

# Salvia News

NUMBER 58



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

**Summer 2014/2015**

# **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 for the purpose of enjoyment and study
2. Promote and encourage the growing of Salvias
3. Correctly name existing and new 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](http://www.salvias.org.au)**

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# SALVIA NEWS

VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP

Website: [www.salvias.org.au](http://www.salvias.org.au)

**W**elcome to the Summer edition of your newsletter filled with articles sourced from near and far for your reading pleasure.

One advantage of receiving your subscription on line is you get to see all the photographs in colour. At this time, only the centre pages of the hard copy of Salvia News are in full colour. There are many in this issue, hope you enjoy.

It has been a busy time preparing our gardens for the warmer season. This has had to be completed in between excessive winds, heavy hail storms and heavy rains. There has been some heavy frosts too and the damage to contend with. I remembered this year to leave cutting back frost bitten plants until the last frosts had gone and haven't lost any. My garden maintenance is mostly completed when I can rather than when it should be. This year the weather has been kind with watering for me when I have completed tasks that need a good soaking which has certainly saved a lot of time and effort.

If you have ever wondered about how the VSSG came to be, then there is a most informative article by Lyndi Garnett on page 14. Watch out in coming issues for more musings from others who worked so tirelessly to ensure VSSG's success.

Some of the Perennial Poppies from Queensland have enjoyed a spectacular trip to the UK and visited many wonderful gardens, page 8.

Robin Middleton from the UK tells about growing salvias in his garden on page 9, don't forget to have a look at his website too.

I am often asked when the next visit will be to Pat Anderson's spectacular garden. This year VSSG is having the Christmas break-up at Pat's home in Warrandyte on Sunday 7 December, details in the Calendar of Events page 4. RSVP is essential. It's always a special social occasion and to wander this garden is a wonderful bonus.

Apart from the Salvia events as advertised in the Calendar of Events, we are frequently asked where Salvias can be purchased. This issue as promised, commencing on page 16, is a listing compiled by Lyndi Garnett of Nurseries from around the country that sell salvias, many through mail order.

Another year almost gone. Wishing you and yours, best wishes for the Christmas Season. Stay safe, have fun and happy gardening too.  
Beth

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Check the VSSG website for more details, [www.salvias.org.au](http://www.salvias.org.au)  
Take your plant lists to events or email your list to Lyndi, [lgarnett844@gmail.com](mailto:lgarnett844@gmail.com)

- Nov 23, Sun**    **The Annual Salvias at Nobelius**  
**11am – 2pm**  
Salvia Display Garden, Nobelius Heritage Park, Crichton Rd, Emerald. **Mel: 127 G4**  
Come and obtain those Salvias you have been wanting. Walk through the gardens and see what is in flower, how they work in a garden setting.  
Salvia books and seed for sale. Meg's Cards for sale.  
Bring a list or email your list in advance to avoid disappointment.  
Bring plants to be identified. [lgarnett844@gmail.com](mailto:lgarnett844@gmail.com)
- Nov 25, Tue**    **Bentleigh Garden Club**  
**7.45pm**  
St John's Anglican Church Hall, 624 Centre Rd, Bentleigh. **Mel: 77 G1**  
Patrick Hogan will be speaking.  
Salvia plants and books will be for sale.
- Dec 7, Sun**    **Christmas Lunch in Pat & John Anderson's garden**  
**11am**  
98 Bradleys Lane, Warrandyte. **Mel: 23 C12**  
Bring a scrumptious Christmas plate to share, a chair. Join in the fun, meet old and new friends.  
Explore Pat's wonderful garden.  
It's our last event for the year. Hope to see you there.  
RSVP essential, please phone Pat & John Anderson 9844 3442

*Merry Christmas everyone and a Happy New Year!  
Enjoy a safe and happy holiday period*

*The Calender of Events for 2015 is still being completed, the calendar usually commences in March. Check the website regularly for the latest news of events to come. For all enquiries relating to Calender of Events, please contact Lyndi Garnett on 9803 4534 or email [lgarnett844@gmail.com](mailto:lgarnett844@gmail.com)*

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## Lyndi's Open Garden - October

