

Salvia News

NUMBER 59



Official Newsletter of the
Victorian Salvia Study Group

Autumn 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

| | | |
|--|--|------------------------|
| GROUP CO-ORDINATOR | Lyndi Garnett 844 Highbury Road Glen Waverley, 3150 Email: lgarnett844@gmail.com | 9803 4534 |
| SECRETARY | Heather Lucas | 9879 5365 |
| TREASURER | Gordon Donaldson | 9836 4147 |
| SUBSCRIPTIONS | Meg Gadd | 9584 8005 |
| EDITOR | Beth Clisby | 0400 727 225 |
| ASSISTANT EDITOR & DISPLAY CO-ORDINATOR | Jillian Barkell | 9756 6361 |
| PHOTOGRAPHER, PR & PUBLICITY | Patrick Hogan | 9758 0871 |
| SEED SUPPLIER | Lyndi Garnett | 9803 4534 |
| PLANT SALES & ENQUIRIES | Jillian Barkell Lyndi Garnett | 9756 6361 9803 4534 |

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SALVIA NEWS SUBMISSIONS

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

Copy Deadline for the next edition is on or before 21 April 2015.

Please post your copy to:

Editor VSSG
3 Creebank View, Pakenham. Vic 3810

or email:

beth.c@bigpond.com
Don't forget the dot between beth and 'c'.



SALVIA NEWS

VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP

Website: www.salvias.org.au

Happy New Year to everyone!

This edition of *Salvia News* has some very interesting articles for your reading pleasure. There is a mounting interest in growing *Salvias* from seed and recent editions have given plenty of ideas for success. This edition, Pat Anderson has written about the buying of seed on the internet, a great read commencing on page 5. Look forward to hearing of your experiences after giving it a go. *Classifying Salvias*, also by Pat Anderson, gives an in depth look at the subject with drawings and lots of photos all from her impressive file commencing on page 8.

Salvias are more than just flowers and Herbalist Sandra Nanka from Queensland has given a very informative background that just may wet the appetite for more information. These and more articles should keep you busy for some time, and of course as a reference for later too.

I haven't managed as many visits to the *Salvia* Display Garden at Nobelius at Emerald as I would have liked and hopefully can do better this year. As I wandered the beds in November, I noticed quite a few new *Salvias* to my last visit. It's wonderful to be able to see them in a garden setting rather than just visualising how a particular *Salvia* or a *Salvia* garden would work in our own gardens. There was so much colour and variety.

It's worth a regular visit to see the changes of season. Remember this garden relies totally on rainfall to get watered. Maintenance is almost fully completed by Lyndi and Jillian with the occasional additional open gardening days throughout the year. These days are not only fun but a chance to see how to maintain the different varieties which also means that there are plenty of cuttings to take home for propagating for your own use. It's well worth your time and you will certainly enjoy the learning curve. Because some people aren't available on a Sunday, there is a Wednesday session too. Take a plate for sharing for a lunch together. The next Working Bees at the Nobelius Display Garden in Emerald are:
Sunday 29 March 11am-3pm
Wednesday 15 April 11am-3pm
Don't forget to let Lyndi know you are attending by either phoning 9803 4534 or emailing her.

lgarnett844@gmail.com

Hope the erratic weather over the summer months hasn't caused you too much damage and that you have enjoyed many pleasurable days in your garden.

Happy gardening,
Beth
beth.c@bigpond.com

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Check the VSSG website for more details and new events to come, www.salvias.org.au

Take your plant lists to events or email your list to Lyndi, lgarnett844@gmail.com

March 7/8 Saturday/Sunday 9am-4pm
Ferny Creek Horticultural Society's Annual Plant Collectors' Sale & Garden Expo

100 Hilton Rd, Ferny Creek. Mel:75 D1.

Salvia plants, books and seed for sale. Bring your list, bring plants to be identified Email your list to avoid disappointment

March 14 Saturday 11am
Julie Campbell's Birchwood near Benalla

653 O'Dea Rd, Molyullah

Come and visit a beautifully laid out garden with a comprehensive collection of Salvias and other interesting plants (as described Page 11/12 Salvia News Spring 2014 edition No 57). Tea/ Coffee will be provided, bring a plate to share and a chair. Julie will have Salvias and other plants for sale. Salvia books for sale. Meg will be present to sign your copy of her Manual.

Julie Campbell Phone 03 57 666275

juliecampbellcecil@gmail.com

March 29 Sunday 11am-3pm
Working Bee at Nobelius Salvia Display Garden

Nobelius Heritage Park, Crighton Rd, Emerald, [under The Packing Shed](#). Mel: 127 G4

Come and join the fun in maintaining our display garden. A chance to identify the Salvias in your garden and the opportunity to take home lots of cuttings. Bring a plate to share and a chair - gardening tools, wet weather gear if necessary, a hat and a large plastic bag for those cuttings. Please call Lyndi on 98034534 if coming up. All welcome

April 11 Saturday 10am-4pm
Jindivick Rare Plant Fair

The Jindivick Public Hall, Jackson Track. Mel: Touring Map 916 U6

Salvia plants, books and seeds will be on sale. Many other nurseries and stalls will also feature. Bring your list and plants to be identified. Email your list to Lyndi to avoid disappointment.

April 12 Sunday
Birchwood Near Benalla Autumn Display
653 O'Dea Rd, Molyullah.

Open to the Public for Cancer Council Victoria, Wangaratta Oncology Unit & Benalla Hospital \$6 entry; scone & tea/coffee \$4 – 100% to the charities. Parking on roadside, toilets open at Molyullah Hall. A sloping garden of one acre with large salvia collection (250 different salvias). Autumn Show includes dahlias, roses, flowering salvias, spreading lawns, range of perennials and dry creek bed area with native flora. Winding paths and various garden features, lawn areas and seating.

