

Salvia News

NUMBER 56



Official Newsletter of the
Victorian Salvia Study Group

Winter 2014

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 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 14 July 2014**



SALVIA NEWS

VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP

Website: www.salvias.org.au

Welcome to the latest edition of *Salvia*

News. As always we have hunted articles from near and far hoping to catch your interest. There are many who enjoy sharing their gardens and knowledge with others. Hope you enjoy what has been put together for this quarter.

It is sadly noted the passing of Shirley Whitehead, wife of VSSG Bill Whitehead, our condolences to Bill and family. Meg Bentley remembers page 6.

At last I've commenced a *Salvia* garden on my verge and have shared its beginning with you on you page 7. If you are going to garden on the verge, check with your Council first. Some Councils allow this but conditions may apply.

If you missed the visit to Meg Bentley's garden, read how we enjoyed the day on page 8. It's always nice to catch up and this time we also enjoyed meeting some new subscribers too. One of the new subscribers has written a lovely article on page 16.

Lyndi has commenced a great article on *Salvia* Differences on page 10. While it's a work in progress, for those who would like more information immediately, have a look at the VSSG website, www.salvias.org.au under the same heading.

It's pleasing to note that if you haven't been able to make an event to purchase a packet or two of Meg's *Salvia* Cards, they are now available via mail order, see page 6 for details.

Last edition's 'Hot Pots' by Pat Anderson brought a lot of interest. Read one response on the Letters page 17. Our climate changes are taking some adapting to, especially as yet there doesn't seem to be a set pattern as in former years. It seems that we are getting extremities in every season. It's wonderful to hear from gardeners who are prepared to share their successes of gardening in a hotter drier climate. Have you too got something to share from your gardening practices? Email or send through Australia Post, don't forget to include your suburb/town and State.

June is *Salvia* News subscription renewal month, see page 13.

Renewal Forms are separate fliers and inserted in this edition for your convenience. Don't forget that whether you are paying by cheque/money order, or making a bank transfer, a Renewal Form must be completed and forwarded to Meg Gadd our Subscriptions Officer. Phone or email Meg should you have any queries.

Happy Gardening, Beth

APOLOGY

Our Calendar of Events on both the website and in the last newsletter advertised the Melbourne International and Garden Show a week early. As soon as it was noted the website was corrected but the newsletter had already been printed. Apologies for any inconvenience caused.

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Copy Deadline for the next edition of *Salvia* News is 14 July 2014.

Articles can be emailed or posted to arrive on or before 14 July to be considered for the next edition of *Salvia* News. We look forward to hearing from you.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- May 27, Sun **San Remo Garden Club** 10.30am Mel: Touring Map 934 J/K 8
San Remo Recreation Centre, Wynne Road, San Remo
Lyndi will be speaking. Bring plants to be identified. Plants and Salvia Books for sale.
- June 5, Thu **Herb Society of Victoria** 7.45pm Mel: 45 B8
Rm Quad 3 Burnley Horticultural College,
500 Yarra Bvd Richmond. First left in Swan St after bridge
Lyndi will be speaking. Bring plants to be identified. Plants and books for sale.
- June 12, Thu **Camberwell Morning Garden Club** 10.30am Mel: 59 K2
405 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, next to RSL
Lyndi will be speaking; Salvia plants and books for sale. Bring plants to be identified.
- June 14, Sat **RHS Conference** Mel: 70 E1
Millers Rd, Mt Waverley Community Centre, opposite train station.
Salvia plants, books and seeds for sale. Large range of plant stalls and products for sale.
Public and subscribers welcome to attend and purchase.
Enquiries Jennifer Rickerby (03) 5367 6363
- June 17, Tue **Romsey Garden Group** 11am Mel Touring Map 909.39
Romsey Neighbourhood House / The Hub, 96 Main St, Romsey.
Lyndi will be speaking. Salvia plants and books for sale. Bring plants to be identified.
- June 22, Sun **Gardening Day at Nobelius** 11am – 3pm Mel: 127 G4
Nobelius Heritage Park, Crighton Road, The Packing Shed, Emerald
Come and help maintain our display garden. Chance to identify different Salvias.
Take home cuttings. Bring a plate to share, a chair, gardening tools, wet weather gear if necessary, a hat and plastic bag for those cuttings.
All subscribers are welcome to come and join in the fun.
- July 1, Tue **Pakenham Garden Club** 11am Mel: 317 A4
Salvation Army Hall, 51 Bald Hill Road, Pakenham
Lyndi will be speaking. Salvia plants, books and seeds for sale.
Bring along plants to be identified.
- Aug 13, Sun **Gardening Day at Nobelius** 11am – 3pm Mel: 127 G4
Nobelius Heritage Park, Crighton Road, The Packing Shed, Emerald
Come and help maintain our display garden. Chance to identify different Salvias.
Take home cuttings. Bring a plate to share, a chair, gardening tools, wet weather gear if Necessary, a hat and plastic bag for those cuttings.
All subscribers are welcome to come and join in the fun.
- Aug 24, Sun **Plant Identification Day** 11am Mel: 62 J10
844 Highbury Rd, Glen Waverley
Show the differences between similar Salvia plants. Other Salvias to be identified.
Bring a plate to share and a chair.
Phone Lyndi if coming 9803 4534
- Sep 6, Sat **Pakenham Garden Expo** 9am Mel: 317 A4
Beaconhills College, Toomuc Valley Rd, Pakenham
Wonderful day for plant lovers. Large range of plants and products.
Salvia plants, books, seeds for sale. Bring your list or email your list in advance to avoid disappointment highcon@hotmail.net.au

