

# Salvia News

NUMBER 82



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

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

Autumn 2021

# VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP 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
4. Maintain our Display Garden at Nobelius Heritage Park for the Group & the general public
5. Manage our website and Facebook page

The Group is a Not for Profit Organisation. Any monies received are used to run the Group's activities and for the planting and maintenance of our GPCAA (Garden Plants Conservation Association of Australia) registered garden collection. ('Plants Trust' has been a shortened, more comprehensive name for the GPCAAA and has been used for quite a while now).

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# SALVIA NEWS

VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP INC

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

Welcome to the Autumn edition of Salvia News. I am feeling very confident with being the editor after a shaky start. Apologies to Stephanie Rendell, the last editor, as I incorrectly typed in Summer 2020/2021 on page 18 (a lovely boy girl) which should have read (a lovely baby girl, Penelope). Also, on page 1 I referred to Lyndi as Lyndi Garrett. I certainly have seen and spoken to Lyndi many times and I know her name is Garnett.

As I am typing the final text into the newsletter the rain has been falling gently all day. I am so happy that my water tank is again full and all the gardens are looking stunning due to the cooler summer and frequent rain.

This edition is packed with fabulous reading. Pat Anderson has written 'A bit of Botany – Part 2'. Sandra Nanka from The Perennial Poppies Group Inc. introduces us to her salvia garden at Mudbrick Herb Cottage and more information on propagation from Geoff Crowhurst.

And the articles from our regular writers Fiona Williams, Heather Lucas and Tine Grimston are always very entertaining. We enjoyed the Christmas lunch and AGM, but it was quite sad that we were restricted with numbers because of coronavirus. Hopefully, I will meet more members at upcoming events.

Please look at the website for the Salvia Study Group – [www.salvias.org.au](http://www.salvias.org.au) as there is valuable information to help with salvias. Look on Facebook for up to date photographs of the flowering salvias for each season.

Happy Gardening,



*Julie*

Editor Salvia News

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**Copy deadline for the next  
edition of Salvia News is  
23 April 2021**

Please email your articles and photos to:  
[julie.salvia.news@gmail.com](mailto:julie.salvia.news@gmail.com)

**Cover photo is *Salvia karwinskii* x  
*involucrate* 'Winter Red'**

Winter Red flowers nearly all year round in some circumstances. Bright cherry red flowers with fragrant, felted dark green leaves. Hardy to the dry, heat, cold and light frost.

**Photo courtesy of Gillian Barkell**

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Garden Visits** are great opportunities to meet with members and explore some special gardens.

**Selling events** are opportunities to purchase salvia plants, books and seed. You can also bring plants/flowers to be identified. Many of the selling events are parts of larger fairs and shows. Remember to take your plant lists to events or email your list to Lyndi Garnett prior to the event so you are not disappointed. Please note that ☼ means it is a selling event.

**If you are attending events, please also let Lyndi know on 98034534.** Some events need to know numbers and some events will require a register of those attending.

**SUNDAY 14 MARCH:**

**GARDEN VISIT TO BRETT HORAN'S LOVELY GARDEN  
37 MACCLESFIELD RD, EMERALD AT 11AM**

After being cancelled last year, Brett is again opening his garden. Come and see a lovely colourful garden is packed full plants and surprises around every corner.

Tea/Coffee supplied. **Bring a plate to share and a chair.** Please phone Brett if coming on 0405762123. All members welcome.

**17 & 18 APRIL**

**YARRA VALLEY AUTUMN PLANT FAIR ☼**

**Quayle Rd, Wandin 10am-4pm each day**

Lots of stalls full of an exciting range of plants for all gardeners.

Come and see our range of salvias for this year. As we couldn't sell last year, we have plenty of stock for sunny, shady positions, groundcovers, small plants for pots, tall screening salvias, autumn and winter flowering salvias all waiting to be snapped up. Pre order now so you don't miss out. These will be put aside for pick up on the day.

Browse through the website [www.salvias.org.au](http://www.salvias.org.au) for more of what you are wanting. Email lists to Lyndi or contact Lyndi prior to the event, pre order to avoid disappointment: [lgarnett844@gmail.com](mailto:lgarnett844@gmail.com).

