

Salvia News

NUMBER 53



Official Newsletter of the
Victorian Salvia Study Group

Spring 2013

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 ON OUR WEBSITE; www.salvias.org.au

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SALVIA NEWS

VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP

Welcome to the Spring edition of Salvia News. Winter hit Melbourne with a

vengeance. We endured some heavy frosts, mid June saw four frosts in a row. Luckily I only have three plants that suffered badly. Meg and Pat sent reminders not to cut back while there is the chance of another frost or the plant could be lost. Our seasons have changed and the weather patterns that we were once able to rely on in planning ahead no longer exist. Our thoughts are with those living in Gippsland and NSW where they have endured excessive rain yet again.

As we head into Spring and better weather there is loads to do in the garden. Before getting into your Pruning of winter Salvias (page 14), have a read of Salvias: dead, deciduous or disappearing temporarily (pages 11-13) to ensure you don't lose any. Sage takes centre Stage (page 8) reproduced from The Herb Age with permission and Salvia Sage, What's in a name (page 8,9) will probably interest most readers. News from Queensland (page 17) is always an interesting read. Queenslanders have had it tough these past few years and have been enduring a wet winter which should have been their dry season.

There is loads more and hopefully something of interest for everyone. Please don't forget to write and let us know what you think of the newsletter, and also how your garden is growing.

Welcome to Pat Jenzen who has bravely put up her hand to be the Salvia News' new Treasurer replacing Irene Robinson. Again, thank you to Irene for her work with VSSG over the last six years, it has been much appreciated..

Until next time; Happy Gardening, Beth

Cancer Council – Afternoon Tea

Patrick Hogan, Ferntree Gully Vic

The sun shone on the afternoon of Sunday 19th May at Ferntree Gully. Over 80 people attended the above event, and including on line donations, more than \$3000 was raised.

Several Salvia people attended the event having had the morning at Russell Cheals garden visit. The Salvia Group kindly donated numerous Salvias for a raffle that was held on the day and Meg Bentley donated a copy of her Salvia handbook.

A very big thank you to all the Salvia people who attended and supported the event and a very special "Thank you" to Lyndi who sold raffle tickets on the day. My garden is only six months old - part of my recent cancer recovery program and I do hope to have people visit again when the garden is a little more established. Once again thank you to everyone who supported the event.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

- Aug 18th Sun** **Plants at Nobelius**
11am -3pm. Nobelius Heritage Park, Crighton Ave, Emerald Melway: 127 G4
Come and obtain the Salvias that you are wanting
Walk through the garden to see what is flowering
Bring a list or email list before hand to avoid disappointment
- Sept 7th Sat** **Pakenham Garden Expo 9.am - 2.pm**
Pakenham Racecourse, Pakenham. Melway: 317 G8
Gardening Australia's Tasmanian presenter, Tino Carnevale is guest speaker.
Variety of plants and other stalls.
Enquiries Meryl Waterhouse 5941 1306
Salvias and books for sale.
Bring your list or email your list to Lyndi at highcon@hotmail.com
- Sept 14th Sat** **Redhill Spring Festival 10am - 4pm**
Red Hill Recreational Reserve / Red Hill Show Grounds. Melway: 190 J3
Huge range of plants and products. Demonstrations & displays
Salvia plants and books for sale
Bring your lists. Bring plants to be identified
- Sept 22nd Sun** **Gardening Day at Nobelius**
11am - 2pm. Nobelius Heritage Park, Crighton Ave, Emerald. Melway: 127 G4
Chance to identify different Salvias.
Bring a plate to share, a chair, gardening tools, wet weather gear if necessary, a hat, plastic bags for cuttings to take home
All subscribers welcome to come and join in the fun.
- Oct 5th/6th Sat/
Sun** **Upper Yarra Valley Garden Club ' Open Gardens Weekend'**
5 gardens in Warburton & East Warburton will be open 10am -5 pm
Refreshments, plant stalls & local produce available at various gardens. Each garden is unique
\$20.00 / 5 gardens or \$5.00 for 1 garden
Enquiries Phone Kevin 59662828
- Oct 27th Sun** **Garden Visit to Broughton Hall, Jindivick** Melway: X912 U6
11 am - Jackson's Track, Jindivick
Magnificent gardens created by David Musker
Group **bookings**, \$8.00 / head. Don't miss out
Ring Ph 98034534 to book your place by September 1st
- Nov 20th Wed** **Mid week Gardening Day at Nobelius**
11am - 2pm. Nobelius Heritage Park, Crighton Ave, Emerald. Mel: 127 G4
For those who can't come on the weekends and want to help.
Chance to identify different Salvias.
Bring a plate to share, a chair, gardening tools, wet weather gear if necessary, a hat, plastic bags for cuttings to take home
- Xmas Breakup Lunch**
To be advised. Watch this space (& or check the website)

Shifting the load at the Salvia Display Garden

Patrick Hogan and Lyndi Garnett

Wednesday 29th May 2013 saw a very energetic group of Salvia enthusiasts distribute more than 10 cubic meters of soil and manure on the Salvia beds in the display garden at Nobelius Heritage Garden. Lyndi assembled her small group of volunteers and the job did look overwhelming when one looked at the heap of soil that had to be moved and distributed over the beds.