NEWS FROM SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND – April 2014

Adrienne Starkey – Ormeau, (south side of Brisbane)

Well, thank goodness for the 130mm of rain we had here last week, otherwise this would be a very negative piece of writing. It's the first time since last autumn that we've had more than a few drops, and all of a sudden, I see green! Despondency was setting in as everything dried up around me, compounded by an ever-growing bull mastiff pup (whose hobbies are digging and chewing!) and a sore foot which annoyingly stifled my activities. During those months of watching everything dry, frizzle, or die off, my gardening spirit didn't completely flag – I propagated like mad, hoping this change in weather would come.

The salvias in my garden didn't cope as well as I thought they would. It was just too much heat, too much harsh hot wind, and no amount of hand watering was going to be enough. Many are being replaced, as they are now woody and struggling, including many of the *microphyllas*. I did take plenty of cuttings of my favourites, so it shouldn't be too long before things look as I like them to. The smaller *greggii*s fared better, just needing a trim and feed to lift their heads. *S. greggii* white form is a great little plant, I'm going to put in more, perhaps massed somewhere, as it always looks so fresh.



Salvia 'Mystic Spires'

My favourite purple, *S. 'Mystic Spires'*, is gone. I had 2 plants of similar age, and I suppose the 4 years I

got from them was pretty good. As seen in the attached photo, I am a "close planter", and perhaps giving them more breathing space would be more sensible, but that probably won't happen. I do have some struck cuttings, so all will be well. I have found that they are definitely one salvia that benefits from having only half pruned back at a time, as they can protest and not come back!



Salvia Heatwave 'Blaze'

The *S. leucantha* varieties I have, 'Midnight', 'Pink Velour' and 'Santa Barbara' are already bouncing back, only a week after the rain, as is *S. madrensis*, just coming into bud now, which is a little later than usual, so it was clearly waiting for a drink. *S. Heatwave 'Blaze'* is one *microphylla* which toughed it out – I really think it is one of the best survivors, and the colour blends so beautifully with others. I like it with the blue Swan River daisy, a powerful contrast. Of the newer small salvias, 'Angel Wings' has shown strength during the drought, and as with *S. 'Blaze'*, it's a good "blender".

I don't have many large salvias anymore. Being on a harsh windy site, they just always seemed to have a sad wilt about them. *S. madrensis* is in a slightly more protected spot, and looks better for it. *S. 'Romantic Rose'* and *S. 'Timboon'*, I've cut to the ground, as all the foliage was burnt and unsightly. Of course, I'll probably miss the winter flowering, but it wouldn't have been much anyway. There's always next year.

The biggest wish for us all up this way, (and probably all over), is for follow-up rain, as about now is the beginning of our dry season. I will be

continued on page 6

Vale: Shirley Whitehead

Everyone who knew Bill and Shirley Whitehead would remember Shirley's 'Curry Puffs' and none more so than the folk of the Salvia Study Group. Any get-togethers in Geelong to see Bill's salvias and his garden would always result in a call from Shirley's kitchen with 'Come before it gets cold' and a delicious feed of 'Curry Puffs' always followed. A gentle lady, who was happy enough to stay in the background, she was always supportive of Bill and looked after his friends whenever they came visiting.

After a long illness and being looked after in return, Shirley passed away early February 2014. Our kind thoughts go to Bill and his family, with condolences from the Salvia Study Group.