Recommends 2nd garden to visit: Salvia garden beds at Benalla Botanic Gardens / Benalla Gallery Café (adjoining gardens) has lunch deal for groups, bookings essential. Plant stall with large range of salvias (private)

Contact: Julie Campbell phone 03 57 666275

juliecampbellcecil@gmail.com

Website: birchwoodnearbenalla.com.au

April 15 Wednesday 11am-3pm
Working Bee at Nobelius Salvia Display Garden
Nobelius Heritage Park, Crighton Rd, Emerald, [under The Packing Shed](#), Mel: 127 G4

This is our midweek working bee for those who can't attend on weekends. Join us and have some fun while maintaining our display garden. It's a chance to identify the Salvias in your own garden and the opportunity to take home lots of cuttings. Bring a plate to share for lunch, a chair, gardening tools, wet weather gear if necessary, a hat and a large plastic bag for those cuttings. Please call Lyndi on 9803 4534 if coming. All welcome.

April 18/19 Saturday/Sunday 9am-4pm
Tesselaar Gardening Plant Expo

357 Monbulk Rd, Silvan. Mel: 123 B7 F3

Salvia plants, books and seeds for sale. Bring your list and plants to be identified. Email your list to avoid disappointment.

April 27 Monday 8pm
Ringwood Garden Club

Ringwood East Community Hall, Knaith Rd, Ringwood. Mel: 50 B8

Lyndi will be speaking. Bring plants to be identified. Salvia plants and books will be on sale.

May 17 Sunday 11am
Judy Percy's wonderful garden

25 Murray Rd, Croydon. Mel: 50 F2

Enjoy this beautiful, quirky garden with many special and unusual plants including plenty of Salvias. Tea and coffee will be provided. Bring a plate to share and a chair. RSVP essential, please ring (03) 9723 5069 if attending.

May 19 Tuesday 12.30pm
Frankston Garden Club

St Paul's Anglican Church, High St, Frankston

Lyndi will be speaking. Bring plants to be identified. Salvia plants and books will be on sale.

June 13 Saturday
RHSV Conference - Gardeners Day Out.

Check the website for more information closer to the event date.

Remember to check the website regularly for any changes, and additional information www.salvias.org.au Should you have any queries phone Lyndi Garnett, VSSG co-ordinator on 9803 4534 or email lgarnett844@gmail.com

The Joys & Pitfalls of buying Salvia Seed on the Internet

Pat Anderson, Warrandyte Vic

Collecting Salvias appears to be an all-consuming passion shared by several of us. Mad really. There is no logical reason, but then we all need to be passionate about something. Once we were all dependent on the specialists, who travelled abroad to source plants, bringing new plants and seed into the country, and then the long wait before they had enough stock to sell on. The Internet has changed all this and now, anyone can buy seed from anywhere and the number of sources grows all the time. To passionate salviaphyles, the ability to acquire new salvias faster, without waiting for others to do the work, brings a new thrill. BUT, buyers beware. There are pitfalls!

The first snag is the obvious one that is that the Australian Quarantine Authority (AQIS) will only allow us to bring in those species that are on the “already-in-the-country” list, established about 10 years ago, unless we are prepared to pay the huge cost of quarantine. As a result, some sources will not even send seed to Australia. Others will send seed but will leave out the banned ones, or the AQIS will open an envelope and remove any banned new ones. Not to worry. There are still plenty of species on the list to get hold of and there are nursery folk who are prepared to deal with the quarantine requirements.

As an aside, I had a funny experience some years ago when a reliable source sent me, among other things, seeds of *Salvia castanea*, but labelled as *S. castanea*. I received the rest of the seeds but these ones were

pulled out by AQIS. I rang AQIS, knowing that *S. castanea* was on the “already-here” list and should therefore be allowed. Their explanation of the removal was that *Castanea* was an agricultural crop. Indeed *Castanea* is – the edible Sweet Chestnut - but these seeds were clearly not large, brown, edible nuts! All that was required was a fax from the nursery source, explaining that *S. castanea* was actually *Salvia castanea* and I eventually got my seeds.

Secondly, you should try to establish how reliable a seed source actually is. Well established sources such as Seedhunt in the USA, Silverhill in South Africa and more recently, Robin Middleton in the UK, are all reliable, but because many salvias can hybridise, the buyer still has a responsibility to research the species they are buying, to germinate and grow the plants on to flowering and compare these with the expected outcome, before spreading something around that is not correct. As an example of responsible behaviour, Meg Bentley was sent some seed last year from a reliable Chinese source. She has since germinated the seed. However, before releasing these exciting plants, she has sent pressed sample back to China for confirmation of validity.

Even the most reliable and major seed suppliers, like Jellito in Europe, can make mistakes. Jellito and other sources have sold seeds labelled as *Salvia hians*, but no one appears to have been able to obtain the real McCoy to date. *Salvia hians* appears to be the Holy Grail of Salvia collectors. Even if the picture provided in a catalogue is

correct, if there is potential for hybridisation, the seeds may not be true. So, if reliable sources can make mistakes, just think how many more mistakes might be being circulated by the burgeoning availability of seed on e-Bay. Again, this is not to say that all sources of seed on eBay are unreliable, just buy with caution.

Other errors have led to incorrectly named plants being circulated by reliable nurseries. Some years ago, I purchased seed labelled *Salvia runcinata*. When I germinated these and the plants had obvious basal, albeit finely indented, foliage, I was told these must be wrong. It subsequently transpired that the small shrub, with fine, lime green foliage and tiny flowers that had been circulating in Australia as *Salvia runcinata*, was actually *Salvia namaensis* so my little plants of *S. runcinata* were actually true.