Patrick Hogan



Photos taken by Patrick Hogan, showing the work underway.

It was a good day yesterday for spreading 16m (not 10) of Ritchie Nottage compost. It is good fertilizer, good steaming black smelly stuff, full of pigs' poo, (it certainly smelt like it) sawdust and everything else. We actually had a little left over – we had a great deal – a truck load, 16m was the same price as 10m delivered.

The sun was warm, so much so that we stripped off to T shirts and had to find hats. Our small team of Jillian, myself, Patrick, Geoff Ellis and Mary & Greg Akins did a magnificent job of shoveling the compost over the beds. Our Dingo man (Rob Sharpe and his daughter) in the photo did a great job

dropping bucket loads of compost up and down the hill for us to get on with the job. He and our little band of helpers worked tirelessly for 3 hours shifting that stuff, so hopefully we should have good blooms in spring and summer. We've just got to finish the pruning first.

We appreciated Patrick giving up his time to come and lend a hand when he was flying off to Ireland that night!!

Lyndi Garnett

Salvia News
Victorian Salvia Study Group
A branch of the Herb Society of Victoria inc.

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Notes from Gruyere: June 2013

Meg Bentley, Gruyere Vic

We have all been having some extremely cold mornings but the days have been delightfully sunny. Quite confusing for our small birds and the Honeyeaters, giving a sense that Spring may not be too far away. Not to mention that some plants in the garden have also taken advantage of the sun. A row of African Daisies have gone into full bloom, looking bright and cheerful on a winters day, unfortunately they are growing so well they are over-crowding the *Loropetalum* planted nearby for leaf contrast. *Salvias* on the other hand have slowed right up, there are of course the taller winter flowering species and cultivars that are keeping the nectar feeding honeyeaters well fed and these are listed as follows:

Salvia gesneraeflora and 'Red Rambler', *involucrata* and 'Pink Icicles', 'Ripe Raspberry', 'Joan', *iodantha*, *purpurea*, *madrensis*, *wagneriana*, *corrugata* which is flowering its best, *macrophylla*, 'Blue Bird', 'Violet Eyes', 'Desley', 'Limelight', 'Timboon', *disjuncta*, *leucantha*, *discolor*, *chiapensis*, *elegans* 'Pineapple', 'Wendy's Wish' and 'Ember's Wish' which has looked so bright and colourful over the winter, 'Meigan's Magic', 'Phyllis Fancy' and two shade lovers also doing well are *Salvia carnea* and *scutellaroides*.

Because of this unusual weather I have taken advantage and started preparing areas for replanting-clearing out unwanted *salvias* like *gesneraeflora* 'Red Rambler' and other over-crowded plants and shrubs in readiness for Spring. This area will give me approx 20 square metres of garden space and I do believe I have uncovered an old garden path that was once used as a walk through to another area.

Gardening does have its rewards and many delights, none more so than to have several Eastern Yellow Robins at your feet as you work, flying down for uncovered insects and grubs, all the while chattering to you to keep out of the way as they feast. Yes, gardening certainly has its benefits!

Outing to Rosebud

Meryl Waterhouse – Pakenham Vic

On a beautiful Autumn morning Beth and I set out to visit Glenda Sellenger's and Wendy Smith's gardens at Rosebud. Special thanks for having us all invade your delightful gardens.

It was an exciting time as it was the first time we had used the new Peninsula Freeway, a great time saver.

On arrival at Glenda's we enjoyed a cuppa as *Salvia News* subscribers arrived from near and far and then Glenda gave us a guided tour of her beautifully laid out garden and wonderful collection of 250 *Salvias*. Her extensive array of plants also included *Plectranthus* and a large collection of *Abutilons*. The landscaped area where the pool had been was also a feature.

A shared lunch was enjoyed by all, about 24 of us. Beth sold raffle tickets for a function I was holding to raise funds for a 6 year old leukemia sufferer which raised \$3740. The major prize of a barbeque was won by Flo McMahon of Sale Garden Club. Thanks to all who supported this cause.

After lunch we travelled around the corner to Wendy's garden and were very fortunate as on arrival we noticed a 'sold' sign on the property. It was noticed she had an area with 100's of pots of cuttings ready to take with her to her new home.