Meg Bentley

Editor: Bill is a Salvia Study Group life member and is also a member of the Herb Society of Vic of many years

NEWS FROM SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND – April 2014

Adrienne Starkey – Ormeau, (south side of Brisbane)

..continued from page 5

planting madly during the next few weeks, while there is still some ground moisture and the tank is full, but I'm determined not to endure such plant loss again, and

will be making extra efforts to ensure stronger plants. Regular feeding. Seasol and like products, well-timed pruning and plenty of mulch. And rain. *Please!*

SALVIA CARDS
by Meg Bentley

only **\$10** pack
(5 single flower or 5 assorted)
plus \$2.50 pp / pack posted

*Available at all VSSG functions and stalls.
Mail orders Lyndi 9803 4534
VSSG
844 Highbury Road,
Glen Waverley Vic 3150*

from the back row:
*Salvia patens, Salvia roemeriana, Salvia microphylla var neurepia,
Salvia gesneraeflora 'Tequila', Salvia leucantha*

PLANTING OUT THE VERGE

Beth Clisby, Pakenham Vic



Newly planted verge



A few months later

Not long ago, I decided to plant out my verge. It is allowed in the Shire where I live. There is a gum tree right in the middle seeping any goodness from the soil so its hard work to keep it grassed. My neighbour insisted that she must have grass next to her driveway so a small area of grass for bin placement at one end has been added. My lawn mowing man cut it very short ready for me to get started. As a person with limited mobility, I use a simple method of no dig. This is the method I have used with some success over the years. The area was cleared of rocks and fallen branches and twigs. After watering well with liquid gypsum as per the bottle's instruction, I covered the whole area with six water saturated sheets of newspaper overlapping the next six sheets placed to ensure not a blade of grass could be seen. I carried a bucket at a time of compost from the back yard to the street and covered the newspaper as thickly as I could manage. It took some time and I managed several kilometres in my wheelchair. Bags of cow and sheep manure were spread across the whole area. Then the lot was covered with about 10 cm of

sugarcane mulch and the whole area watered again.

I am not a very patient person so less than a fortnight later I started planting, moving aside areas of mulch, manure and paper, digging a hole twice the width of the salvia pot and a little deeper. I plant most Salvias a little deeper than when they were in the pot and filled below and around the new plant with quality potting mix. After planting, the sugarcane mulch etc was placed back around the plant and at completion, a good watering given.

As you know I am still a new salvia enthusiast so Meg Bentley very kindly assisted with the choice of salvias needed. I wanted low growing except for the Salvia Dwarf Limelight which is hugging the gumtree. Initially the following were planted:

2 x *Salvia jamensis* (yellow), 2 x *Salvia 'Iced Lemon'*, 2 x *Salvia forskaohlei* (blue & white), 2 *Salvia muirii* (blue), *Salvia 'Marine Blue'* (sky blue), *Salvia 'Embers Wish'* (coral) at one side of the tree; *Salvia 'Dwarf Limelight'* (lime bracts, purple

flowers), *Salvia 'Christine Yeo'* (mauve/purple), *Salvia 'Superior Purple'* (dark purple), *Salvia 'Purple Warrior'* (purple), *Salvia muelleri* (purple). I have since added *Salvia coccinea 'Tavistock'* (pale pink) to the mauve/purple end of the garden.

Salvias are quick growing so I now need to fill the gaps with more plants. I have also bought one small pot of Mondo Grass and broken into 50 pieces and planted on the road side to separate foot traffic and the Salvias.

As it was such a hot summer and the garden so new, I watered the verge twice more. With very little watering, just dead heading and light trimming I am already visualising what it will look like in seasons to come. The falling gum leaves were left over the hotter months but raked up before it was time to feed the soil again ready for another growth spurt.

It's a simple garden but it's a work in progress and already giving me much pleasure. I can't wait to see what the next season brings.

MEG BENTLEY'S OPEN GARDEN VISIT 23 March 2014

Heather Lucas

This is a garden visit day I always look forward to and I'm sure that there were many other people who were looking forward to the day at Meg's garden as well. As Meg is the registered Garden Plant Conservation Association of Australia (GPCAA) *Salvia* Collection Holder and has around 400 species in her collection, one is always guaranteed a wonderful day walking around her garden and checking all the salvias out.

The actual temperature on the day was 17 degrees Celsius and we did have showers during the day on and off, but that certainly did not deter any of us having a super day. There were around 30 people who came and we all enjoyed a very sumptuous morning tea and lunch together.



Meg has many acres of garden, but the main garden area around the house with salvias is around 2 acres, with a wonderful area where there are many plants being propagated and lots of salvias to view, that you can add to your wish list. Meg had printed out a page of the garden layout with the different paths to take, which really did help those who had not been to her place before. On the top garden path there was a display of salvia rare gems and unusual species. This of course was of great interest to me, as I always want to add to my collection and in particular the yellow flowered salvia (shown in

Salvia paramiltiorhizza, lovely the last *Salvia* News – Trip Down South) caught my eye. A number of people commented on the *Salvia rumicifolia x sagittata*, a beautiful salvia with cobalt blue flowers, a very striking plant. There was also a new salvia Species from Guatemala, a dark blue flower with white throat that was a favourite of many. There was a spectacular *Salvia regla*, gorgeous white *Salvia japonica* and pale yellow *Salvia koyamae* 'Crug Cream'.