I have also had seed of *Salvia serpillifolia* that turned out to be a *Salvia microphylla* cross – or rather crosses. The results varied, one plant looking identical to *Salvia* ‘Christine Yeo’! No one has ever picked this up in my garden labelling. Saving seeds of the next generation has in turn given me a lovely range of magenta to purple flowering plants, which I like, and so I haven’t destroyed them. To me they are P1, P2, P3, etc., but they should not be available commercially. I also have a very pretty Chinese-type Salvia, which came from seed of *S. digitaloides* and should be yellow, but this one is a nice pale blue, but a ‘No-name’. And I have made mistakes too. I grew plants of *Salvia haenkii*

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The Joys & Pitfalls of buying Salvia Seed on the Internet

Pat Anderson, Warrandyte Vic

..continued from page 5

propagated easily and were slow to flower and some of these plants were shared around the group. BUT, shock horror, the result when it flowered was like a *S. longistyla* on steroids, and definitely not the true *Salvia haenkii*, more's the pity.

In the same way I have been given plants grown by others, following seed purchase, that have turned out to be incorrect. These include a *Salvia gracilis* that became *Salvia myriantha* 'Cerise', *Salvia exserta* that isn't even a *Salvia* and *Salvia* x 'May Night', which turned out to be *S. verbenaca*, a weed to be avoided.

So, which salvias have this potential to hybridise? The answer is many, within groups. Examples of groups are the *S. superba, sylvestris, nemerosa* group, the Chinese species like *S. przewalskii, dolicantha* and *evansiana*, the Mediterranean ones like *S. officinalis, fruticosa, pomifera, phlomoides*, and the Californian group (sometimes referred to as a sub genus *Audibertia*).

This brings me to the most important pitfall of buying and selling *Salvia* seed on-line or any other way for that matter. If you buy seed with a cultivar name – a name with part of it in inverted commas- eg. *Salvia greggii* 'Ciegno de Oro', *Salvia* 'Penny's Smile', *Salvia* 'Madeline', or *Salvia mexicana* 'Limelight,' to name just a few of the cultivars available as seed, the results are unlikely to come true, and even if they appear to do so, they should not carry the same name as the plant from which they came. To be fair, I've grown quite a few plants

from seed of *Salvia patens* 'Pink Ice' and the majority have turned out pink, but not all. It is safest to wait until they flower before passing them on to someone else, and then best to call them *Salvia patens* 'Pink', rather than 'Pink Ice', thus linking it to the source but without giving the exact cultivar name. Better still, seeds of cultivars should not be sold as such, only propagated vegetatively.

In summary, the take home message is: Buy seeds by all means, but buy with caution. Check the reliability of the source. Do your research about what the result should look like. Take the time to grow your plants on to flowering before passing them on to others. Finally, if the results aren't correct, they are yours to destroy or enjoy, whatever your choice might be, but if you don't destroy them, please don't give them the name of the seeds you bought

The New Book of SALVIAS by Betsy Clebsch

Book @ \$15 each x copies \$

Plus P&H \$9 per copy \$

Total \$

Please make cheques payable to **H.S.O.V. Salvia Study Group**

Send remittance and completed form to:

Salvia Study Group
844 Highbury Road,
Glen Waverley. Vic 3150

Enquiries phone VSSG Lyndi Garnett 9803 4534

PLEASE PRINT

Name:

Address:

State: Post code:

Phone:



Notes from Gruyere Autumn 2015

Meg Bentley

Happy New Year to everyone.

What perfect weather for gardens and gardening...while it rains or when the drizzle sets in and while the mornings are deliciously cool and fresh. It has also been an ideal time to propagate salvias and to pot up cuttings that have taken root, to which most of my mornings are taken up with these jobs in hand.

I have found that as long as the propagating medium (perlite with a small amount of soil mixed in) is kept damp then the cuttings will form roots very fast. It takes no time at all to fill a bench with potted up cuttings especially if they were placed 6-8 cuttings to a pot or tube stock with a single cutting and pot up into larger pots. Suddenly all the bench space is taken up and starts the constant juggle of moving those plants into a shaded area while established plants are put into open areas. Shade is still a necessity for the young soft growth because the sun is so hot when it does come out but eventually they will harden up and be moved out into the open.

When potting up the cuttings especially from the perlite mix I have found the best method is to have two containers on hand, one of diluted seaweed solution and the other to shake the perlite into as you tip out the cuttings and separate the fine roots. Trim off any roots that are longer than the top growth of the cutting so there is approximately an equal balance of root to top growth. Place a small amount of soil (potting mix) into the pot, carefully sit the cutting into the pot and gently backfill with potting mix tapping the side of the pot as you go and keeping the plant central. Don't plant the cutting at this stage too deep into the pot but keep the lower leaves just above the soil.

Many folk will want to push the soil around the plant at this stage...DON'T, it works much better if you thump the pot down onto the bench to help it settle in and that way the roots and soil work down together and you are not pushing the soil onto the roots and breaking them off as you push down. This can happen to many folk and the plant may die. Dunk the new potted up cutting into the seaweed solution and place in the shade to recover and settle in. Water overhead with extra seaweed solution. Large leaved plants will need to be watered more often than the grey leaved salvias so water them sparingly as needed.

I have been potting up some of the *Salvia aurea* cultivars and realized just how many come from our friend Trudi Fry. My favourite of course is the *Salvia aurea* 'Green Ginger', a compact bush with calyces of green (and stay that way) while the corolla is a bright gingery colour, unlike the paler terracotta colour of the species. Another one, called *Salvia aurea* 'Silver Lady' which was one of Trudi's specials is also a lower growing shrubby bush with silvery foliage. Then there is the prostrate growing form *Salvia aurea* 'prostrate form' which lays low to the ground with foliage fanning out on horizontal branches, similar to the cultivar *Salvia aurea* 'Bookleaf' but differs in as much as the leaves sit rather uniform like the pages of a book, hence the name.

Trudi's garden has not only brought about the aurea cultivars, how can we forget her beautiful *Salvia* 'Crimson and Black' or S. 'Snow White' which went so well with the Christmas red of her *Salvia* 'Holly'. How often one forgets how our plants came about, how they were named and by whom. There are many, many friends growing in my gardens, they become part of my life in my garden as do plants including their collectors from other countries. Many of the early spring flowering salvias are ready for a cut back or trim and a feed, no doubt this will be done in the days ahead. Mulching too, if there is enough to go around, which will greatly enhance the garden in readiness for a repeat Autumn flush of flowers...hopefully!