Another wonderful array of at least 250 *Salvias* and many other plants that everyone enjoyed. The wonderful day finished with afternoon tea before we departed for home. Many of us even came away with cuttings.

Sage takes Centre Stage

June Valentine

This is a superb blurb about a herb called Sage. Take centre stage. Sage does not thrive in a cage or a garage or even in a cold Anchorage but does well growing near cabbage and is delicious served with sausage. Now I'll turn the page and tell you more about sage.

Salvia officinalis: from the Latin *salvere to be saved* inferring the curative powers of the plant. Native of Mediterranean region with more than 900 species in this Lamiaceae family.

One of its earliest reputations was as prevention against old age - Ancient Egyptians used Sage medicinally as a brain tonic. Ye olde English proverb *He would live for an age must eat sage in May*. It was so valued by the Chinese in 17th century that Dutch merchants would trade with them one chest of sage for three chests of tea.

According to Culpeper *sage juice drunk with vinegar is good for the plague*. Another old tradition was to plant rue amongst sage to keep away noxious toads - haven't seen any in my garden so must be working.

It was used to improve the bouquet of poor wine. Sage wine was a favourite of King Henry 111. Apparently some time ago asthmatics used to smoke the dried leaves or inhale the fumes of burning sage.

Nowadays it is used medicinally and culinary and as a pest deterrent. Gargle as a remedy for laryngitis and sore throats. A mouth wash of sage tea is effective for mouth ulcers. It counteracts the richness of certain foods whilst assisting digestion especially pork and duck. In Italy rolled up with ham and veal in

satimbocca jalso - a sage butter pasta dish. In Germany and Belgium added to eel and other oily fish dishes.

For anyone bedridden Sage infused in vinegar can be used as a rub to prevent bedsores. Also rub the juice from the leaves onto bites and stings to relieve pain and swelling. Leaf rubbed on teeth instead of toothpaste. An infusion is a helpful remedy for menopausal and irregular periods because it has some oestrogen like constituents for the reason pregnant women should take care with its use.

As a fair hair tonic - apparently lessens grey hair but most women nowadays use products off the shelf from the chemist or supermarket.

Sage spray will kill aphids. Plant near a doorway to keep ants away.

Sage is a short lived perennial - suggest replacing every 4 to 7 years. Best grown by cuttings in spring. Leaves are green then mature to a silver grey. Harvest the leaves just before the plant flowers then cut back hard. Can be dried in a cool, airy place or in a microwave. I then just crumble the leaves and store in an airtight container. Fresh sage leaves can also be chopped finely, put into ice cube trays covered with water and frozen.

All in all an attractive and useful herb so be wise and grow to a ripe old sage.

Bibliography authors include: Isabell Shiphard, Penny Woodward, Kath Keville and Rosemary Hemphill.

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Salvia and Sage: What's in a name?

Pat Anderson

Beth asked me to write a few words in case people are confused about names.

Sage is the common name for culinary sage, that is, *Salvia officinalis*. Yes, Sage and

Salvia are the same thing. But there is a danger in using purely common names. The classic example is Mountain Ash. We, in Victoria, all know about the 'Giant Mount Ash' eucalypts of our mountain regions lower

Salvia and Sage: What's in a name?

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than the snow line. This is technically *Eucalyptus regnans*. Using the botanical name avoids confusion with the Mountain Ash of my youth in England, which is also commonly called Rowan, and is a small tree with red berries.

In the case of salvias, or perhaps I should write, *Salvia* to be botanically correct, it's OK to use the term, sage, when talking about cooking or even herbal remedies, but there are other genera that have the name 'Sage' in their common name.

We have 'African Sage', which is the common name for the gorgeous plant, *Brillantaisia subulugurica* which grows to 1.5m with glossy leaves and enormous, two-lipped mauve/purple flowers, that looks a bit like a *Salvia* but is actually in the family *Acanthaceae*.

We have 'Jerusalem Sage', which is the common name for that tough plant with whorls of yellow flowers that comes from the Mediterranean area and has been around in local gardens for decades, but is in the same family of plants as *Salvia*, whose botanical name is *Phlomis fruticosa*.

Then there is another one – 'Blue Sage'. This is a shrub to 1.2m from India, with conspicuously-veined, dark green leaves and stems of blue flowers in late winter to early spring. It is also a member of the *Acanthaceae* and its botanical name is *Eranthemum pulchellum*.

So there you have it – to my knowledge that is. There could be others that we would be pleased to hear about.