Salvia rumicifolia x sagittata

As always Meg was in great demand to identify salvias and partake of her knowledge, which she always does with such grace and warmth. At the end of the day many people hot footed it down to the bottom path, where there were trays of plants for sale. Everyone I am sure came away well fed, happy and in most cases with some more salvias to add to their garden.

Many thanks to Meg, her husband Garry and her family helpers who welcomed us so warmly and provided a thoroughly enjoyable day.

Editor: It was a great turnout to Meg's Open Garden with a few new faces too. The weather was kind with only a light shower early in the day that didn't even dampen spirits, there was just so

much to see. I have printed below the running sheet that Heather mentions above that Meg had given to everyone together with a map that made it easy for people to wander the many paths of this spectacular garden. Many of the paths were lined with pots so that no matter which way you faced there was so much to see. She also had some of her original drawings and paintings on display and a photographic display of the wildlife that lives within the garden. Thankyou Meg, Garry and family for a most enjoyable day.



Lunch on the balcony

Gardens in Gruyere – Meg Bentley

Having lived here in Gruyere for 50 years and growing a garden through mostly dry periods in that time, I would have to say that this past Summer 2013-2014 has been the driest we have encountered. Many gardeners have gone through similar conditions but living in a rain-shadow as we do and tank water running low, one has to determine which plants require watering and what will survive without it. As you wander around the gardens you will come across many plants that look like they are in the process of dying with leaves wilted beyond recognition. You may see this in your own gardens and either accept the fact that things will

MEG BENTLEY'S OPEN GARDEN VISIT

change when the weather cools or start to panic and put profuse amounts of water onto the plants but this doesn't always work. The climatic atmosphere needs to change in order for the plants to restructure themselves and start to grow again. These wilted leaves are just telling you they are in 'shut-down survival' mode and most plants will come back from the base if given a chance. By scratching the stems at the base of the plant, you will find out if it is green, then it will survive but if it is brown and pulpy it may not.



Hardy plants, trees and shrubs form the main structure which includes some existing Eucalypts, Acacias, Correas and grasses. Larger ornamentals include Liquidambar, Golden Ash, Claret Ash, Oaks, Acers, Pistacia sinensis, Nashi Pear, Conifers and our lovely Ginkgo biloba. Many smaller shrubs, trees and perennials have been planted mostly with the aim of keeping Honeyeaters and other birdlife satisfied with nectar, insects and seeds. The Salvia Collection alone keeps all manner of birds fed and to some extent housed, especially the little Blue Wrens, Bush Wrens and Blackbirds, since they like to nest amongst the bushy salvias. The native birds are our constant companions when in the garden especially the Yellow Robins and Eastern Spinebill. Others include the Crescent honeyeater, Yellow

Winged, Yellow faced and White Eared honeyeaters. Larger birds are the Grey Thrush, Rosellas, King Parrots, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo, Gang-Gangs, Magpies and the Kookaburras which have occasionally nested here. Grasses in some areas have been left long to encourage the birds to nest and for some protection. Wildlife consists of wombats, wallabies, echidna and a resident blue tongue lizard. We do have possum and rabbit problems.

There are over 300 Salvia species and cultivars throughout the gardens both in the ground and containers, they won't all be flowering at the same time since many are winter flowering, especially the larger leaved salvias, reaching their peak with cooler weather and rain. Autumn is the saving grace for all gardens and plants.



This year many roses have been planted amongst the salvias not only for contract of flower, foliage and texture, but because I do like old fashioned roses. Most have a beautiful perfume, deep and heady but not only that, my other love is music and I wanted to include roses with a musical theme, these you will find labelled as you walk through the salvia garden. Some roses of course are special because they represent someone's great achievement in their lifetime.

One example is the rose named for the Royal Flying Doctor Service 'Outback Hero'.

Down the centre of the lawn is a new pond where frogs have made their home and dragon flies have found new life, in time it will be covered with water lilies, creating its own little eco system.

We do hope your time in the gardens is an enjoyable one and thank you for coming.

Meg

Nobelius Heritage Park

Melway 127 G4

Crichton Avenue, Emerald

Have you been to the VSSG Display Garden at Nobelius recently? It wasn't long ago that concerned people were contacting Lyndi to ask if they should give it some water. Lyndi was and is adamant that it is not to be watered. After planting the display garden manages wholly on rainwater only. With the wonderful rain received very recently it is showing very good growth and an abundance of flowers. Lyndi and Jillian are up there each fortnight to maintain it. There are Working Bees Sunday 22 June and 13 August or if you would prefer a Wednesday, contact Lyndi to check on the next time they will be there. Working Bees are a great opportunity to take home cuttings, to see how the different Salvias perform and of course to assist you with plant identification. It's a great picnic place, loads of birdlife, and easy parking. Security cameras are up and running together with notices and appear to be doing the job of deterring damage and theft of the Salvias.