*Photos Patrick Hogan*



# Lyndi's Open Garden

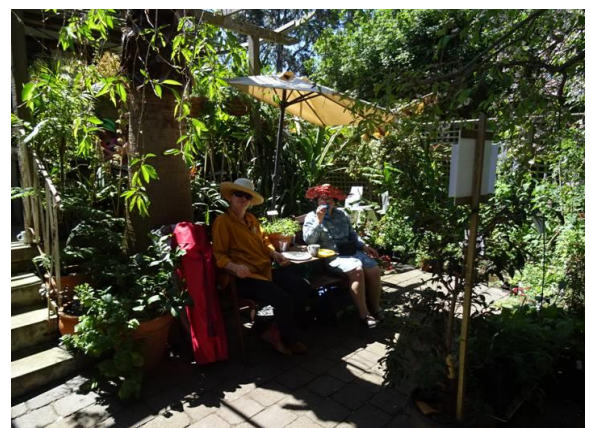
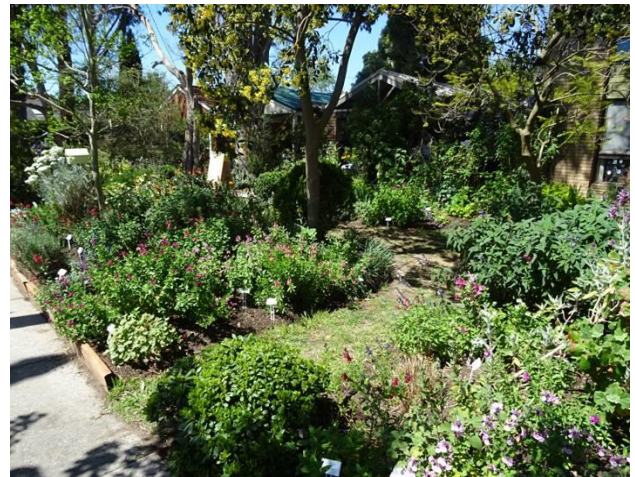
Beth Clisby – photos Patrick Hogan

What a wonderful day we had at Lyndi's open garden in October. The weather was just perfect, the light breeze most welcome or it may have even been a little too warm, we certainly knew that Summer is nearly upon us.

It was very apparent where the open garden was. The verge is heavily planted and is a burst of colour. What a welcoming sight, Lyndi's whole front yard heralded that Spring is upon us, and with the sun shining we knew we were in for a special day.

After saying hello some grabbed a cuppa, others, me included, went exploring immediately starting from the verge, meandering in the front yard, down the side and into the back yard. Salvias were clearly marked which made it very easy to add plants to your wish list or seek them out from the many plants available for sale. Arriving on time gives one the best choices and I was very pleased with another ten to add to my patch - *Salvia* 'Sweet Laura' which I had on order, *Salvia greggii* 'Crimson and Black', *Salvia* 'Martine', *Salvia* 'Mystic Spires', *Salvia* 'A' lo ha' – now this one I chose for the name (!) - *Salvia greggii* 'Holly', *Salvia* 'Bill Whitehead' named after one of VSSG founding members, *Salvia* 'Yamagata' my first Japanese specie, *Salvia* 'Tavistock' and *Salvia lanceolata*. *Salvia* sales were a bonus to a very pleasant time.

There was a very good turnout, some just came to see the garden and to make their purchases. Many stayed to lunch sitting on the verandah and spilling out under the trees in the back yard. As always there was plenty to feast on, great company, and time to catch up with old and new friends. Thanks Lyndi and Mike for having us. It was a lovely day enjoyed by all.



# Propagating Demonstration with Meg Bentley

Patrick Hogan



The weather was beautiful for those lucky enough to attend Meg Bentley's Propagating afternoon adjacent to the Salvia Display Garden in Nobelius Heritage Park, Emerald one Sunday in September. Seventeen people attended the afternoon. Lots of tips and techniques were passed on by Meg to an appreciative audience. Meg demonstrated how to take particular cuttings as we walked around the Salvia beds and collected specimens to propagate. Next Meg demonstrated how she pots up cuttings and some of her important tips here were;

- (1) Use only Perlite and potting mix or
- (2) Use potting mix and when you make a hole in the potting mix to insert your cutting – fill the hole with Perlite material. 70/30 or 60/40 Perlite and potting mixtures are common
- (3) Give the newly planted cuttings a good watering using a dilute solution of Seasol
- (4) Place the cuttings in the shade with plenty of air for circulation
- (5) Place a saucer or other object beneath the pot to provide some water at the base.
- (6) Wait until you see young roots appear through the base of the flower pot before potting up or planting out the newly propagated plant
- (7) Enjoy your new propagated plant

After many plants were potted up under the watchful eye of Meg the group then had a delightful afternoon cuppa and cakes – courtesy of Jillian and Lyndi. Everyone enjoyed the day and I hope to be able to provide the Victorian Salvia Study Group with pots of sturdy plants for sale in the near future.