PLANT ID DAY AT LYNDI'S

Beth Clisby, Pakenham, Vic

It was a cold start, the fourth day in a row of frosts; still, about two dozen of us went to Lyndi's for the Salvia ID Day. We were outside spilling out of the carport, sitting around a fire and drinking endless cups of tea and coffee while hanging on to every word as Lyndi shared the differences of similar salvias and how to recognise each variety even when the plants were not in flower. Others, including Jillian added their expertise during the presentation. There were many specimens to show us and where there wasn't one in flower Pat Anderson, who is another walking encyclopaedia, had her lap top computer to show us the flower in question. Differences included but not limited to round and square stems, colour and texture of leaves, calyxes, flowers and of course smell. It was an informal gathering as well as a day of learning and many shared stories of their own experiences with different salvias.

We stopped for lunch set up in the backyard where most commenced with delicious hot soup made by Lyndi. As always, the shared meal offered plenty of choice and it was enjoyed by all. Although the sun made it pleasant to be outside, it was still very crisp and there was another fire. Before returning for the afternoon session, we wandered around Lyndi's wonderful garden. Each of her salvias were named so it was easy to note ones we wanted for our wish list. There were also plants and other items for sale.

It was a great day, one I personally hope will be repeated. It was a fun learning experience with great company. The more I learn, the more salvias I see, the more I want to plant at home, and to learn even more about this species that gives so much pleasure.

A new purple Salvia

Pat Anderson, Warrandyte, Vic

In the autumn, I had a phone call from a friend, Ann Butterworth, in Yarrambat who has a back garden crammed full of plants, as well as boxes of pot plants for sale at markets. Her garden is blessed with sunshine, no frosts, and no noisy miners, so that the small birds abound and are always busy collecting nectar from her salvias and, at the same time, up to a bit of cross pollination.

Ann called to say she had almost pulled out a plant that was growing in the path, thinking it was yet another *Salvia*. 'Anthony Parker', but that she hadn't got around to it and that it was now flowering, with purple flowers. Now, I know that people's perception of colours varies and I assumed that this was either 'Anthony Parker' in different light, or 'Magenta Magic' or even *Salvia leucantha* 'Magenta/Midnight/Harry's Red', or whatever you want to call it. She assured me that it didn't have a *S. leucantha* leaf, so I decided I should go and have a look. And there it was – truly a purple-looking version of 'Anthony Parker'.



This is exciting because there are not too many purple salvias of this size. When I say 'size', at this stage we don't know how big it will grow or for how long it will flower. So, while a few cuttings have been rooted, it will be watched for a year to see what happens. No name as yet either, so watch this space. Meanwhile, here is a picture of it, next to 'Anthony Parker'. Not a good photo unfortunately, but the colour is distinctly different from the indigo blue of 'Anthony Parker'

FROST DAMAGE

Pat Anderson, Warrandyte, Vic



Salvia adenophora taken 24/06/2013

I've never seen such severe frost damage in our garden before, but the curious thing is the way this particular plant, *S. adenophora*, has turned out, while the others are just black.

They should all come back in the spring from the protected underground growth. The thing is not to cut back the mess now, but to leave it to protect any new growth until all danger of frost is over.

Salvias: dead, deciduous or disappearing temporarily?

Pat Anderson, Warrandyte, Vic – June 2013

A salvia that looks dead or that has disappeared in the winter may be very much alive, so it is worth being aware of what to expect and not rushing in with the spade. Losing leaves and disappearing underground are both strategies that plants can use to get through cold winters. Consequently winter dormancy is a strategy commonly found in salvias from northern Europe and from cold parts of Asia. In Victoria, where we are growing these plants away from their native habitat, winter dormancy may or may not happen, depending on local climatic conditions.

Deciduous salvias (leaves lost during winter)

I am only aware of three species that lose their leaves in our Warrandyte garden. These are *S. regla*, *S. cuspidata* subsp *gilliesii* and *S. lemmonii* (syn *microphylla* var *wislizenii*), all of which have their origin in Mexico.



Salvia regla (Figure 1)

S. regla (Figure 1) is a medium shrub that can become a bit woody. Mine stands about 1.4m high but is more than ten years old. It is a useful plant in the garden because it flowers quite late in the year when several others have finished. Mine is situated under a *Cercis Canadensis* (Forest Pansy) and its bright red orange flowers go well with the autumn foliage of the Forest Pansy. The smallish, light green leaves are also attractive, but in June these start to disappear. While it is tempting to prune such deciduous shrubs in winter, I leave this until the spring (after the

frosts) when everything gets cut back and divided up. However, in the case of *S. regla*, pruning should be kept to a minimum and mainly for shape, because next year's flowers will emerge from the new shoots on this year's growth.



Salvia cuspidata subsp *gilliesii* (Figure 2)

S. cuspidata subsp *gilliesii* (Figure 2) Similar pruning rules and reasons apply to this species, as next year's flowers will emerge from the side shoots of this year's growth. As a result of being too afraid to prune it, my plant, which is much more upright than that of *S. regla*, has now reached about two metres. I will probably bite the bullet this year and reduce it in size, knowing that it may not flower so much next year. It would have been better if I had taken out the central growth points every year since I had had the plant!