SALVIA DIFFERENCES – Part 1

Lyndi Garnett, VSSG Co-ordinator, Glen Waverley Vic

There are quite a few Salvias that look very similar and some people find it hard to tell the difference between these Salvias. Here are a few points to look for when trying to correctly identify these similar looking plants.

‘BLACK KNIGHT’ & ‘PURPLE MAJESTY’

Both of these Salvias look very similar, they both have similar size leaves and both have similar looking flowers, but look for these differences.

Salvia ‘Black Knight’

- ‘Black Knight’ is a large rounded shrub growing to 2.5-3m x 2.5-3m.
- Origins are from *S. splendens*, the leaf has a similar texture, venation & dark green.
- Leaf stems (petioles) are purple.
- Flower stems are coloured.
- Calyx is papery and a dark purple.
- Flower (corolla) is a dark violet purple, a long tubular flower with a small lower lip.
- ‘Black Night’ flowers for a longer period, most of the year.

Salvia ‘Purple Majesty’

- A smaller growing perennial growing to 1-1.5m x 1m
- Origins are from *S. guaranitica* and *S. gesneriiflora*, making it more of a perennial shrub.
- Leaves are similar to *S. guaranitica*, a lighter green with similar venation, shape and size.
- Stems are much thinner than ‘Black Knight’ but showing some woodiness.
- Flower stems are green and so are the leaf stems.
- Calyx is sharply pointed, dark purple on the top exposed side and green, almost white beneath.
- ‘Purple Majesty’ produces new growth in Spring, flowering late Spring through to Autumn.

If ‘Black Knight’ is too large for the garden, then ‘Purple Majesty’ is a good smaller alternative, both are frost tender, both are best grown in a sheltered sunny, semi shaded area.



Salvia ‘Black Knight’ 2.5 x 3m
Tall, bushy shrub, sunny, sheltered position.
Calyx is completely purple



Salvia ‘Purple Majesty’ 1.5 x 1
Upright bushy perennial, sunny sheltered post,
Flower is violet, calyx colour beneath is green.



S. 'Black Knight' leaves have different veination and are dark green



S. 'Purple Majesty' leaves are quite different, a brighter green

'MARINE BLUE' & CHAMAEDRYOIDES

Salvia 'Marine Blue'

- 'Marine Blue' is a small upright perennial, growing to 40-60cmH.
- Although it can grow from a single stem, it can increase by layering and underground stems. It is *NOT* an aggressive or rampant grower.
- Leaves are small elliptical, blue grey/green in colour, a rugose texture, the veins evident with crenate edges.
- Flower stems are long to approximately 15cm, green with long internodes between the whorls.
- Calyxes are green, corollas are a vivid blue with a hint of mauve and a small white dot at the throat.

A wonderful drought resistant plant that flowers throughout most of the year. It needs sun to grow well. It doesn't like cold or wet feet.



Salvia 'Marine Blue' 40-60cm
Blue green leaves, very indented, cordate shape



Salvia chamaedryoides – groundcover
Silver grey elliptical leaves, white patch in throat,
Different shade of blue, mauve



SALVIA DIFFERENCES – Part 1 *Lyndi Garnett, VSSG Co-ordinator*

..continued from page 11

Salvia chamaedryoides

- *S. chamaedryoides* is a smaller, compact ground cover to 10cm and with flowers 15cm.
- This starts from a single stem, but quickly forms a compact clump by the stems layering as it quietly spreads to a nice clump.
- Leaves are much smaller than “Marine Blue”, elliptical with entire edges and a silver grey colour. When leaves become larger/older, they may look similar to Marine Blue but still stay silver grey.
- During the colder months, the leaves can turn grey, but turn silver in the heat of the summer months.
- Flower stems grow above the plant to approximately 15cm, these are green and similar to ‘Marine Blue’, but they are smaller, the flowers are smaller with short internodes.
- Corollas are almost the same blue/mauve, but with a more sky blue look about them. The corolla is smaller than ‘Marine Blue’.
- The main flowering period is late spring summer.

A good plant in the front of the bed, forming a ground cover in full sun. It doesn't like cold, not too much rain, it needs very good drainage to perform properly.

S. chamaedryoides should be grown in full sun to keep its silvery leaves. It doesn't like cold, wet feet.

In coming issues of Salvia News we will continue to look at comparing similar salvias. In the meantime you may wish to read more on the VSSG website www.salvias.org.au which is an on-going work in progress of Salvia Differences.

This space is for your article. There are so many things you can share about your garden, how you cope through the summer months. It may be about your favourite Salvia, and why it gives you so much pleasure. Have you tried growing Salvias in a hanging basket or large pot, wheelbarrow or something else? Have you visited a special garden that you particularly enjoyed? Have you been to a Salvia event and met others with the Salvia addiction.