A very big 'thankyou' to Meg for your advice and assistance. To everyone behind the scenes who contributed to the day - Tables, chairs, tea, coffee, milk, sugar, potting mix, secateurs, pots and more - Thank you.



# Notes from Gruyere Summer, Oct/Nov. 2014

*Meg Bentley*

Spring is well and truly here as I write in the early hours, just as the birds are waking. Outside my window the Yellow Robin kisses the dawn and the Blackbird continues his melodious song. Close by the Spotted Pardalote 'pings' on a branch above his nest, tunneled into the garden wall

Many plants, mostly salvias have been planted out into the garden or potted up into bigger pots. One very interesting situation (which could apply to anyone of us) was planting out a large pot of a *Salvia microphylla* cultivar and whilst looking for its label I could only find an old *Salvia patens* name. Checking the plant further I noticed a different set of leaves to the main plant, situated in the centre of the plant and thought perhaps the plant had a mutation. So laying the plant out on the bench I pulled away the soil to reveal stems and tubers coming from underneath the *Salvia microphylla* cultivar. It was easy to see when separating the plants that a seed had dropped into the pot beside the *Salvia patens* and grew quite large when *Salvia patens* went dormant. Through separating the stems and removing much of the soil I found the tubers all intact and re-shooting with new growing stems.



**Pic showing the lighter coloured stems of *Salvia patens* coming up through the self-sown *Salvia microphylla* cultivar**

Both were of course planted separately into the garden but the lesson here is when you are taking cuttings be aware of other plants that could be dormant and mindful of spreading cultivars that could come up beside a plant, especially with some of the *microphylla* cultivars which are known to spread. Check out that the cutting or rooted division you are taking is really the 'right' one and not a piece of the spreading interloper. Many folk will swear that the plant they grew from cuttings came from a particular labeled plant, when in fact it could be an undermined off-shoot from another plant.

Although things here have been rather hectic at times, I did manage to have a little time off and went to visit Julie and Gary Campbell's garden 'Birchwood near Benalla' at Molyullah. It is indeed a delightful garden to see at any time but this time it was full of bulbs flowering in all their glory. Especially the tulips and Iris in arranged colours to suit the flowering plants nearby. Julie has many salvias growing and flowering at different times of the year and in her front garden at this time were the best examples of *Salvia heirosolymitana*, both plants and flowers, I have ever seen. Growing nearby was a good display of *Salvia eigii* both complimenting one and other. An article about Julie and Gary's garden was in the previous *Salvia News* entitled 'Moving on With More Salvias'.

Keep an eye open for forth-coming openings to 'Birchwood near Benalla', perhaps the *Salvia* Study Group may make a visit next year, around March/April to see the garden which is well worth the trip and although a fair distance it is like an oasis in the surrounding farmland.

# Perennial Poppies group goes to the UK

Lynn McAlister – Lawnton (suburb of northern Brisbane, Qld)

Salvias are one of my favourite groups of cottage garden plants and I have been very fortunate, this July and August, to have seen them growing, not only here in our south east Queensland winter, but also in the UK and Ireland summer. In July and August, I visited the UK and Ireland with the Perennial Poppies group. We visited more than fifty gardens, some very well-known and many lesser known private gardens, large and very large. There were cottage gardens, woodland gardens, walled gardens, orchards, floral borders, arboreta, expansive lawns, manors, houses a castle or two and even a cidery. I quickly confirmed that my favourite shrubs and perennials grow in the UK! The summer weather we encountered was very mild, by Queensland standards. There were such wonderful colourful shrubs and perennials such as buddleia, catalpa, cornus, dahlias, asters, verbascum, monarda, phlox, helenium, nemesa, verbena, geraniums, hydrangea and clematis to name but a few. Each garden we visited offered an amazing array of temperate and cool-climate flowers, grasses, shrubs and trees. I had expected to find an even larger range of salvias, than we have in south east Queensland, growing in the UK summer garden. Such however was not the case. Perhaps it is just that UK gardeners have such a wide range of colourful perennials from which to choose that salvias don't feature as strongly. I must add that most of the gardens we saw were quite large but I did do my best to see all they had to offer.