Salvia lemmonii (syn *microphylla* var *wislizenii*) (Figure 3)

continued page 12..

Salvias: dead, deciduous or disappearing temporarily?

..continued from page 11

S. lemmonii (syn *microphylla* var *wislizenii*) (Figure 3) is my only other deciduous salvia. As it is located in a border edge amongst many other *S. microphylla* and *S. greggii* forms, it would be easy to think this one had died and therefore pull it out to tidy things up. Thankfully this hasn't happened because I am aware of its growth habit and know that, all being well, a new flush of leaves will come with spring. It may not matter when or how I prune this one, but I generally treat this in the same way as the rest of my *S. microphylla* and *S. greggii* forms, with a substantial chop in spring and another one in mid-season to prolong the flowering.

A few other plants, *S. coahuilensis* being one, lose some of their leaves in the cold conditions of this garden in winter, but not to the extent that I would call them deciduous – just messy. Again, I leave this until my general spring clean up.

One final point about deciduous salvias is that propagation by cuttings in late summer/autumn is a waste of time. Even if you can get them rooted, they are rarely big and strong enough to get through winter, so always try to do this early in the season. The same goes for winter dormant salvias.

Winter dormant salvias

I use this term, rather than 'Herbaceous', which is common in horticultural circles. 'Herbaceous' in the botanical sense refers to soft, non-woody tissue, like grass. The salvias with basal foliage fit the bill, but some that die down for the winter, like 'Indigo Spires' leave decidedly woody stems for cutting back and, in my humble opinion, therefore don't technically merit the term 'Herbaceous'.

Plants that die back leaving dead stems need to be cut back to tidy up. As above, I leave this job until spring because the dead material will protect any new spring growth while there is still a chance of frost. In a frost-free garden, a winter tidy up is fine.

Plants that disappear underground here in the winter include several of the Asian salvias – *S. castanea*, *S. nipponica*, *S. multiorrhiza*, *S. glabrescens*, *S. plectranthoides*, *S. trijuga* for example. These should return in the spring, but they dislike wet roots in the winter and the best way of getting them to come back is by having them in very well-drained soil, or failing that, in a pot in a gritty mix, preferably out of the rain.

The European salvias like the various crosses of *S. nemerosa*, *sylvestris*, *superba* etc all die back, but they come from wetter climates, and drainage is less of a problem than for the Asian ones. Some of those from the Mediterranean area that die back, however, do need good drainage. *S. jurisicii* comes to mind here. From a small cluster of plants, I always seem to have some losses, so I always collect seed, which is plentiful and germinates easily, and raise plants which I keep in the glasshouse ready to fill the gaps in the spring. *Salvia nutans* is also a problem because the snails love it and I confess to never having looked after one of these carefully enough to spare the new growth in spring from the ravages of hungry snails – a pity because the flowers look splendid.

Of the S. African ones, *S. schlechteri* (low, with feather foliage) is pretty well winter dormant here, so don't give up if it disappears. I have two: one in a pot which thrives, the other in the ground where the soil is a bit like concrete, poorly drained and lacking everything. Naturally this doesn't seem to grow at all, although it usually manages to creep back in the spring – just. I should move it, but the problem is where?

Several salvias from the Americas take a winter rest. These are too numerous to mention but include: *S. atrocyanea*, *S. arizonica*, *S. azurea*, *S. cardiophylla*, *S. clinopodioides*, *S. darcyi*, *S. forreri*, *S. longistyla*, *S. patens*, *S. reptans*, *S. prunelloides*** and *S. rhinosina* (syn *meyeri*), while *S. lycioides* and

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Russ Cheal Garden Visit

Sylvia Hammond, Watsonia, Vic

The visit to Russ and Barbs garden on Sunday 19th of May provided inspiration of what can be achieved in an average sized suburban block with planning and great soil. The day proved to be a delightful autumn day with the predicted rain not coming and the garden being bathed in autumn sun.

The garden was full of colour with paths to different vistas or points of interest. The backdrop of the garden being green rolling hills created a feeling of space and tranquility. As a garden novice I don't know or take note of the names of the plants what I appreciate is the colour and the overall impression of a garden. The garden was full of salvias and roses in full bloom with carefully placed decorative pots placed through out the garden to create focal points of interest.

The garden demonstrated the importance of structure and planning with a focus on

creating great soil. Russ and Barb moved into the housing estate with a blank canvas with the first two jobs being building up the soil and creating paved walkways to create structure and focal points. The result of all this effort and planning was clearly on display during our visit.

Linda and Jillian provided names to mystery salvia's and advice on others. Russ was very generous with his knowledge giving me some great tips on propagating and double planting. I left inspired to give propagating another go and headed straight to a Garden Centre to find some feature pots for my garden. I am now spending time studying my garden to identify some focal points for my pots.