Are you experiencing a garden problem that others may be able to assist with, or you may wish to have a Salvia identified? Lyndi is always ready to assist.

Perhaps you would like to make comment after reading an article in Salvia News, or is there something you think could make Salvia News a better read.

It doesn't have to be very long, can be in letter form or just a couple of paragraphs, don't forget to include a photo where possible.

We look forward to hearing from you. Deadline for the next issue is 14 July 2014. Don't forget to include your name, suburb or town and State.

*Send your articles and photos via
email: beth.c@bigpond.com
or post to: 3 Creekbank View, Pakenham Vic 3810*

NOTES FROM GRUYERE: April 2014

Meg Bentley

What glorious weather we are having NOW!! It has been so dry and our plants and gardens have suffered greatly up to date but things are looking good with the rain we have had lately, thank goodness.

What a great day it was here in Gruyere when so many folk came to see the garden, have lunch, meet new subscribers and catch up with friends. There were also friendly faces of people I knew who had travelled many miles to get here. Thank you to those people for coming and then having a chance to meet the Salvia Study Group. It was lovely to have every-one come and brave the hills and see such a dry garden with not much in flower. I guess one could view it as an example of how plants struggle and get through our varying climates without pampering and depending on the need for water. I would also like to thank those who helped out on the day with seats, parking and assisting with directions around the gardens (with-out the maps, one could get lost so I was told) I do hope every-one enjoyed themselves.

It has been a very busy time for the Salvia Study Group in general with shows and sales which have gone very well. One new event was an invite to the CWA Headquarters Annual Country Fair which went very well. The Ferny Creek Plant Collectors Sale weekend was a good weekend with plenty of plant sales and many other interesting plant stalls. Book sales inside the hall were well frequented, art displays, succulents and hardy plants plus many other stalls of rare and wonderful plants. We were lucky with the weather which is always an encouragement to want to go out and buy anything garden related.

Tesselaar's Garden and Plant Expo was another very good weekend and what wonderful weather, so much so that plants were selling like hot cakes and benches had to be re-loaded on the Sunday. Tesselaar's is an excellent venue bringing so many plants people together, not only with such an assortment of stall holders with varying garden related items for sale but the families, gardeners and the 'would be gardeners' who want to have a go at any cost. One would have to say the weather was perfect, autumn sunshine at its best.

Then we had the Jindivick Country Fair, another great venue and wonderful people to meet, a truly country affair up in the hills not too far from Drouin one way and Neerim South the other way. Many salvias were sold and many other plants etc bought from mixed vendors (mostly plant related). I did have to get a few more roses to add to the garden then, to finish off the day, one simply had to go and say hello to David Musker of the wonderful nursery Jindivick Country Gardener with his assortment of rare and unusual plants, pottery, garden seats and various wall plaques, including cards and rare items inside the shop.

After such a busy time it will be nice to slow up a bit and sort the garden, put in some newly acquired salvias and roses (of course) and put in a few cuttings, while the ground is still warm and the plants have got good growing material on them. Winter will soon be upon us and it could either be too cold or shall I say it TOO WET

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Meg Gadd

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MEZA AZURE IS STILL ALIVE AND KICKING

Lyndi Garnett / VSSG Co-ordinator

Salvia 'Meza Azure' was released in Australia about three years ago from California. It was part of the Meza Range, the other colours being a pink and a red coloured *Salvia*.



We thought we had lost this gorgeous little mauve *Salvia*, as it was marketed through stores other than Bunnings. As we could not find this range in other stores, we thought we had lost them. But lo and behold 'Meza Azure' and the others are alive and well, they are being grown and marketed by Haar's Nursery.

Last year I came across what I thought was a different mauve *Salvia* as well as the pink and red varieties. I

thought that the mauve flowers looked different from my 'Meza Azure' and so I referred to this mauve *Salvia* as 'Haar's Purple' (Haar's Nursery were not interested in naming the mauve *Salvia* or the pink and red varieties), hence the name. The red and pink varieties were and are a non-descript pink and red, but I bought them to see how they performed.

This year I found the same mauve *Salvia* in Bunnings, again grown by Haar's Nursery, so I bought all that they had. They are being marketed under the label of 'Garden Jewels', with no name for any of the colours.

After I had a good look at my 'Meza Azure' in my garden and conferred with Meg, we both concluded that those mauve, pink and red *Salvias* grown by Haar's Nursery and found in Bunnings are in fact the 'Meza Range', but not named as such.

For those who don't know 'Meza Azure', this is a gorgeous mauve/purple *Salvia* that flowers the whole year. A good compact plant, growing to approx 60cm with neat tidy foliage, doesn't get leggy if you forget to trim, it stays compact with all its beautiful mauve/purple flowers all year.