May we all get through the hot summer, when it does arrive, we may yet have a very hot February and March so I hope your gardens hold up well and continue to flourish. Happy gardening to everyone.

Classifying Salvias

Pat Anderson – January 2015

Why do people like to group things? Sometimes it can be helpful to simplify things. Sometimes it can help to show how things are related. In the case of plants, it can be helpful to know if one species is like another because it might need the same requirements in the garden or because it might readily cross with another in the same group.

With more than 900 species of *Salvia* in the world, it is not surprising that various botanists have tried over the years to group these into sections or subgenera. Such groupings have traditionally been based on the detailed shape of flower parts, especially the reproductive parts like the stamens and ovaries. The earliest classifications were, of course, based on far fewer species than are known today. Over the years, various improvements have been suggested to these original groupings but none of them have been entirely satisfactory.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, major advances were made in plant systematics (classification/taxonomy). These came about as scientists learnt more about genetics and could even watch cells splitting under powerful electron microscopes. Then, with the ability to sequence genetic information from plants and to analyse this information with powerful computers, a whole new approach became possible. This way of classifying plants is called cladistics, and I will write about it in a future article.

Some results from this new approach to sorting out relatedness of Salvias shows some parallels to the early descriptive efforts of botanists. Differences, however, are also emerging. Scientists are now developing clearer ideas of how the genus *Salvia* may have

developed. Inevitably the results suggest more radical ideas, such as the likelihood that *Salvia*, as a genus, might have evolved independently at least three times.

In this article I would like to describe some of the older ways people have grouped salvias and in an article in the next issue, I will describe the results of some of the exciting, recent research at the molecular level. Who knows? The outcome of this sort of research may completely re-define what a salvia is, possibly splitting the genus 3 ways and even incorporating other genera?

First of all, some context. The enormous genus *Salvia* belongs to the even larger family of plants known as Lamiaceae which embraces many of the lovely garden plants we enjoy: *Lavandula*, *Teucrium*, *Lepechinia*, *Nepeta*, *Stachys*, *Perovskia*, as well as many of the culinary herbs which are in common use in our kitchens: *Thymus*, *Ocimum*, *Rosmarinus*, *Satureja*, to name just a few. The features that are shared by most of these plants are several:

- Stems with quadrangular (square) cross section
 - Opposite leaves
 - 2-lipped flowers
 - hairs and aromatic oil glands
- but** Salvias are distinguished from other members of the family by also having:
- calyces with 2 lips and, more importantly

- a unique arrangement of the stamens, with a lever mechanism

While plants in the Lamiaceae family generally have 2 pairs of stamens, one pair usually shorter than the other, in *Salvia* there is only 1 pair. Not only that, but the special lever mechanism of this pair of stamens aids pollination, whether by insects or by birds.

The stamen is the male organ of a plant, each stamen comprising a filament capped by anthers where the pollen is formed. In the Lamiaceae family each stamen generally has 2 anthers, with connective tissue in between. Walker and Sytsma (2007) propose that the stamen arrangement in *Salvia* has evolved from other genera in the plant family in a 5-stage process. Most related plants have 2 pairs of stamens, one shorter than the other, as in stage 1 in Figure 1 below. They suggest that gradually, the shorter pair of stamens has disappeared as at Stage 2. Then, the connective tissue between the anthers has begun to elongate (Stage 3) and elongate more (Stage 4) until finally we have a situation with a short filament inside the flower tube with the connective see-sawing above it with 2 anthers towards the outside edge of the flower tube and the other 2 anthers inside the tube, either disappearing or being fused as shown in Stage 5.

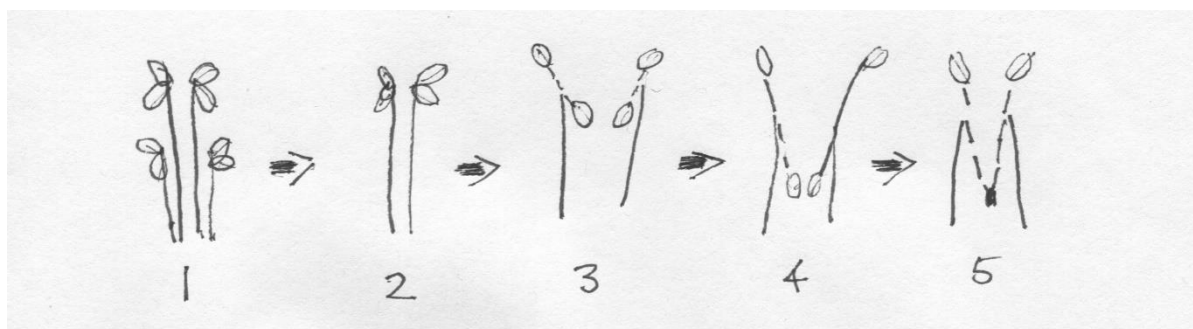


Figure 1. Generalised evolution of the staminal lever in *Salvia*. Stage 1 – 2 = loss of one pair of stamens. Stages 2 – 4 = gradual elongation of the connective tissue between the anthers. Stage 5: in some species, the posterior anthers become fused

This lever mechanism greatly assists pollination. When a pollinator, whether an insect or a bird, tries to push its way into a *Salvia* flower tube to seek nectar at the base, it has to force its way past the posterior (inside) end of this stamen arrangement. In doing so (see Fig 2), this end is forced up, making the outer end with the pollen-bearing anthers deposit pollen on the bird's head or bee's back, whichever is the case. This pollen then rubs off onto the stigma (female part) of the next flower the pollinator visits.