Many of the gardens had one or two, or a few salvias tucked away in the floral beds and borders. They were mostly the *Salvia microphylla* and *greggii* varieties in familiar colours- pinks, peach, mauve and creamy white, but with unfamiliar names such as 'Wild couple of salvias I had never seen before, orange red flowers and several with blue or were probably *Salvia patens* of different *Salvia* 'Phyllis Fancy', 'Wendy's Wish', 'Majesty' (looking much taller than here at many species we saw and which can grow much taller in the UK and flower colour

*We talked  
with  
William  
Dyson  
about  
Salvia  
jamensis  
hybrids he  
has  
developed*

Watermelon' and 'Sungold'. I spotted a *Salvia dombeyi* with heads dangling 20-30 blue and white flowers which we thought varieties. There were also familiar 'friends', 'Waverly' 'Hot Lips' and possibly 'Purple home). Interestingly that was a feature of in parts of south east Queensland. They grow seems to be much brighter.

Great Comp garden is noted for its salvia and many other Dyson hybrids. We were the *Salvia jamensis* hybrids he has difficulties of importing to Australia, and proliferation of *microphylla* and *greggii* and habit and perhaps lack distinction. should aim to develop local hybrids suited the many hybrids currently being difficulty of ensuring that salvia varieties

collection and is home of *Salvia* 'Silas Dyson' fortunate to talk with William Dyson about developed, hybridising in general, the also the challenges of managing the hybrids, which are often very similar in colour William suggested that salvia enthusiasts to local conditions rather than trying to import developed. He sympathised with the are correctly named and marketed. When we

visited they were just planting up a very large, new salvia bed to showcase recent *microphylla* and *greggii* hybrids. There were red, peach, pink, mauve, purple and cream varieties, some with dark bracts and having smaller and larger leaves. Unfortunately, they were not yet labelled so will have to remain nameless for now.

My most memorable salvia scene from the trip was at Great Dixter; several beautiful tall salvias with dark blue flowers, green bracts and light green leaves were framed to the side and behind by very tall, pale coloured, airy grasses. It was quite an unusual combination, I thought, and one I would like to replicate. I think the potential to use light-weight grasses with salvias is very promising, based on the combinations we saw. Back home, at the end of August, I found my 'just north of Brisbane' garden had been through an unusually warm and dry winter according to the 'garden help'. Number three son had done an admirable job of keeping everything happy (mostly), during my absence. I am pleased to say that *Salvia* 'Hot Lips' looked just as bright and beautiful as in the UK. It must be enjoying the dry weather. Also looking well-tended were *Salvia iodantha*, *Salvia x involucrata* 'Joan', 'Phyllis Fancy', 'Purple Majesty', 'Garron', 'Josh' and 'Royal Bumble' which now has a question mark over it after seeing the namesake looking very different indeed at Great Comp. My 'Royal Bumble' is a very different 'red' to the couple we saw in the UK and perhaps was mislabelled where I purchased it here. The trip was marvellous and a great opportunity to gather 'ideas'. I now have many plans for featuring my salvias a little differently. They will always be a mainstay of the colour in my garden. I have a few ideas, gathered from beds of quite different genera, which I will try to implement to better show off the salvias. Until next time, may your salvias grow ever taller and brighter to light up your gardens.

# Salvia garden in the South of England

Robin Middleton. UK. [www.robinssalvias.com](http://www.robinssalvias.com)

It is late September in the South of England, where I have my Salvia collection. This is perhaps the best time of the year for my plants. Whereas most gardens are all but finished now, my Salvias, along with Rudbeckias and Dahlias are stunning.

Because of a very mild Spring, many of the Salvias are in bloom a month earlier than usual, these include *Salvia madrensis*, *Salvia cuspidata* ssp *gilliesii*, and *Salvia amethystina* ssp *ampelophylla*. Some are over 2 metres tall.

I have contacts all over the world who specialise in Salvias, and we share seeds and sometimes plants/cuttings. This would not have been possible before the internet. New hybrids are constantly occurring, many in Australia, some of which have found their way to the UK, eg 'Wendy's Wish', 'Ember's Wish', and 'Magenta Magic'. These are stunners, but need frost protection. I have a close friend in Argentina, Rolando Uria, ([www.salvias.com.ar](http://www.salvias.com.ar)) who probably has the largest Salvia collection in South America. He plays around with seeds, and gets some magnificent hybrids; *sagittata* x *acaliifolia*, *chiapensis* x *eizi-matudae*, and *miniata* x *microphylla* to name a few. We exchange plants and it is always interesting (if occasionally disappointing) to see how they perform in our different climates.