'Meza Azure' can still be found in Bunnings, but hurry as stocks run out and they don't stock through the colder months.

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MY INTRODUCTION TO SALVIAS

Lee Andre (Croydon, Victoria)

I was introduced to the world of salvia's about six years ago by Pat Anderson. Pat would front up to our local Warrandyte Garden Club with an armful of salvias – different colours, leaf sizes and smells. At the end of the meeting, Pat would say “take what you want as I don't want to take them home!” To my surprise my cuttings took (many of the flowers had dropped off so I had no idea what I was getting). What a surprise when they finally flowered. Sometimes Pat would chair our meetings and give us an informative talk on the Lamiaceae family.

We all were most intrigued that it extended so far as mint, lavender, thyme, rosemary, honey suckle, lepechinia just to name a few.

Now I have 25 salvias and the Eastern Spinebills visit my *Salvia* ‘Meigan's Magic’ and *Salvia* ‘Phyllis Fancy’ which I can see from my kitchen window. It is a joy knowing that I am growing a plant in my suburban garden which attracts and feeds the precious native birds.

We have had garden outings at Pat and John's property in Warrandyte over the years and enjoy the walking commentary as we progress around their beautiful garden. Many of us at our Garden Club have become hooked on salvias, thanks to Pat.

When I was planting out my *Salvia* ‘Meigan's Magic’ and *Salvia* ‘Phyllis Fancy’, we bought an eight week old German Shepherd puppy – brittle salvias and a boisterous pup don't exactly mix. I suppose it was a forced pruning – she is now five years old and respects my salvias except when she is happy and wags her tail right next to my salvias.

Many of my friends have planted natives, but I wanted colour with different heights and variety in my garden, which salvias contributed. I find the clippings easy to feed back onto the garden or

put into the compost pile as they break down quicker than natives.

I attended my first *Salvia* Study Group outing on Sunday 23rd March 2014 at Meg Bentley's garden where I put names to faces (names mentioned in the newsletters). Thank you for making me feel at home and welcome as a newbie. I purchased Meg's manual and she signed my book and wrote encouraging words inside the cover. I am so impressed with the manual and I am learning so much.

At Meg's we saw so many different *salvia* plants and if you were privileged enough to catch up with Meg or Lyndi the information was endless.

Happy gardening,
Lee

*Brittle
salvias
and a
boisterous
pup don't
mix*

Editor:

Meg's manual is “A Manual for Salvia Growers” by Meg Bentley, and is available at events as described in the Calendar Of Events or by mail order for \$30 plus postage, see page 19 this edition of Salvia News.

It was such a good day at Meg's Open Garden. It was pleasure to meet some new subscribers and catch up with old friends. Welcome Lee, and thank you for sharing. It is a great read.

LETTERS

In the last *Salvia News* was an excellent article from Pat Anderson on 'Hot Pots'. Could you ask her for permission to use part of it in the Benalla Garden Club newsletter. It is very relevant to our extremely hot summers.

The article Pat Anderson wrote on 'Hot Pots' in the autumn newsletter was of great interest.

We all have different ways of keeping pots alive in summer. As I only have tank water, minimal watering is done. If I buy a plant in November, I don't plant it until our autumn break, which still hasn't arrived this year, so it will probably be April when the temperatures cool down. To help the new plant survive, I put rice hulls about 2 inches thick in the bottom of a styrofoam box with drainage holes in, then place pots in it, filling around the pots with more rice hulls up to the lip of the pot.



Rice Hulls

This keeps them cool, the rice hulls don't get smelly or wet, and can be used again, year after year until they eventually get mixed in with compost. I first discovered rice hulls when buying two day old calves. For bedding, the farmer was using a deep layer of rice hulls which kept the young calves warm and dry. I had previously used straw as bedding mulch, but within two day this was wet and foul smelling which encouraged diseases. I then tried it as a mulch on the garden, but rain was unable to penetrate it, leaving the soil underneath bone dry. Next I used it in the hen house as litter. Boy, did they have fun, \ searching for grains of rice, re-arranging the hulls from one end of the run to the other. Again this reduced wet soil, their manure was mixed in by the hens, and after about 12 months, I would clean out then pen, replace with fresh rice hulls, then mix the used hulls into the garden where it helped break up hard soil as well as fertilize. I doubt the availability of this marvellous product in the metropolitan areas, but country communities may be able to procure it at Product Merchandisers. The two pots one inside the other which Pat mentioned works well, again the rice hulls are the insulator and works well. I once tried putting silver foil inside a pot

with the shiny side out. It helped, but was no match for the two pot method.