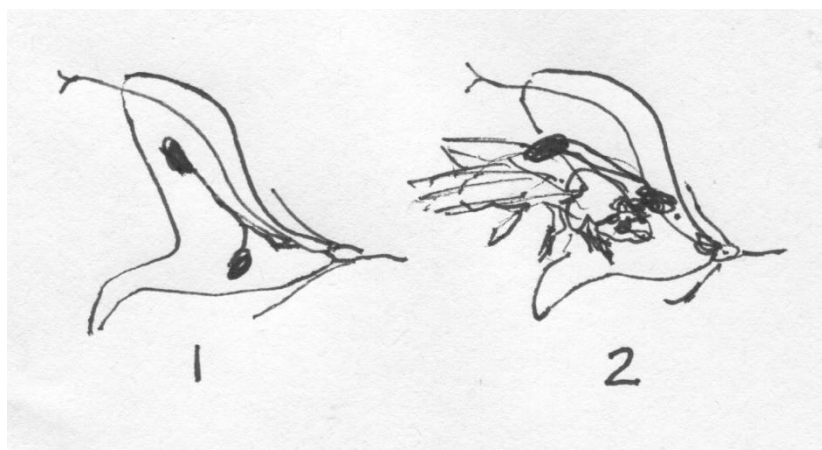


Figure 2. Generalised Pollination process by an insect in a salvia. As the insect pushes its head into the flower tube, the posterior (sterile) anther is pushed up by the insect's head and pollen is deposit the back of the insect from the fertile, anterior anther. This pollen will subsequently rub off onto the stigma of the next flower the insect visits.

George Bentham was the great 19th century botanist who, among many achievements, made a global study of the various genera and species of the Lamiaceae family (known then as Labiatae). Based primarily on differences in stamen shape and detail, he grouped the nearly 300 *Salvia* species known at the time into four subgenera. Two of these were Old World (Europe, Africa & Asia) subgenera, which he called *Salvia* and *Sclarea*, one was in the New World (the Americas) which he called *Calosphace* and one spanned the Old and New Worlds, which he called *Leonia*. He ultimately divided these into 12 sections (1876). His classification was based on a few factors including stamen morphology.

By the twentieth century, some 500 species in the New World subgenus *Calosphace* had been discovered, compared to the 156 in Bentham's time, and Carl Epling (1939) set about revising this subgenus, breaking the species down into 91 sections, based on several factors including:

- the number of flowers in a glomerule
- persistence or not of floral bracts
- number of veins in the upper lip of the calyx
- proportion of upper lip to lower lip
- invaginated nature of the corolla tube
- inclusion/exclusion of stamens
- nature of the stamen connective
- proportions and shape of style branches
- hairiness/smoothness of the style

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CLASSIFYING SALVIAS – Pat Anderson

continued from page



Figure 3. *Salvia cyanescens*



Figure 4. *Salvia pratensis* form



Figure 5. *Salvia castanea*



Figure 6. *Salvia nanchuanensis*



Figure 7. *Salvia aurea* (syn *africana lutea*)



Figure 8. *Salvia aurita*



Figure 9. *Salvia serpyllifolia*



Figure 10. *Salvia clevelandii*



Figure 11. *Salvia oxyphora*

CLASSIFYING SALVIAS



Figure 12 *Salvia purpurea*



Figure 13 *Salvia semiatrata*



Figure 14 *Salvia haenkii*

This revision has been widely referred to since its publication. There are some obvious similarities between species within some of his groupings. For example, his section *Hastatae* includes *Salvia. macrophylla*, *S. sagittata* and *S. scutellarioides*. However, *S. cacaliifolia*, which to me looks very similar, is in a stand-alone section, *Standleyana*. Ninety one sections is also a fairly unwieldy number to work with.

Other botanists have completed other revisions, such as that of Ian Hedge concerning the *Salvia* species of Africa and the Canary Islands (1974).

Christian Froissart (2008) has suggested another simplified classification of 16 subdivisions of *Salvia*, linked to the various sections proposed by Bentham and additional ones described by Stibal. This system is based on 8 different shapes of the lower lip of the calyx and 6 stamen types and he has provided a key to determining a type, together with pictures of the different calyx and stamen types. His system has some merits in that he allocates each of the species described in his book to one of these subdivisions. But, the book is in French.

Possibly of more use to ordinary gardeners with an interest in *Salvias* is the descriptive approach taken by Christine Yeo in her useful little books published in 1995 and 1997. Yeo defines three groups of *Salvias* from the Old World and three from the New World. However, her groupings to me embrace too great a variation to be useful. For example, her **Group 1** includes plants with foliage in a basal clump, or rosette, from which flowering stems arise in spring to early summer, with few or no stem leaves. Examples are *S. pratensis*, *S. argentea*, *S. aethiopsis*, *S. barrelieri*, *S. sclarea*, *S. austriaca*, *S. staminea*, *S. canescens*, *S. cyanescens*, *S. przwalskii* and *S. castanea*. I would group these latter two Asian *salvias* separately as the flowers are quite different. Similarly, her **Group 2** with shrubby plants, similar to common sage, many with grey foliage, includes plants which are not really shrubby, like *S. candelabrum*, *S. blancoana*, *S. jurisicii*, *S. fruticosa*, *S. tomentosa* and *S. algeriensis* (an annual).

Another possible way of grouping some *salvias* could be by location, at the same time grouping plants that show similarities, as well as including members that are known to hybridise. This isn't of course a comprehensive classification, just my suggestion.