**SUNDAY 9 MAY**

**GARDEN VISIT AMANDA HABGOOD  
106 Victoria Rd, Wandin North at 11am**

After being cancelled last year, Amanda is again opening her garden. Come and see a lovely spacious garden. In May, her garden should be showing all those wonderful autumn colours and her salvias still should be in full bloom.

Come and join us wandering around her garden, chatting to others whilst watching her ducks wagging their tails and dipping into the pond.

Tea/Coffee supplied. **Bring a plate to share and a chair.** Please phone Amanda if coming on 0405762123.

All members welcome.

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS (contd.)

## SATURDAY 19 JUNE GARDENER'S DAY OUT

**Rusden Theatre, Deakin University, Burwood Hwy, Burwood at 9.30am.**

It's on again, after being cancelled and disappointing the gardening community last year. But the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria has three great speakers to show you what is happening in horticulture and how to improve your garden.

*Remember to check the website regularly for any changes and additional information.*

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

# INTERESTING SALVIA

## Mexicana Tribe

*S. mexicana* major  
*S. mexicana* 'Limelight'  
*S. mexicana* 'Little Limelight'  
*S. mexicana* 'Lolly'  
*S. mexicana* Lolita  
*S. mexicana* minor  
*S. mexicana* 'Snowflake'  
*S. mexicana* 'Bill Whitehead'  
*S. mexicana* 'Kieran'

*S. mexicana* 'Lolly'



The mexicana tribe of Salvias (are an interesting and very distinctive group of shrubs. Most are large rounded, bushy shrubs growing to about 2.5 – 3m H, and having a good spread of about 2m wide, some are smaller, but most have a spreading habit except 'Snowflake' which has an upright habit.

They have very distinctive leaves, all having a wide almost squashed heart shaped leaf. Often the base is oblique (one side of the leaf is longer than the other). They usually have very long leaf stems and the venation is very distinct

The growth habit is the flower stem appears in the middle of two side shoots. These can often be at odd angles and not always carry a growing shoot, but rather a stem of leaves and flowers.

They are among the earliest of the Autumn Salvias to flower. They produce some of the most wonderful flowers with interesting coloured calyces. All have the same blue corolla with a hint of mauve, except ('Snowflake') but many have different coloured calyces.

When in bud, the unopened calyx looks crimped together. The bud doesn't seem to be in the nodding position as in many other large Salvias, but rather grows from between two side shoots and two large leaves.

More information about Mexicana tribe will be available in the Winter Edition.



## MAIL ORDER SHOPPING

(postage prices within Australia)

*Ideas for gift giving or keeping*

### A Manual for Salvia Growers By Meg Bentley

**\$30** per copy *Plus* \$10 per copy posted

Order form for this item is on inside back cover of Salvia News



### Salvia Cards - Meg Bentley

**\$10** per pack (5 single flower or 5 assorted)  
*Plus* \$2.50 per pack posted

- ..... Assorted packs
- or Single Flower packs -
- ..... *Salvia patens*
- ..... *Salvia roemeriana*
- ..... *Salvia microphylla var neurepia*
- ..... *Salvia gesneraeflora* 'Tequila'
- ..... *Salvia leucantha*
- ..... **Total packs @ \$10 per pack \$.....**

*Plus* \$2.50 per pack posted \$ .....

**TOTAL COST OF ORDER**                      **\$ \_\_\_\_\_**

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844 Highbury Road,  
Glen Waverley Vic 3150  
*Enquiries to: Lyndi Garnett (03) 9803 4534*

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Name:.....

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Suburb/Town: ..... State: ..... Post code: ..... Phone:.....

# FROM OUR NETWORKS

There is much that can be learnt from our friends, extended networks and industry partners. We are pleased to be able to share....

## NEWS FROM SOUTHWEST QUEENSLAND

**Sandra Nanka**

**The Perennial Poppies Group Inc.**

**Mudbrick Herb Cottage**

Here in Mudgeeraba, southeast Queensland, we have had some good rain. After a dry November with not one drop, December brought 549mm. Our dam is full, grass is green and the garden is growing profusely and so are the weeds. The salvias are responding enthusiastically, and many are in full bloom adding their colour to our garden.