I only grow the Salvias which I really like (that is most of them) and will always try something new. Some just get too big here, and if not hardy, I cannot keep them all in my greenhouses. Some have not flowered for 3 years, these are mostly species from high altitudes near the equator, they don't like the short winter days here, so although very rare, I have

to discard them. These include *Salvia rufula*, *Salvia rubriflora*, and *Salvia quitensis*. But I do give cuttings to the National Collection Holders.

I find some Salvias to be quite invasive in my garden. These include *Salvia darcy*, *Salvia guaranitica*, and *Salvia stachydifolia* (the one that used to be called *Salvia meyeri*.) I try to replace these every 3 -4 years, though I hate digging up healthy plants! We have many *greggii*/x *jamensis/microphylla* cultivars, these also become untidy after a few years, despite vigorous spring pruning. New ones are offered for sale every year, very often identical, but with different names. This happens not only here, but in Australia, the USA, and continental Europe, which makes life confusing. I always sow about 50 seeds from this type, just to see what happens, and I usually keep 2 or 3 of the best for testing.

The current highlights amongst my Salvias are *Salvia darcy*, most *Salvia guaranitica*, *Salvia involucrata*, *Salvia splendens* (true species), *Salvia 'Amistad'*, *Salvia 'Ember's Wish'*, *Salvia 'Jean's Jewel'*, *Salvia 'African Sky'*, *Salvia concolor*, and *Salvia atrocyanea*. I could go on and on.

Where I live we rarely have temperatures below -6, or above 32 degrees. My soil is sandy and free-draining, so many of the Mexican and South American Salvias are quite hardy here, with a mulch. But I always take a few cuttings just in case.

I enjoy reading "Salvia News" every three months, and am delighted to make this small contribution.

Kind regards to you all in Australia.  
Robin [www.robinssalvias.com](http://www.robinssalvias.com)

**I only grow  
the Salvias  
which I  
really like  
(that is  
most of  
them)**

## APOLOGY

Last issue of Salvia News, the gremlins must have visited. In the article on Correct Labelling on page 9, *Salvia coahuilensis* had an 'i' missing and as a Salvia name this needs to be corrected. The jury is still out regarding Salvia names being in the plural and each has to be looked at individually as there doesn't seem to be a set rule. Unfortunately there were other spelling errors too that hadn't been picked up in the proof reading. Additionally, Salvia News arrived late for those who received online. Hopefully the problems and errors have been fixed. Some of these errors were out of my control, but as editor, I send my sincere apologies to everyone and assure you that it is being worked on to prevent a repeat. Thankyou.

# Salvia Differences

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. We have already looked at some (Salvia News 56, Winter edition). Here are a few points to look for when trying correctly identify these similar looking plants.

## **INVOLUCRATA, 'TIMBOON' & 'ROMANTIC ROSE'**



*Salvia involucrata* spp

Tall 3x3m, arching branches, large thin cordate leaves mid-green; large knob long flower stem, thin corollas; calyx all face in an upward direction



*Salvia* 'Timboon'

Tall 3x3m arching branches, thick hairy cordate leaves; Flowers dark crimson, small knob, medium flower stem; dark pink calyxes

### *Salvia involucrata*

- This is a tall autumn/winter flowering Salvia with arching branches to 4m.
- Leaves are dark green, a thin texture with a very pointed apex.
- Calyxes are pink in crowded whorls around the stem, but because of its arching habits, all the flowers face upwards along the flower stem.
- Flower stem is very long, sometimes up to 30cm long with a small tight involucre (knob) at the end, hence the name *involucrata*.
- Flowers (corolla's) are tubular and a clear pink colour.
- *S. involucrata* has married with *S. karwinskii* to produce many well known crosses.

Eastern Spinebills and Wattle birds love the flowers but few are fertilized to produce any seedlings.



*Salvia* 'Romantic Rose'

Tall arching branches, bright green elongated cordate leaves; Flowers, fat, light pink, dark calyxes, knob elongated; large shrub 4x 4m

*Continued on page 11*

# Salvia Differences

Continued from page 10

## Salvia 'Timboon'

- This is a *karwinskii* x *involucrate* tall winter flowering Salvia to 4m H with arching branches.
  - Leaves are dark green, roughly the shape of *S.karwinskii* and slightly hairy, with a nice Salvia fragrance.
  - Flower stems are long and pink coloured. The whorls of flowers are very dense and again face upwards.
  - Calyxes are a dark pink, pointed ends with pink hairs.
  - Flowers (corollas) are dark tubular and crimson. Only a small involucre appears at the end.
- Quite a dense bush that propagates easily from tip cuttings. Very attractive.