Continued on page 12

CLASSIFYING SALVIAS – Pat Anderson

continued from page 12

| location | Rough description | Some examples * denotes photo included |
|---------------|--|--|
| Mediterranean | Aromatic, basal foliage, often grey, putting up flowering stems in spring, with or without stem leaves, stems sometimes branched | <i>S. officinalis</i> , <i>S. fruticosa</i> , <i>S. aethiopsis</i> , <i>S. palaestina</i> , <i>S. cyanescens</i> * (Fig. 3), <i>S. sclarea</i> , <i>S. candidissima</i> |
| Europe | Foliage in basal rosettes, denser inflorescence than above, upper lip falcate (sickle-shaped) | <i>S. pratensis</i> * (Fig. 4), <i>S. nemerosa</i> , <i>S. sylvestris</i> , <i>S. superba</i> . There are many crosses from these parents such as 'Blue Hills', 'Lambley Dumble' |
| Asia | Basal clumps of foliage, sometimes winter dormant. Fattish corolla tubes | <i>S. nubicola</i> , <i>S. castanea</i> * (Fig. 5), <i>S. przewalskii</i> , <i>S. trijuga</i> |
| Asia | Compound leaves | <i>S. plectranthoides</i> , <i>S. japonica</i> , <i>S. miltiorrhiza</i> , <i>S. nanchuanensis</i> (Fig. 6)* |
| South Africa | Shrubby, often grey leaves, calyces expanding as seeds develop | <i>S. aurea</i> (syn <i>africana lutea</i>)* (Fig. 7), <i>S. lanceolata</i> , <i>S. muiirii</i> |
| South Africa | Low plants, often spreading. Indented leaves | <i>S. aurita</i> * (Fig. 8), <i>S. repens</i> , <i>S. scabra</i> |
| Mexico | Small leaved sub-shrubs. Insect pollinated | <i>S. greggii</i> , <i>S. microphylla</i> , <i>S. serpillifolia</i> (Fig. 9)*, <i>S. dichlamys</i> |
| California | Dry tolerant shrubs. flowers arranged in whorls | <i>S. apiana</i> , <i>S. clevelandii</i> *(Fig. 10), <i>S. leucophylla</i> , <i>S. munzii</i> |
| The Americas | Huge, diverse range of showy plants, often with large, tubular flowers pollinated by birds | <i>S. guaranitica</i> , <i>S. oxyphora</i> (Fig. 11)*, <i>S. purpurea</i> (Fig. 12)*, <i>S. semiatrata</i> *, <i>S. leucantha</i> , <i>S. littae</i> , <i>S. haenkii</i> *, <i>S. regla</i> , This list is huge and there are sub groups within that are known to hybridise. Too hard Basket! |

In summary, there may be many ways to group plant species, none of which is necessarily useful to gardeners except the gardener who wants to understand how the plants have evolved or the keen horticulturalist who wants to find plants that may hybridise easily. Surely the DNA of a species is the key to both of these outcomes. So, in the next article I will describe some current research in this area.

\

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Salvia - not just a pretty flower!

Sandra Nanka

Mudbrick Cottage Herb Farm, Mudgeeraba, Qld

www.herbcottage.com.au

While I do love the beautiful flowers, colours and shapes of the many salvias we grow, I am as always, interested in a plants' usefulness. Can it be used for cooking; to add flavour and yumminess or help digest a meal? Do they have medicinal properties, or strong fragrances that can be utilized in some way? I know the flower nectar of salvias are very important food for bees, butterflies and in South America – humming birds. I also think it is really important to have 'food for the eyes' in the garden and salvias certainly add beauty, sometimes in a rough disorganized way, which suits me fine.

Salvias belong to the family Lamiaceae and are commonly aromatic herbs with square stems, the leaves opposite or whorled, most often simple but occasionally pinnately compound. The flowers are bisexual and zygomorphic (having only one plane of symmetry, bilaterally symmetrical). The largest genera of the family Lamiaceae is Salvia, with up to 900 known species.

The name of the genus, Salvia, is derived from the Latin *salvere*, to be saved and this reflects the wide ranges of medicinal uses for the many varieties of Salvia. This name was corrupted popularly to Sauja and Sauge (the French form), in Old English, 'Sawge,' which has become our present-day name of Sage.

Sage *Salvia officinalis*

Common garden sage has a long history of culinary use. Sage is perfect for using in traditional chicken stuffing or with other meats, such as pork and sausages. Sage is also used in vinegars and as a garnish for salads, cheeses and butter.

Common garden sage is an extremely potent herb and has a broad range of medicinal uses. Women have used sage for menstrual problems, during menopause, to dry up milk flow when nursing is to cease (not for use during pregnancy or breastfeeding). Sage may also be used to aid digestive and gastric problems, including heartburn. There is growing evidence for the usefulness of sage for memory problems and there may be some benefit for depression. Sage is also anti-microbial and anti-inflammatory and has benefits when used topically for cold sores and as a gargle for other mouth problems.

Red Sage *Salvia miltiorrhiza*

Red sage is native to China, growing in grassy places in forests, as well as hilltops and alongside stream banks. Its species name *miltiorrhiza* means "red juice extracted from a root" it often goes by the name red rooted sage and is known as Dan shen in Chinese medicine. It is a deciduous perennial with branching stems up to 80cm, with widely spaced leaves that are both simple and divided. Flowers form in whorls that are light purple to lavender blue with a dark purple calyx. In Chinese medicine it is used to 'invigorate the blood' and 'remove excess heat' particularly from the heart and liver. It is used for coronary heart disease, poor circulation, palpitations, irritability, insomnia, breast abscesses, mastitis conditions caused by blood stagnation primarily those affecting the lower abdomen such as period pain, fibroids and

menstrual problems. Its sedative action – calms nerves and is helpful for treating angina, palpitations, insomnia and irritability which are all made worse from anxiety and worry. Do not take if you are on anti-coagulant and anti-platelet drugs, bleeding tendency, pregnancy. Use only as prescribed by a qualified health practitioner.

Chia *Salvia hispanica*

This annual salvia has seeds that are a very rich source of omega-3 essential fatty acids as well as the beneficial long-chain triglycerides that help maintain the proper wall flexibility of cells and restore the proper cholesterol /triglyceride ratio. Chia is a rich source of both soluble and insoluble dietary fibre. Soluble fibre has many benefits, including moderating blood glucose levels and lowering cholesterol. Insoluble fibre offers many benefits to intestinal health, including regular gut function and can reduce the risk and occurrence of colon cancer. Chia seeds can be sprinkled over salads, cereals and muesli or incorporated into breads, muffins, slices, cookies or porridge. Chia Gel - When mixed with water (ratio - 1 tablespoon of seeds to 1 cup of water), it forms a unique nourishing gel that can be added to smoothies, juices, breakfast shakes, herbal teas, yoghurt, soups, salad dressing or sauces.