The standouts for us at the moment are *Salvia involucrata* 'Joan' (she always looks nice). At the moment, she is covered in cerise pink flowers and the darker calyx sets off the colour nicely. Joan grows to 1.5m in our garden and bushes out to about the same. It won't be long before she will get a much-needed cut back. *S.* 'Mystic Spires' looks stunning. Its upright habit makes it a tidier plant than its larger sister, 'Indigo Spires'. 'Mystic Spires' grows to 80 cm tall and 50cm wide. Its parents are *S. longispicata* and *S. farinacea*.

We have *Salvia farinacea* growing in our carpark garden. I used to think they were annuals, but obviously not, as we have had ours for about 5 years now. We cut them back a couple of times a year and they come back beautifully. The purple/blue flowers put on a great show for visitors for most of the year. All the varieties of *Salvia microphylla* are putting on a great show. Some of the flowers are so intensely coloured that I find them hard to photograph with my phone. I love the softer colour of 'Angel Wings' with its two-toned pink flowers and dark calyces. The baby sage also commands my attention, sitting neatly on the edge of the border

covered with so many deep pink flowers and if you like white flowers you can't go past 'Peg'.



Then there is 'Easter Bonnet' which I keep thinking is a microphylla but it is a *Salvia greggii*. The flower is so interesting with the pink hairs on the hood of the white/creamy flowers and attached to the plant with the greenish black bracts. *Salvia radula* is another white flowered salvia that has grown quite well for us. I love the bigger aromatic leaves and the flower heads that stand up above the foliage.

*Salvia splendens* 'Ellie' is another favourite that is still flowering beautifully. At almost

2m high, she demands to be seen. I love the flower colour, coral pink-red with a long tubular section and small lip at the end. The bracts are slightly darker, with a brown-red tone that seems to deepen as the flowers open. Only just starting to flower now, *Salvia confertiflora* is a bit different to most salvias. Its iridescent orange flowers are surrounded by deep reddish brown, velvet-like fuzzy calyces. From a distance, it looks like the colour of terracotta bricks. The flower stems are quite long and stand up above the foliage. The leaves are dark green with serrated edges. This salvia can grow to 1.8m tall. I do love blue flowering plants and *Salvia pallida* is starting to flower now. The powder blue flowers are held in lavender calyces on tall flower spikes. The leaves are long and oval shaped with scalloped edges, ending in a pointed tip. Another blue flowering variety I am fond of is bog sage (*Salvia uliginosa*). I know it gets out of control but I love to see

the flowering stems swaying in the garden. I will finish with *Salvia nubicola*; **nubicola** means 'dweller among the clouds'. It sounds quite romantic to me. We have had this in the garden for almost 2 years now. It flowered back in September and is coming into flower again now. It dies down a bit in winter but comes back strongly. The leaves are triangular in shape and quite large near the base. The whorls of flowers sit above the leaves and are yellow with maroon dots on the upper lip. It reaches to 1m high, when in flower. There are many more in flower now; too many to mention here. As you all know salvias are so wonderful to add colour to the garden.

**From the editor:** I know that it gets away from you in a bog, but in drier circumstances, it may be difficult to grow.

## Guess this Salvia flowering in Autumn...

- I am a tough hardy plant but can tolerate winter cold and a mild frost.
- My flowers are pink/mauve.
- I like sun but not fussy about soil but prefer a well-drained soil.
- My leaves are hastate shaped, grey/green, growing up to 60-70cm long and 30cm wide.
- I am... (turn to page 15 for the answer).

## CLOUDEHILL NURSERY AND GARDEN

I was fortunate to visit Cloudehill, 89 Olinda-Monbulk Rd, Olinda, Victoria late January, and discovered quite a few changes in the garden beds. Cloudehill is part of The Diggers Club.

The garden bed I was interested in was a new grass garden laid out below Seasons Restaurant. Intermingled with the grasses were many salvias. I am excited about what they will look like in six months time.