I would like to thank Russ and Barb for their hospitality a lovely day was had by all.

Salvias: dead, deciduous or disappearing temporarily?

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penstemonoides tend to look a bit shabby in the cold weather. I have included pictures of a few of these as they are not very common among our gardens.

** note. This is how you can tell *S.*

prunelloides from *S. glechomifolia*. The former is winter dormant.

In summary:

There are no salvias indigenous to Victoria, or Australia for that matter, so how an individual species will perform in your garden will depend very much on the local climate. So go steady with the spade if a plant has disappeared because there is a good chance that it will re-emerge, or in a few specific cases, grow new leaves in the spring. Two plants in particular that are very slow to emerge in the spring are *S. cardiophylla* and *S. clinopodioides*. These leave it until summer to re-emerge and in the case of *S. clinopodioides*, the new shoots sometimes

emerge some distance from where last year's plant was!

With all these plants, propagate back-ups, just in case, but don't leave it too late in the season. They need to have enough subterranean growth to get them through their first winter. The same goes for those that get knocked back by the frost, as has happened here in our Warrandyte garden since I started to write this. *S. adenophora*, *S. urica* and *S. oxyphora* all look very sad today, but my plants are big enough to have an adequate rootstock for re-emergence in spring – I hope.

Most winter-dormant salvias need excellent drainage, so having back-ups in pots with a gritty mix, and kept out of the rain, is a good idea.

Lastly, watch out for snails. They LOVE the new shoots of emerging plants, especially *S. patens* and *S. nutans*.

Pruning of Winter Salvias

Lyndi Garnett, Glen Waverley Vic

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 group to sell – we can always use some more pots of whatever you give us. (just phone and we can organize to pick up.)

Don't even think about taking cutting of the small leaf Salvias e.g. *greggii*'s and *microphylla*'s, they will only sit and sulk in this cold weather. They are best taken in the warmer months.

Taking Cuttings

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

As many of these large leaf Salvias can have hollow stems, it is best to take the cutting by cutting through the node, or at least leave a heel.

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

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

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 and you need to pot up, carefully tip up the pot

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www.salvias.org.au

An Experiment in Propagation

Russ Cheal, Wonga Park, Vic.

In October 2012 I was fortunate to be given some cutting material from a new, not released *Salvia* that we now know as *S. 'Ember's Wish'*.

While taking the cuttings on the 25 Oct I decided to put one in that I labelled 'NNW' which stands for No Node, Wounded.

The cutting was soft wood 'stem only' and I wounded it as you would for more mature cutting material. It was dipped into Clonex Purple gel which I use for all my cuttings, popped into a single small pot using Debco Propagating mix and placed on a heated pad at 24 degrees.

My thoughts were that it would die a lonely death but to my surprise on the 3 Nov (10 days from potting) this cutting had extensive roots showing out of all the drainage holes of the pot.

This led me to do a bit of research and John Sutton in his book 'The Gardener's Guide to Growing Salvias' whilst advocating the use of node cuttings, he also states that "rooting in most *Salvia* species occurs so easily that the precise position of the base of the cutting is immaterial".

I then decided to run a batch of cuttings all taken as 'NNW'. These cuttings were all taken on the 8 November and the dates that roots were noticeable through the drainage holes is noted next to them.

S buchananii - 20/11

S coccinea 'Coconut Ice' - 16/11

S 'Desley' - 17/11

S greggii 'Cherry' - 18/11

S greggii 'Pumpkin' - 18/11

S greggii 'Wensley Apricot' - 19/11

S involucrata 'Mulberry Jam' - 19/11

S miniata - 20/11

S 'Mystic Spires' - 17/11

S 'Penny's Smile' - 20/11

S 'Tequila Blue' - 19/11

S 'Wendy's Wish' - 20/11

Since then while most of my cuttings are taken with nodes I still use the 'NNW' method and also a combination of both i.e. a node cutting but with a length of stem underneath so that I figure I have a triple chance, either the node will root or the stem will root or both!

I have not had a 'NNW' cutting die and most root reasonably quickly maybe because of the wound which has also led me to wound node cuttings more often than I did in the past.

This has been of interest to me and has allowed me to get more cuttings from a single branch and has so far given very good root systems within an acceptable period of time.



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SEED BANK

Lyndi Garnett, Glen Waverley, Vic

The Group has had a seed bank up and running successfully for some time, thanks to generous contribution of seed from a few members. Unfortunately by the end of the winter our stocks are getting low and without a huge variety of different Salvias.