Clary Sage *Salvia sclarea*

The English name Clary is derived from the Latin 'sclarea', which is from the word 'clarus' meaning 'clear'. This was due to the use of the plant to clear eyes, and the name clary eventually became 'clear eye' in many areas. The green-grey leaves are, huge! They are 30cm long at the base and may be up to 50cm long as they move up the stems, and as wide as

Salvia - not just a pretty flower! *Sandra Nanka*

..continued from page 13

a hand span in some cases. The leaves are arranged in pairs around the hair covered, square brownish stems. They are oblong and heart shaped with wrinkled, velvet like texture and toothed margins. The summer blooming flowers are held in bracts that range in colour from pale mauve to lilac and extend up long, loose terminal spikes. Clary Sage has a strong tradition of medicinal use and is used by herbalists today, as an essential oil and used treating depression, anxiety and fear, as an antispasmodic, and to treat menstrual concerns. The seeds have a mucilaginous coat and when crushed make a sticky paste that may be placed in the eye to help adhere to the offending object.

White sage *Salvia apiana*

The flower stalks bear small white to lavender flowers. The long, grey or silvery white leaves are highly aromatic when crushed and lend white sage its name. The plant is also called 'apiana' because of the great bee attractant qualities. Native American uses for white sage included using leaves as a source of flavouring in meal preparation. They also ground up the seeds and mixed with flour to create porridge and biscuits. The seeds, roots and leaves are all edible. The traditional medicinal uses of white sage by Native Americans included as a cold remedy, for fevers and painful or heavy menstruation and for healing and strength after childbirth. It was also reputed to rid the body of foul odours when the leaves were crushed and rubbed all over the body. Warm sage tea is said to be good for sore throats and cold tea for stomach aches. The seeds were also used to remove foreign objects from the eyes, much like Clary sage in Europe. White sage infusions can be used as a rinse for shiny hair and to reduce grey hair. The grey foliage is also very useful in decorative wreaths and potpourri.

Salvia Lyrata is a medicinal and edible herb. As alternative medicine, it is carminative, diaphoretic, laxative, and salve. Lyre-leaved sage has some of the same medicinal properties of the other sages but not as strong in its action. It is used mainly as a gargle in the treatment of sore throat and mouth infections. Medicinal salve made from the root is applied to sores. Warm infusion of herb is taken as a laxative or for colds, coughs and nervous debility. This sage is not very strong tasting, and has a rather pleasant minty flavor, fresh young leaves are edible in salads, or cooked as pot herb.

Pineapple sage *Salvia elegans*

A hardy dense bush with striking red, flower spikes. The leaves and flowers are both edible and may be used as part of salads or as garnishes. They are a nice addition to fruit salads as the crushed leaves will impart a pineapple aroma. They can also be used in cold soups, to garnish cool drinks and iced or herbal teas. An interesting idea is to mix chopped leaves with cream cheese for a tasty spread.

Fruity Sage *Salvia dorisiana*

The fuzzy, vibrant lime green leaves are heart shaped. The flowers are a strong magenta pink colour with green calyces. Fruity Sage is known for its intoxicating fragrance, which has been described as reminiscent of many fruits! The leaves, as well as much of the plant, are covered in tiny hairs, giving an overall fuzzy appearance, which release oils when crushed or brushed against in the garden. Some culinary uses for Fruity Sage include using the leaves and flowers in salads, fruits salads, iced teas and fruit punches. The dried leaves retain the fragrance and also make very nice wreaths and potpourri.

Salvia somalensis

The long, lime green leaves have a clear central vein and are an oblong shape with a rugose, or textured appearance. They are about 10cm long, 2.5 cm wide and arch or curl back gracefully, giving the whole plant a characteristic graceful appearance. When crushed the leaves give off a sticky residue and a menthol fragrance. The blue flowers are quite large, with a white splash in the centre. Appearing from summer to autumn, they grow in tight whorls of many flowers or inflorescences at the end of the stems. Some research has been undertaken into the suitability of this plant's essential oils for use in cosmetics. It appears that the unique fragrance, described as 'peculiar olfactory characteristics', may be particularly useful for men's perfumes and body detergents.

Salvia chamelaeagnea

An evergreen shrub growing to 2 meters. The leaves are green, slightly hairy and occasionally have toothed margins. The leaves also have tiny dots or glands which emit a strong scent and exude a bitter tasting, sticky substance when touched. The flowers are held in thick whorls and take up the top third of each stem or branch, colour can range from blue, mauve, pink or white. This plant has been used for

Salvia - not just a pretty flower!

medicinal purposes such as treating coughs and colds, colic and heartburn. A tea may be made by chopping the leaves finely and steeping in a cup of boiling water.

Salvia involucrata is a tall, woody stemmed perennial growing up to 4 meters in ideal conditions. It is quite wide, with an arching habit. The dark green leaves are smooth and heart shaped have long stalks and grow to about 10cm in length. The flowers have two lips and conspicuous pink bracts that fall off as the flowers grow bigger. The name 'involucrata' refers to the prominent, large and colourful bracts. Like many other salvias, *S. involucrata* has been used traditionally as a memory enhancer. Scientific studies have indicated that there are several compounds present in extracts of this salvia that have an affinity with acetylcholine receptors in the cerebral cortex.

Salvia africana-caerulea

It is known as a compact perennial shrub in Australia growing about 60cm wide and 60-80cm high. Both

leaves and stems are very hairy and the plant releases a strong scent when crushed. The leaf colour is generally green, but they may take on a blue grey tone and are generally lighter underneath. They are two toned, with pale blue and mauve lobes and a beeline of dots running down into the throat. *Salvia africana-caerulea* was one of the first plants to be used by the Dutch settlers upon arrival in South Africa. It was used medicinally and for flavouring food because it was seen as a good replacement for common sage. It was used by early settlers as a tea mixed with Epsom salts and lemon juice to treat stomach complaints such as colic, indigestion, diarrhoea and heartburn. The Khosian people also used the plant to treat coughs, colds and women's ailments. When mixed with other plants it was used to treat fever and measles. The leaves have a mild antiseptic effect and can be used externally. A brew forms a useful mouthwash and gargle for sore throats.