If you have time, plan a visit.  
[www.cloudehill.com.au](http://www.cloudehill.com.au)

Julie Kavanagh



# A Bit of Botany

Pat Anderson

Part 2:

## The Reproductive Parts

In the Spring 2020 edition of this newsletter, I described the flower parts calyx (sepals) and corolla (petals) and the bracts that are sometimes found immediately under the flowers. These are some of the features that are useful in identifying a particular species of *Salvia*. In this article, I shall describe **the reproductive parts** of the flower and a little bit about pollination.



*S indica*

**The reproductive parts** of the flower include the **stamens** (male parts) with anthers on the tips where pollen is found, and the female parts, which include the **style**, with its tip, the **stigma**, that receives pollen during fertilisation and the **ovary**, where the seeds are formed.

When you look at a salvia flower, these parts are not immediately obvious because the stamens are often tucked under the upper lip



*S squalens*

of the flower as in the following picture of *Salvia indica*, where you can just see the orangey-yellow anthers inside the upper lips of the individual flowers, while the purple styles stick out beyond the corollas. But this varies between groups of salvias and also with the age of the flower. In *S. squalens*, the stamens are exserted (they protrude) and the tips are unusual in that they are red. The style is also different, in that the stigma at the tip is not forked (more below). In *S. leucophylla*, the stamens with their yellow, fertile tips are also easy to see.



*S. leucophylla*



Fig III



Fig I

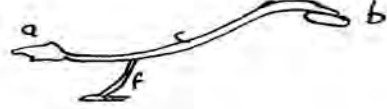


Fig II

Stamens are the male part of a flower. They are particularly significant in salvias. In the first place, salvias are almost, but not quite, unique in the Lamiaceae family of plants in having only 2 stamens, whereas most of the other genera such as *Lavandula*, *Phlomis*, *Lepechinia*, *Scutellaria*, *Agastache*, *Leonotis*, etc have 4 stamens. Secondly, the stamens in *Salvia* have a unique lever mechanism that is crucial to the process of pollination. In many flowers, the stamens are quite upright, as in Figure I below, being made up of a filament (f) that attaches it to the corolla, and the anther at the top that is made up of 2 lobes (a and b), joined by some connective tissue.

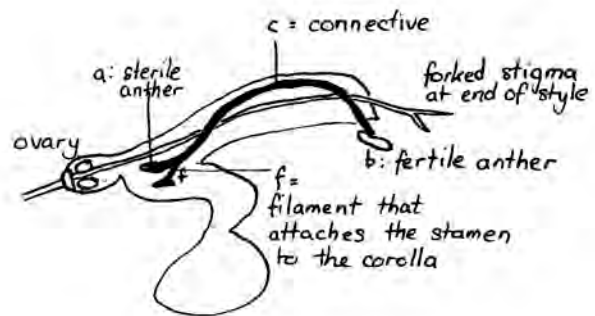
In the case of salvias, it is believed that, over time, the anthers have evolved by extending the connective tissue (c), as in Figure II, leading ultimately to the situation in Figure III, where the filament is quite short, the connective is much longer, and only 1 fertile anther remains (b), while the other anther (a) has become sterile to create this lever (see-saw) mechanism. The significance of this is explained in the diagram at the bottom of the page in the section on **fertilisation**.

**The female parts of a flower** consist of the **ovary**, or swollen section at the base of the flower, in which there are carpels where the seeds form and from which a long stalk, or **style**, protrudes, at the tip of which is the **stigma**. The stigma is made of special tissue to which pollen can stick.

Salvias are said to be **gynobasic** flowers because the style is attached at the base of the ovary. In many Salvias, the tip of the stigma is forked, though not always. In an earlier edition of this newsletter, John Daniels, from the Hobart Botanic Gardens, wrote a

fascinating article on the variations in the form of the stigma in Salvias – their colour, whether or not forked and which had hairs. He questioned the function of shape, colour and hairiness.