If you have Salvias that need cutting back that still have lots of seed or even just a little seed on their stems, would you like to keep the seed bank in mind. It's as simple as collecting that seed, and placing it in a paper bag (not plastic as the seed will sweat and become mouldy). You can either clean it and put it in a small envelope or

just give to Lyndi, or pass it on to someone who will deliver your seed into the right hands. Make sure the seed is clearly named. The seed will then be cleaned (if not cleaned already) and packaged. So with your help we can boost up the number of different Salvia seeds in our seed bank for those people overseas, interstate or here in Victoria who like growing Salvias from seed.

If you are unsure, please contact Lyndi. Ph 98034534.

We will be very glad to receive any of your excess seed from your Salvias.

An Experiment in Propagation

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Having sent my article to Beth for the Salvia News, she asked me for a photo and we decided that I would try to photograph the root system of a rooted 'no node' cutting. I had a couple of *S. involucrata* 'Mulberry Jam' on the bench so decided to use them. I carefully washed the propagating mix from the plants and teased out the roots.

What I found was that there were no roots coming from the wounded area of the cuttings, only from the bottom of the stem and slightly up the stem. So much for wounding?

This leads me to now do some cuttings without nodes and not to wound them. I'll trial some now but really should wait until the warmer weather to really do a trial batch of different Salvias that should include all those that comprised the first batch I did.

I think it was Peter Cundall who said that "the more I learn about gardening, the more there is to learn"....ain't that the truth!

Will let you know how I get on.

Happy gardening.

Pruning of Winter Salvias

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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 fail, and give them away to someone to brighten their day.

Winter News from Queensland

Lynn McAllister

Hello from south east Queensland where it has been wetter than usual for some time now. There have been four significant rain events in the last six months and fewer sun-shiny days than normal. The salvias in my garden were weathering the extra wet quite well until just a couple of weeks ago. The garden is clay over shale and as I plant, I mound up by about 10-20cms. All the salvias are well mulched with coarse sugar cane bagasse.

The beginning of June saw a whole week of grey skies and about 10mm of very misty rain – so not a huge amount but a constant mist for the week, quite chilly and really quite unusual for Brisbane in June...that was the end for a few of my 'old faithfuls'. Who would have thought *Salvia pallida* would give in to the wet? It had been a proven performer in my garden for some years. Fortunately, I have already replaced it thanks to a kind gesture from a 'salvia buddy'. *Salvias greggii* 'Maraschino' and 'Sierra Red' also curled up their toes and moved on. I miss the luscious cherry coloured flowers of 'Maraschino' already. In my garden, 'Sierra Red' was a very 'pink' red, and always a bit shy to flower. Now I am wondering if the rather shaded position may have contributed to both 'Sierra Red's coquettish behaviour and its demise. Unfortunately, I don't have another specimen in a sunnier spot so this remains to be replaced.

I have learned a few very valuable lessons from these prolonged weather events. I am going to share as many cuttings as I can with friends and neighbours. Then when mine 'go to heaven's garden' I can ask for replacement cuttings. I must be more diligent about taking cuttings regularly and having multiple plantings in different areas of the yard and even on the footpath – I did start this practice a couple of years ago but have not given it top priority, until now that is. The last few months have certainly cemented this idea of having multiple plantings, into my gardening practice. I have started keeping a diary and hopefully this will lead to a better understanding of the types of Salvias in my

garden. I know we can't always beat the weather and we will probably never know exactly which straw breaks the salvia's back, but I am hopeful that keeping a record of what the salvias are doing, will be a positive step in the right direction.

Enough of the doom and gloom! There are quite a few salvias doing marvellously with the extra water. *Salvia madrensis* started flowering at the end of March and has not let up. It overhangs a much used path and so receives regular haircuts. It continues to flower beautifully and the bush has grown from a rooted cutting 12 months ago to an impressive specimen 1.5m tall with a spread of 2.5 metres. Perhaps more frequent light pruning would improve other of my salvias too! I have several *Salvia wagneriana* around the yard and the best performer grows under the paw-paw trees. Since my garden must be productive, as well as colourful, I started mixed planting of fruit trees, vegies and salvias a few years ago and so far it seems to be working well (in most cases). My gregarious visitors, the native mickie birds (Noisy Miners) play all winter long in the velvety, cerise flowers. Interestingly, they do not spend much time in the little 'brother' *S. wagneriana* 'Dark Form' which has been in for about two years and is yet to reach a metre, half the height suggested in the catalogue. It is certainly darker in the foliage and the flower. The flower heads are shorter and heavier, perhaps it just doesn't take their fancy. I absolutely love it because it doesn't take up so much space, (I must take cuttings!!). My recently planted soft apricot pink, *Salvia* 'Tavistock' has come on very well in the wet as have 'Mrs Bucket' a cheeky little purple which has reached 50cm x 70cms with some afternoon shade and 'Angel Wings' in full sun and full flower. Who knows what the remainder of 2013 will bring weather-wise. I will endeavour to share rooted cuttings and plant in various places round the yard and hopefully guard against weather-related losses. Till next time, all the best and may the weather be kind, Lynn.