## Salvia 'Romantic Rose'

- This is a very robust winter flowering tall *involucrate* x *karwinskii* Salvia to 4m, with arching branches.
  - Leaves are thin textured, long, a lighter green, a narrow heart shape and not really hairy.
  - Flower stems are long and a light pink. The whorls are not as dense as the others, so look sparse and not as crowded.
  - Calyxes are green and appear around the whole stem, although often can appear facing in one direction. The green calyx makes a good contrast with the clear cerise pink corolla.
  - Corollas are a clear dark pink that is tubular and fat. The involucre is elongated, a very distinctive feature.
- A large shrub that needs to be cut back each year to keep it contained

## SNOW WHITE' & GREGGII 'ALBA'

These Salvias are similar but easy to tell the difference between the two. 'Snow White' is a progeny of *S. greggii* 'Alba'. The *greggii* must have found a *microphylla* attractive to produce this little beauty. Although the leaves show a *greggii* dominant parent, it is easy to tell it is a cross.



*Salvia greggii* 'Alba'

Shrub tight, compact, upright growth to 40cmH



*Salvia* 'Snow White'

More open habit, slightly taller to 60cmH  
flowers and buds the same as *greggii* 'Alba'

## Salvia greggii 'Alba'

- A small shrub to 40cm, with compact growth and well clothed all the way down the stems.
- Flowers are the same for both.
- Leaves are thin, mat green, only the midrib showing and about 1-1.2cm x 0.4cm wide.

## Salvia 'Snow White'

- A small shrub, but taller than *Salvia greggii* 'Alba'. About 50-60cm with a more open habit. The stems are sparser with leaves.
- Leaves are a mat green, showing the midrib, but also faint veins can be seen. The leaves are much longer and broader, 2-3cm x 0.5-0.6cm.
- Everything about this plant is bigger. Even the flower is slightly larger.

Continued on page 12

# Salvia Differences

Continued from page 11

## 'CYCLAMEN' & 'PINK BLUSH'

These are extremely similar Salvia. They were discovered at a time when everything was kept without looking at what is already in cultivation. One of these should not have come into cultivation as their similarities cause a lot of problems. Most of the distinguishing items come from the leaves.

Both are *microphyllas*, growing 40-60cm with a spreading habit.

Both flower at the same time and have the same coloured bright pink flowers at approximately the same size.

### Salvia 'Cyclamen'

- 'Cyclamen' has leaves that are heart shaped, slightly pointed at the ends. Well grown the leaves can be 3-4cm x 2-3cm wide.
- Flowers are a bright cyclamen colour and are quite large and wide.

### Salvia 'Pink Blush'

- 'Pink Blush' has leaves that are oblong, definitely rounded at the ends. Well grown, these can also reach 3-4cm wide. Often the leaves can have a slight blue hue to them.
  - Flowers are also approximately the same size, perhaps a tad smaller, but the same bright cyclamen pink colour.
- As you can see it's extremely difficult to tell these two apart, especially for the uninitiated. You need a keen eye to tell them apart.



**Salvia 'Cyclamen'**  
Very large flowers, calyx dark coloured



**Salvia 'Pink Blush'**  
Flowers are same colour but not as large as 'Cyclamen.' Calyx, green or slightly coloured



'Cyclamen' leaves are shiny, broad ovate and pointed



'Pink Blush' leaves are broad oblong, not pointed, green or slightly blue hue o colour

More information on 'Differences' will be featured in later editions of Salvia News. In the meantime, should you be seeking more information on Salvia differences, go to the VSSG website [www.salvias.org](http://www.salvias.org) If you have any queries, do not hesitate to contact the writer on email [lgarnett844@gmail.com](mailto:lgarnett844@gmail.com)

# PAKENHAM GARDEN EXPO.

*Heather Lucas, Heathmont, Vic.*

I'm sure that everyone was looking forward to this garden show, as it was the first plant sale event for spring 2014 and I certainly was quite happy to let winter go and have some lovely spring days to garden and trim back plants. Therefore also lots of new plants needing to be purchased.

This year the venue was new, normally being held at the Pakenham Racecourse, it was now being held at Beaconhills College, Toomuc Valley Road, Pakenham on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> September from 9 am to 2 pm.