So, putting these features together gives us the generalised cross section of a salvia below, where the style is shown as a double line, finishing with a forked stigma and the stamen as an arched black line, with a fertile anther (b) on the right-hand side and an infertile anther (a) on the left hand side. It is attached to the corolla by the filament (f). All these terms might seem a bit over-complicated and unnecessary, but they are important when we consider the role of the stamens in pollination in salvias – see below



### Generalised cross section of a salvia

Some of these features can be seen in a more familiar way in the following photographs. In the first picture of *S. dolomitica*, taken front on, you can just see the tip of the stigma sitting tightly under the upper lip, and below this, the infertile anther lobes. In the second picture, the upper corolla lip has been pulled

off, revealing the 2 fertile anther lobes that were previously tucked under the lip.



*S. dolomitica*



*S. dolomitica* with upper lip removed

The next picture is *S. recognita*, (and more in focus!!) shows the forked stigma a lot more clearly, and again, the 2 infertile anther lobes. When an insect pushes its way into the corolla to get nectar from the base, it will push those 2 lobes inwards and upwards, forcing the

fertile lobes to bear pollen down on to the bees back.



*S. recognita*

**Fertilisation and the staminal lever mechanism in Salvias**

Watch a bee collecting nectar from a salvia. As it crawls into the corolla tube to find nectar at the base of the tube, its body will push the sterile anthers inwards and upwards which, in turn, brings the fertile, pollen-laden anthers down on its back, depositing pollen (Fig. V). When it visits the next flower, this pollen will brush off its back onto the receptive stigma of the second flower (Fig. VI).

It isn't always like this. Approximately one third of all salvias in the world are pollinated by birds in their native habitat. These include New World salvias and some South African species. However, pollen can equally well be deposited on the upper part of the beak and transferred to the stigma of the next flower in the same way. Moths with long tongues are



Fig. IV

Fig. V

Fig. VI

equally able to penetrate into a long corolla tube.

The early classification of sub-species of *Salvia* included the shape of the stamens and corolla tube because they recognised that plants evolved in parallel with their pollinators. There is of course a lot of speculation about how this all took place and modern approaches to classification involving detailed molecular studies, together with comparisons of the reproductive parts of flowers, are helping to clarify things more.

### **Pollination**

Sexual reproduction in flowers involves the fusion of male and female reproductive cells that are known as gametes. This comes about by pollination – ie the transfer of pollen carrying the male gamete to the stigma. If the tissue on the stigma is ready (receptive), and if the pollen is compatible, the pollen grain germinates on the stigma, a pollen tube forms and grows down the style, the sperm nuclei move down this and fuse with the female egg cell.

Germination of the pollen on the stigma depends on the shape of the pollen grain and on a chemical reaction between exudates from the wall of the pollen grain and the surface of the stigma. If germination occurs, the pollen is said to be compatible. Conversely, if it can't develop, it is incompatible. Many plants are self-incompatible which means that their own pollen cannot germinate on the stigma of the same individual. The plants must then be cross-pollinated with pollen from another individual of the same species. Usually, stigmas reject pollen from other species but when different species do fertilise, we have hybridisation.

So, why not get out into the garden and start looking inside your *salvia* flowers? You will be surprised at what you see and at the differences between flowers of different groups of *salvias*. And don't forget to try pushing a pencil or a narrow stick inside a

flower that has pollen on the anthers to see if you can collect some of it like the natural pollinators do.

### **Further Reading**

1. Capon, B. 1990, "Botany for Gardeners: An Introduction and Guide". – this one is great for anyone interested in subjects like plant function, adaptation, reproduction.
2. Chong, S. N. (revised by King, E. L.) 1996, *Basic Morphology of Flowering Plants*", Training Publications of Western Australia.
3. Clarke, I. and Lee, H., 1987, "Name that Flower". Melbourne University Press
4. Classe-Brockhoff R., Wester P., Tweraser E. "The staminal lever arm mechanism in *Salvia* – a review. *Plant Biology* 2003; 5, 33 – 41
5. Harris, J. G. & Harris, M. W., 2001, "Plant Identification Terminology: An Illustrated Guide".
6. Mager, S. "Botanical Field Guide" – a handy, fold out card containing 280 symbols and 400 keywords (bought mine at Adelaide Botanic Gardens)

### **Pat Anderson: 15 October 2020**

The third part of this series will cover some of the terms used to describe leaves – their shape, tips, base, margins, surface and hairiness. All these terms are used when comparing one *salvia* with another.