HSOV Gardeners Day Out

Beth Clisby – Pakenham, Vic

The Horticultural Society of Victoria (HSOV) conference themed 'Gardeners Day Out' was held on 15 June at the Mt Waverley Community Hall.

After the 'Welcome' and 'RHSV Overview', Keith Edwards from Diggers Seeds spoke on Heritage Seeds. Heirloom varieties from and prior to the 1950's are open pollinated and people own their seeds. With hybrids, seeds can't be saved.

What I think people will most remember about his talk is after his explanation of the difference between Heritage Seeds and other seeds he showed the toughness of hybrids. He explained that because the community wanted fruit and veges all year round they had to be tough enough to handle the mileage, cartage and cool storage, and still look to be at their best on the shelves even if lacking in flavour of yesteryear. As the audience gasped he pulled out a brick and placed it on top of four tomatoes bought that morning from the supermarket and placed on a table close together. He then went on to remove the brick and place a 25 kg weight on the tomatoes. This remained there for the rest of his talk of approximately 45 minutes. He then removed the weight and there was hardly a mark to show the load the tomatoes had carried.

A wonderful array of veges from Diggers Seeds were presented, many with the original different colours. Hybrid seeds that produce different coloured veges as are often seen in the supermarket are produced chemically to look like the resurgent heirloom veges.

Only 15% of garlic bought off the shelf is grown in Australia, all the rest comes from off shore and is sprayed with methalbromide on arrival in Australia.

There are only five seed companies (hybrid seeds) that control the seed food bank. If a virus gets in we lose everything.

Have you ever read the packet or container of soluble Citrus fertiliser. It contains metals!

Clive Larkman of Larkman Nurseries spoke about Herbs and Perennials and even shared recipes and cooking hints using herbs from the garden. He suggested those interested may wish to take a look at his website; www.clivescorner.com.au

After lunch there were the presentations for the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show, Hanging Baskets competitions.

Judy Horton, horticulturalist from Yates gave her talk on The Backyard Garden through time. She had access to Yates archives and gave a wonderful slide presentation which even included some of the equipment and seed packets with their prices at that time. Judy Horton is also the Editor of Yates Garden Guide

The Special Effort saw many people go home with prizes. The two ladies I went with were lucky winners. Everyone went home with a goodies bag. There was time to check out the stalls in the outer halls during lunch break and afterwards. Jillian and Lyndi were kept busy as always. I came home with another four salvias, a great finish to an enjoyable day. Well worth marking in the diary for next year.

WANTED **HELPER ON WEDNESDAYS**

Seeking someone who can find a few hours on Wednesdays, PLEASE put your hand up, as Jillian and Lyndi would really appreciate another person with a passion for Salvias to help them at Nobelius.

Light work in the display garden, eg pruning, raking, weeding. No heavy work except to take the prunings away. This is a great opportunity to see Salvias growing, do some Salvia identification, go away with cutting material, and of course enjoy a day in the garden and fresh air. If you can help, please contact Lyndi on 9803 4534

A MANUAL FOR SALVIA GROWERS

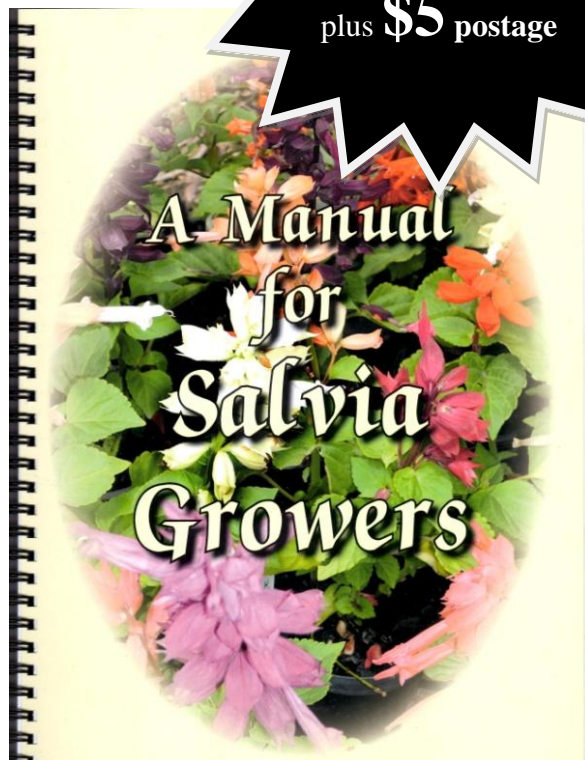
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