I started off very early as I was picking up another committee member, Pat Jenzen from Lilydale (half an hour away from me), then we had to cut across the Dandenong Ranges to Pakenham (about 50 minutes drive) to get to Pakenham bright and breezy to help Lyndi and Jillian with any last minute items that needed to be done on the stand, before the hordes of people came at 9 am. Last year people were actually arriving and coming before the 9 am start and when 9 am came there were heaps of people. This year funnily enough there weren't a lot of people before or at 9 am. However it did pick up after 9.15 am and although never really inundated, there was a steady amount of people all day. What probably helped was that we had lots of helpers (about 8 of us) for the stand, so were able to all go off at different times to check out the other stands and have a break.

There were several plant stands at the expo selling bulbs, roses, hellebores, rare plants and of course our

salvia stand. There were also stands selling tools and gardening equipment and an area inside the hall that was set up with tables and chairs where you could purchase food and refreshments.

We had a very good day for salvia plant sales and many of the helpers on the stand left with loads of plants, so all in all a lovely start to spring.

Unfortunately for me though the day ended on a rather sour note as when I walked over to my car I noticed that someone had backed into the back of my car. It must have been a larger car or truck as the dent was much higher up above the bumper bar of my 4 wheel drive. Whoever backed into my car definitely would have known that they had, but there was no note on my car!! Ah well there are worse things that happen in life, so off I drove home to look at the plants I'd bought and with a glass of red wine I walked around my garden and tried to decide where I could put them all

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# IN THE BEGINNING...

## Victorian Salvia Study Group (VSSG)

Lyndi Garnett

In the beginning, way back then, in early 1989, the Herb Society of Victoria placed an ad in *The Herb Age* asking for those who were interested in growing Salvias to attend a meeting, for like minded Salvia collectors. I was very interested as I thought I had a lot of Salvias – I had four Salvias!!

We met at Trudi Fry's house, early in Autumn, with the weather still very mild and warm. There were eight of us seated around her big table. At that stage no one seemed to know anyone else, but everyone knew Ray Boatman. Obviously Ray knew Trudi well and Trudi may have known Melwyn Fleay at that stage.

Standing beside Ray was a small man with a wonderful warm smile and cheerful eyes – Bill Whitehead. He then introduced himself as the rep for the OPCA – as it was then (Ornamental Plant Collections Association) – the extra 'A' in the title came later and later became known as the GPCAA.

Bill told us about his extensive collection of Salvias, which put the rest of us to shame as none of us had many more than about six different Salvias.

Bill emphasized the importance of collecting, growing and keeping lists of our personal Salvia collections, as he believed that many Salvias were being lost through building development and carelessness of not keeping seed or records of collections. Thus unofficially the Salvia Study Group was born.

After that short meeting we said that we would all keep in touch and really start to collect Salvias and we had a brief tour of Trudi's garden, but I had to leave to pick up children from School. At that stage I didn't know the Dandenong Ranges very well so I almost got lost on the way home.

A few weeks later Ray phoned up and asked me to come up to Melwyn Fleay's garden in Healesville – again I hadn't any idea of the distance or the travel time. When I arrived Ray, Trudi, Melwyn and one other from the meeting were there walking around her beautiful garden. It was at that time we received pieces of *Salvia involucrata* spp. Ray and Trudi were able to strike it successfully, I had to wait to eventually receive a plant.

A few months later at a Herb Society meeting, Ray announced that Mark Dimiotis had kindly donated his front garden for the use of growing Salvias. We being at that stage, Ray, Trudi and myself with the help of Jill Bryant, Helen Fallshaw, Graham and Velda Ellis then went down to Mark's place and began planning and planting out the front garden with the few plants that we had acquired and scraped together from anywhere we could find them.

I should mention that at that stage, Graham and Velda had a nursery, selling herbs and Salvias from their home in Canterbury. They were able to supply quite a few Salvias for both Hampton and Nobelius.

In 1991 the Ray received a letter from the OPCA, suggesting that the Herb Society hold a collection of Salvias for the OPCA and would they consider having a Salvia Study group within their midst. Upon which the Group was formally begun.

It was also about this time that Ray was granted a piece of land by the Emerald City Council as a trial plot for the growing of Salvias. This was situated just below the Emerald Museum in the Nobelius Heritage Park.

Ray then drew up a design of the proposed Salvia trial garden and we proceeded to have working bee's to plant it out. Ray was very proud of this plot and worked tirelessly to find new plants for the plot.