# More about propagation

Geoff Crowhurst, Thornbury, Victoria

Every gardener gardens in his or her own way, learning much over time, and repeating processes that have worked. The same is true for propagating, though some basic rules have to be followed by everyone. Pat Anderson and Meg Bentley are certainly very successful with propagating salvias, but I probably do some things a bit differently, as the following piece will show.

I've always enjoyed growing plants from seed and from cuttings, starting with cosmos seed when I was seven. Salvia lovers are lucky that most salvias are easy to propagate by cuttings, and for those that don't respond well, trying seed (if obtainable) or layering might be the way to go. For cuttings, soft wood tip cuttings are usually recommended, from shoots about to flower, in flower, or after flowering, with buds or flowers removed. The best times for those without special conditions, like a glasshouse, are the warmer months between about October and March, after the soft new growth of spring has hardened up. A cutting with two to four nodes is okay, and large leaves can be trimmed in half. Cuttings may be dipped in rooting hormone.

It is important that cutting material is kept in good condition until the cuttings are potted up and watered. If gathering cutting material from elsewhere, the best time, especially in warm to hot weather, is morning. The cut pieces can be placed in a plastic bag and sprinkled with water, the top secured with a twist tie, and then the bag kept in a cool place until potting up time. If you are very confident of a good strike rate, cuttings may be placed individually in small plastic tubes. I mostly use 10cm squat plastic pots I have scrounged from the pot recycling bin at CERES in East Brunswick, and usually put anywhere between 3 and 7 cuttings in each according to the size of the cuttings. I make up my own cutting mix, 50/50 dampened coir peat and perlite, though sometimes I add some medium grade washed sand which I can get at the Latrobe Sunday Market. The other products are available at Bunnings stores, and care should be taken with perlite as it contains very fine dust particles in the dry state. Cuttings are gently watered in.

Quite often I place potted up cuttings in a plastic storage box, the semi-opaque type, and put the lid back on. It is therefore like the Wardian Case used from about the 1830s by the plant hunters of the time to get plants back home in good condition. The box is placed somewhere that gets good light, but only a bit of direct sunlight. The cuttings need to be checked regularly to see that they remain in good condition. Any yellowing or limp cuttings can be gently removed. After 4-6 weeks some cuttings may be rooting, indicated by new growth. If there seems a danger of cuttings rotting, the lid may be removed for some or all of the day.



The other container for cuttings that I have designed is a large plastic drink bottle with the bottom cut off, and the lid removed. (I have been known to buy bottles for this purpose, not the drink.) After buying old saucers from an op shop, I place a pot of cuttings on a saucer, and place a de-bottomed bottle over the top. Unlike the cuttings in the plastic box, these cuttings will probably need watering after some weeks. Again, the potted up cuttings are placed somewhere in good light, and little direct sunlight.

Potting up rooted cuttings requires a deal of care, as the new roots are quite fragile, so proceed gently, and allow the watering in to do most of the settling work. I pot first into tubes and then 9cm square pots. These seem better than round pots, where in time roots circle the pot before they become pot bound. Newly potted cuttings are best placed in semi-shade and should be carefully watched in warm to hot weather. Potted plants can be nipped back to make them bushier, and maybe given some liquid fertiliser.

Layering is a useful technique for plants that don't strike readily from cuttings or when only one or two new plants are needed. Until quite recently layering was a common practice in Chinese plant nurseries for many different plants: now sophisticated glasshouses with bottom heat and temperature control have made it redundant. One needs fairly new, low stems which can be bent more or less horizontal, with leaves only removed from the (middle) portion to be layered.

Last year I layered *Salvia* 'Mesa Azure' as it doesn't seem to strike readily from cuttings. I used a couple of 5 inch pots, drilled small holes on opposite sides of each below the rim, and poked bamboo skewers through to hold each layered piece, having shaved off a bit of the bark on the underside and dabbed with hormone powder. The layered pieces were covered with potting mix and watered.