This is just a small insight into the many uses of these interesting genera of plants.



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SALVIA STUDY GROUP 2014 REVIEW

Lyndi Garnett – VSSG Co-ordinator

2014 was another very busy and successful year for the Group beginning in March with the CWA Annual Fete and Ferny Creek's Garden Expo, another extremely busy weekend in April at Tesselaar's where we almost sold out. A few weeks later saw us at the Jindivick Festival which is gaining the home gardener's attention.

The cooler months are always a little quiet, but May saw us visiting some beautiful, well nurtured gardens, everyone was impressed and went home with plenty of ideas for their own gardens. We didn't have our usual Plant Identification day in June, this was replaced by a very comprehensive and very useful Photo/computer session at Patrick's home. As there was so much interest for those struggling to take photos or send them via email we might have another session.

June was the RHS annual Conference which again was very successful with very good quality speakers and a huge array of prizes to be won in the raffle.

The weather was fabulous for The Spring Festival in September with Pakenham and Redhill, they were both very successful, a good start to Spring, so much better than last year where it was freezing and rained out.

October saw us invited to a new Festival in Ivanhoe. Although small, it was very well attended. Looking at the high quality and variety of stalls, this is a venue that we hope to attend next year.

November always begins with the Rose Show and later our Annual sale of Salvias at Nobelius. This is a really good time of the year to see the Nobelius Salvia Display Garden as there was so much good growth and the gardens were in full bloom. None of this would have been possible if weren't for the hard working crews that help out at our working bees. All that work of weeding, pruning and planting makes a huge difference to our Display Garden.

We also had a very busy year on the speaker circuit and while I did the lion's share of the talks to Garden Clubs, I very much appreciated being helped by Gordon, Patrick and Meg filling in and spreading the word. This year I was finally able to produce a Power point presentation with the help of a few friends. This was a godsend as I could finally show people what each Salvia looked like instead of holding up pictures and flowers that no one could see. Gordon jumped in at the deep end and took on the Propagating days at his home, helping to provide a constant supply of Salvias for the various garden events.

Our Xmas Lunch at the Anderson's garden was dry, (not one bit of rain), very lively with the meeting of old friends and of course our usual scrumptious spread of food. The garden was without exception wonderful – so much to see and look at, with so many new species and varieties of Salvias that most of us only dream about.

Another year already here, the calendar is fast filling up, we have been planning events for the year ahead. I'd like to say thankyou for all the support we've had from all our subscribers throughout 2014 at all of our events. We look forward to seeing and hearing from you in 2015.

Newsletter submissions

We love hearing from you, what works for you in your garden, gardens you have visited locally to you, interstate or overseas, your Salvia finds. Please share your experiences. Email me beth.c@bigpond.com or post to Beth Clisby 3 Creebank View, Lakeside, Pakenham 3810

A simple way is send me a letter and tell me as if I was sitting across the table from you.

If you would like to share but need some help, don't hesitate to email me or call me 0400 727 225. Don't forget if you phone that I have voice impairment as part of my disability deterioration and often sound cross or upset when I am not. Remember that I mostly don't even know so please just ignore. Please give it a try.

Beth

Editor, Salvia News.

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Salvia Group Christmas Party 2014

Patrick Hogan, Ferntree Gully Vic



Pat Anderson kindly allowed the Victorian Salvia Study Group to host the end of year Christmas party at her beautiful manicured property. As this was my first visit to Pat's garden I was expecting great things. Believe me when I say that I was absolutely mesmerised by the fantastic layout of the garden and the health of all her Salvias.

Unfortunately the weather on the morning may have deterred some people from attending, but by the time we got there until we left, we had no rain.

How do I describe the garden – well if you want to see a collection of the very best of Salvias in an idyllic setting – make sure you visit Pats garden next time it is open. To complement the beautiful garden of Salvias Pat's husband, John has numerous articles of garden ornaments around the garden.

As usual plenty of scrumptious food was available and lots of Salvias were provided by subscribers to take home. A truly memorable garden that provided a very nice backdrop for the Christmas end of year get together.

Thank you Pat and John for once again hosting the Victorian Salvia Study Group. Some photographs of the day are included. What a wonderful way to finish up the year.



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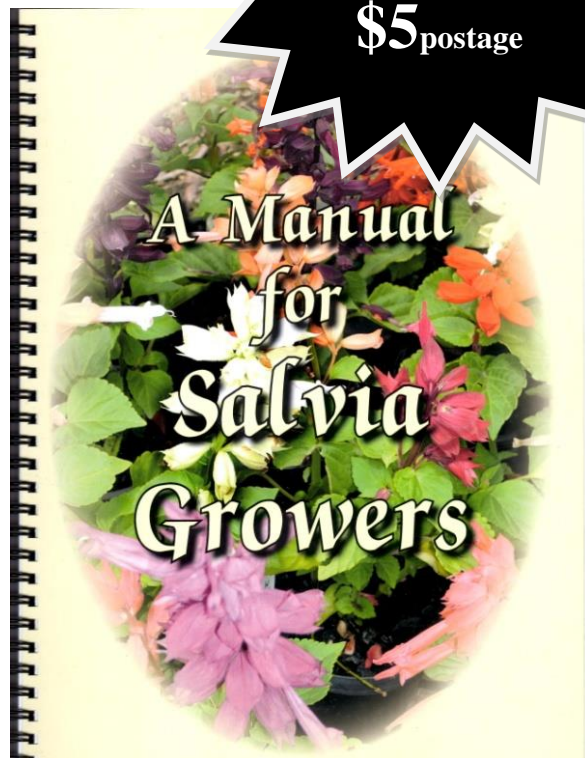
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