Of course all through this period there was a huge amount of correspondence to find anyone who had any Salvias in their nurseries, anyone who had Salvia collections and to be able to buy seed from overseas nurseries. We were also trying to find the correct information about the Salvias that we had and knew about. Copious number of visits were made to the Herbarium to sort through their information which seemed out of date, scrabbling through Flora's and any books on Salvias to find up to date information on names – so many names were old names no longer in use.

## IN THE BEGINNING.. VSSG

We also kept copious amounts of lists, noting any relevant information on cards which were kept and then presented to the OPCA for their records.

We were also grabbing any new Salvias we could find and of course not knowing what they were or how they grew, we planted them in both gardens. Had we known then about *S. guaranitica*, I don't think we would have planted it – it became a weed in Mark's garden until we pulled it all out.

Mark's garden was then registered officially as a collection for the OPCA in 1993.

All through this time we were holding regular meetings, many being held at the Ellis's home. At one of these meetings – (all had even at that time a wonderful spread of food), Ray introduced us to Elly, who we were informed had a magnificent garden in Upwey and was an avid Salvia collector (who later became our first Treasurer) and who opened her garden to us to visit and to the Open Garden Scheme as Lemon Tree Cottage. Many will remember the wonderful garden visits we've had admiring and ogling at all her beautiful Salvias plants.

It was also in the early 90's that we became aware of Sue Templeton's Unlimited Perennial Nursery in Albury. Most of us were in regular contact with her trying to obtain more of her Salvias. Some members even took the journey to Albury and Lavington to buy, bringing back some wonderful treasures which we all eagerly wanted to know more about and had to wait for until cuttings were ready to distribute.

It was through Sue's efforts and contacts in America and elsewhere, that she was able to bring in seed and introduce so many new species and hybrids to Australia. We are extremely indebted to Sue for all the work she has done in increasing our knowledge about Salvias.

It was also about this time that Meg Bentley came upon us and decided to join our small band of Salvia enthusiasts. Her tale can be told in another saga of the group.

As with all groups, as they are growing and developing, some people leave and others find us and join our little band, while others remain to continue. We are indebted to all those wonderful people who helped build the Group to what it is today and without the work, the help, the promotions of the group of people like Ray Boatman, Bill Whitehead, Trudi Fry, Graham and Velda Ellis, the help of Jill Bryant, Mark Dimiotis and Elly, we wouldn't be here today.

Of that original meeting way back then, some people we didn't see again, while others having retired from active service, still follow our activities, through the Salvia News.

I'm beginning to feel a bit lonely as I'm the only one from that wonderful meeting all those years ago still actively engaged in the activities of the Group. I'm so pleased to have been present at that inaugural meeting in 1989.

\* OPCA , Ornamental Plant Collection Association.

later OPCAA, Ornamental Plant Collection Association of Australia. - later

GPCA, Garden Plant Conservation Association of Australia Inc. now called Plant Trust (GPCAA)

As you can see, the 'collection' has changed to 'conservation'

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*Continued on page 17*

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Continued from page 16

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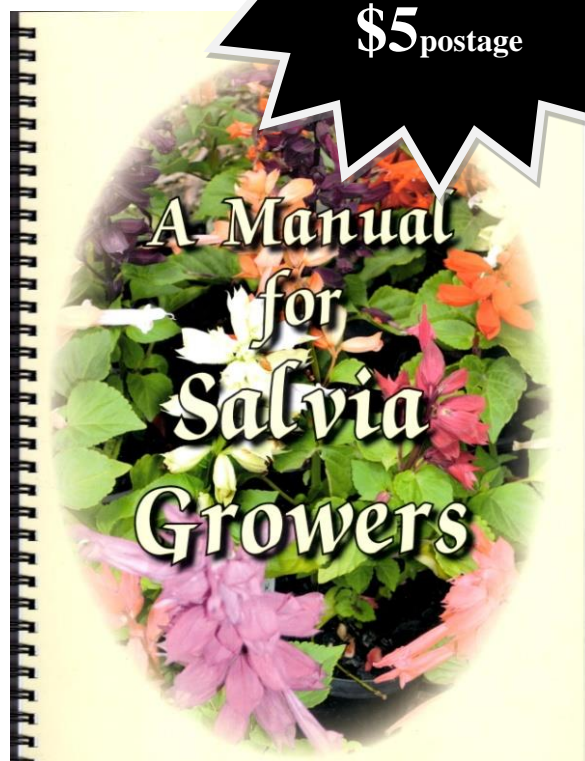
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