Allow plenty of time for a layered stem to make roots. I successfully got a replacement plant for the old one I wanted to remove. Very recently, my neighbours being away on holiday, I had a look at a couple of bushes of 'African Skies' they have growing on their nature-strip. One had layered itself under chip mulch, so, wanting a plant for elsewhere on the nature-strip, I potted up a couple of rooted pieces. Also, my *Salvia dolomitica* has suckered quite a bit, probably because its roots can't go into the hard clay underneath. I have previously potted up a couple of suckers. It would also be a good candidate for layering.

Growing things from seed can be fun. My experience is that *salvia* seed germinates readily, though preferably it should not be more than a year old. I remember importing some seed from Seedhunt in California some years ago, and more recently have grown *S. radula* and *S. coccinea* 'Brenthurst' from seed. Almost anyone with *salvias* knows that *S. greggii* and *S. microphylla* cross very readily, and that chance seedlings are usually not worth growing on. 'Wendy's Wish' occurred as a seedling in Wendy Smith's garden, and the parents having been worked out, the same cross was used to produce the other plants in the 'Wishes' series. In South Africa, *S. africana* and *S. aurea* have produced interesting and very worthwhile crosses, but I have not heard of similar crosses in Australia. So if you have species *salvias*, it can be worth collecting and growing seed, though seedlings may show (natural) variation. My *S. radula* and *S. coccinea* produced very even batches of seedlings.

Collecting seed requires careful attention to when the calyx dries and the little black seeds can be seen. Leave it too long, and the seed has already dispersed. Collected seed probably needs a few months after collection to mature. It can then be evenly spread on a pot filled with ordinary potting mix tamped down a bit, and lightly covered with more mix before watering. Finishing with a layer of sand makes germinating seed more easily seen and discourages moss from growing. I put pots with seed in the same plastic box as cuttings but remove them as soon as germination occurs. They can then be placed in semi-shade, progressing to a sunny spot unless it's hot. Little seedlings can be carefully pricked out when they've got their second pair of true leaves. The best times for seed sowing are again the warmer months. Pots with cuttings and seed should both be carefully labelled, as it is very easy to forget or confuse what is in each pot.





## Jennifer Kloester's Garden Visit and Annual General

**Heather Lucas, Heathmont, Victoria**

On 6<sup>th</sup> December 2020 we had our first garden visit in 9 months (we went to Allowyn Gardens on 1<sup>st</sup> March) due to Covid-19 and I'm sure all of us were absolutely starving for a garden visit and social contact with all our wonderful salvia members and friends.

Well, if we wanted something special to uplift and feed our souls, then this was the garden to visit and fill that void. This garden was immaculate and so wonderfully tended, looked after and well to me perfect. Couldn't see a weed, plants of all kinds and of course our wonderful salvias that we all love and are so fanatical about (well me anyway) – sublime and just what all us Melbournians needed after so long in lockdown and without any garden festivals, sales events or garden visits (although we were able to squeeze in our Annual Plants at Nobelius Sale Day the week before this visit – 29<sup>th</sup> November).



This garden is in Newtown, a suburb of Geelong, so it was lovely that we were visiting and supporting one of our country or should I say more out of town (Melbourne) gardeners. It was a lovely day weather wise as well, not too hot, not too cold, just right – 21 degrees. The house was a wonderful older style brick house with a very spectacular front door which was a blue grey wooden door with a lead lighting inlay. There was a small garden out the front of the house with a cream picket fence and a red brick path leading up to the door and red bricks also forming the edging of the garden bed along the front of the house. There was also a garden bed along the front of the

house and a small strip of grass in between this bed and the bed behind the picket fencing. This front garden was packed with all sorts of plants and was a mass of colour. There was the most magnificent example of *Salvia canariensis*, very large, very prolific and dense, not straggly like mine!! There were also roses, alstroemeria, geraniums, lilliums, lavender, ageratum, euphorbia and a wonderful wisteria along the front verandah of the house. Some of the salvias in the front garden were *S. canariensis*, *S. 'Celestial Blue'* or was it *S. clevelandii*, *S. flocculosa*, *S. leucantha 'White Velour'*, *S. 'Magenta Magic'*, *S. semiatrata*.

