unusual, on stems in spring to 75cm, the blue lilac flowers have a hood that is spotted with purple and the lower lip is a flushed pale yellow.

'**Meigan's Magic**' – the progeny of 'Anthony Parker' grows to 1.5m, leaves are

similar but the flowers are a pure white corolla with a dark purple calyx.

'**Magenta Magic**' – a midsize shrub, very similar to 'Waverly' in leaves and growth habit, but with long magenta flower stems, flowering for long periods.

Hopefully this has sorted out some of those confusing names. While some plants are easily obtainable, others can only be grown from seed, which are often hard to find. But by growing more of these Salvias, you will get to know your plant, which will help to dispel some of the confusion surrounding these names.

Attention all Subscribers

There are many subscribers we do not know exist except that you are on the database to receive your copy of *Salvia News*. We would love to hear from you, hear your experiences with growing of salvias, any problem you may have experienced, help that you may need, wanting to find a particular salvia to grow, gardens you may have visited, your favourite salvia/s. Please share with us all by putting pen to paper, include a photo where possible.

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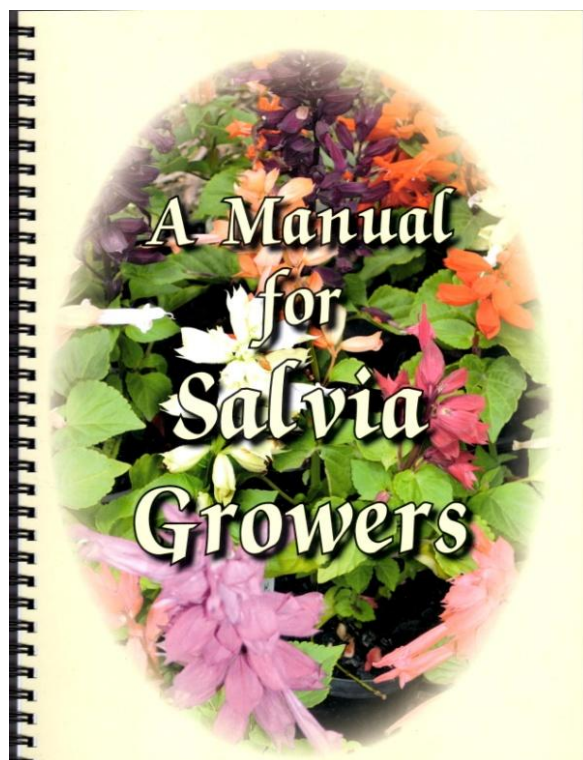
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