Whitefly on salvias can be a problem. Some years ago I wrote about this and cannot remember if I sent a photo with it. Each year my beans are ruined by this pesky little varmint, even though I continually sprayed with a natural pesticide once a week, which was an expensive way of having a feed of beans!! When my large leaf salvias were smothered with them, my anger knew no bounds. Not about to be beaten I researched the Encarsia Wasp, which I purchased from Biological Services in South Australia. One thousand eggs of this little chap arrived in the mail and were placed near the problem plants. For about two weeks nothing happened (they had to hatch of course), then upon the daily inspection I could see the little critters were no longer moving (had to prod them to be sure), then within about a week, the leaves were smothered with ants which were retrieving all the bodies to take to their nests. Nature was doing its "Thing".

A product I have used to increase success in my plantings is Hydrocell, which looks similar to polystyrene pieces, both large & fine. The Wodonga Council garden staff use it when transplanting very large trees, with great success. It is put in the bottom of the hole and also mixed to the added soil, retaining moisture. When the plant roots reach it, they actually grow through it, unlike gel crystals. I found that when any plant struggled to thrive, if I dug it up to inspect, the roots would all just be clustered in the gel, and went no further. With the hydrocell, the roots not only reach into the moist foam, they pass through it and keep growing.

I first experimented with plants in pots so I could quickly check the results. Instructions on the bag are to put a hose in and wet the foam before using. If you do not do this, the only concern is that there are not only chunks of foam, but many fine particles, so it is essential to wear a mask when using it. It is supposed to last for about 10 years. It cost me \$40 for a large bag, at Peards Nursery in Wodonga.

I have attached a photo of the *Salvia* covered with whitefly to give you an idea of the huge problem I had. The ladybird is just starting its feast.

continued on page 18

LETTERS.. *continued*



White Fly (notice the ladybird at bottom LHS)

Always on the lookout for dry tolerant plants, I read how the *Salvia discolor* was also good to plant in dry shade, which is just where I have mine, no water, and looks great. Even the Heatwave series can struggle during summer.

**Jess Kay,
Glenrowan, Vic**

Editor: Pat Anderson was only too pleased to give permission for her article to be reprinted in a garden club newsletter. In fact Jess was one of several seeking such permission. Both Pat and Jess have given you options that may work for you. Don't forget to let us know what you tried and your results too.

THANK YOU....

Thankyou to all those who donated pots of Salvias for the display at Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show (MIFGS). A wonderful selection of plants were donated, in fact we had too many pots for a 2m x 1m display area.

The display was good, perhaps a little crowded, but full of an interesting variety of Salvias. It certainly was a talking point for the public who ventured up to the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) display.



Thank you to all those who donated so generously for the weekend at Tesselaar Garden Expo in March, a special thank you to Russell, Meg Bentley and Pat Anderson for their very, very generous donation of plants for Tesselaar Garden Expo and Jindivick's Rare Plant Expo, again a great selection of Salvias of all sorts.

If anyone has any spare or disused 4" pots that they don't want, would they like to donate them back to the group (VSSG). Please ring me on 9803 4534 to discuss. There are always those in the group who help in propagation and need pots.

Thankyou,
Lyndi Garnett

Editor: Thank you must also go to Lyndi and Jillian who work so tirelessly for VSSG. Not only do they attend so many functions, but they are 'behind the scenes' working too that includes, but not limited to, preparation, displays, pickup and packup and of course growing many of the numerous plants that are displayed and sold. It wouldn't happen without them.

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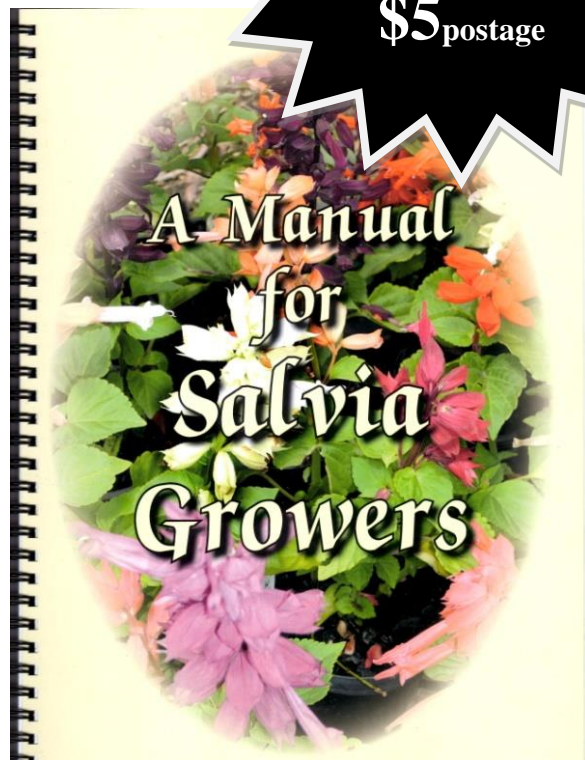
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