Off the red brick path a gravel path wound around one side of the house, leading to the back garden, which opened up to a lower garden area down some wide paved stone steps with red brick low walls on both sides. Garden beds flowed out around an area of grass with all sorts of plants – abutilon, aquilegia, teucrium betonicum, roses, daisies, geraniums, hollyhocks, penstemon and iris's to name a few. Amongst the salvias in the back garden were *S. chiapensis*, *S. discolor*, *S. macrophylla x runcinata*, *S. microphylla 'Hot Lips'* and *S. scabra*. There was even an inground trampoline tucked in one of the back corners of the garden, with a raised vegetable bed and an archway with a climbing rose trailing off it. Immediately outside the back of the house was a red bricked area with one side having a lovely courtyard area with a lime green iron table and chairs with a round concrete bowl filled with water and another smaller pot placed in it with a water plant in front of it. Also in this area was a small round garden bed with a gorgeous maple in the centre, a bowl of round rocks, an iron stand with potted plant and begonia, heuchera's, geraniums and mats of green ground covers (I think thyme). There were also lots of plants in glazed, concrete and terracotta pots in the back garden, one with a huge orange/yellow datura (angels trumpet) that was magnificent. Jennifer also had many ornaments (concrete statues, 2 gorgeous iron animal statues - one rabbit, one mouse or was it a rat, concrete pedestal and urn, metal pelican and a huge rusted iron artwork piece about 5 foot high which looked like a flower bud to me) in the garden.



We also held the VSSG Annual General Meeting which went smoothly and was completed within 30 minutes, returning all the original committee members and with no change to the positions of the committee. We had around 18 people attend this garden visit and AGM and were also lucky to be able to speak to Jennifer's gardener and her next door neighbour, who also helps in her garden, both having a vast knowledge of gardening and plants.

The array of food for lunch was a feast in itself and we all tucked into it. There were also lots of plants brought along by the members to share and lots of cuttings, so we all went home with some special plants and cuttings and of course a very happy smiling face.

A big thank you to Jennifer and her husband for letting us come and see her garden and also have the Annual General Meeting there. Now let's hope that we can get many more garden visits in this year and have a Covid free and safe year.

# Salvias in Autumn



S 'Meigan's Magic

March is the beginning of the autumn flowering Salvias, when the first of the tall autumn/ winter flowering Salvias appear, when the colour purple starts to shine, especially paired with the bright cerise colours. This is when *S. mexicana* 'Limelight' starts to flower, followed by 'Lolly and the other mexicana varieties. 'Meigan's Magic' and 'Anthony Parker' begin their wonderful purple show. The autumn leucantha's put on an excellent display with the different shades of magenta and mauve. All these contrast so well with the cerise *S. curviflora* and 'Joan' and the crimson of 'Ripe Raspberry'.

There are so many Salvias still flowering at this time of year, the last of the summer herbaceous flowers can be still seen in March and April. Some of course will remain flowering until the onset of the cold weather of winter. Yet other small microphylla and greggii varieties growing in the warmer suburbs may remain flowering all year, such as 'Angel Wings', 'Mesa Azure' and 'Hotlips'.

Many varieties have such a long flowering period extending from summer into autumn and again into winter. Some of these may not be shown to their full extent, this will allow more varieties to be shown

## Comments & Feedback

We hope you enjoy Salvia News as much as we enjoy collating it for you. We welcome your comments and feedback regarding this publication, our website, the Facebook group and the Study Group in general.

You can send your feedback to us at any time by emailing the Editor or Lyndi Garnett (Group Coordinator).

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[lgarnett844@gmail.com](mailto:lgarnett844@gmail.com)

I am *Salvia canarienses*. Did you guess me correctly?



# Autumn

## What is flowering now



S Envy Dark



S Limelight



*S mexicana* Snowflake



S 'Meza Azure'



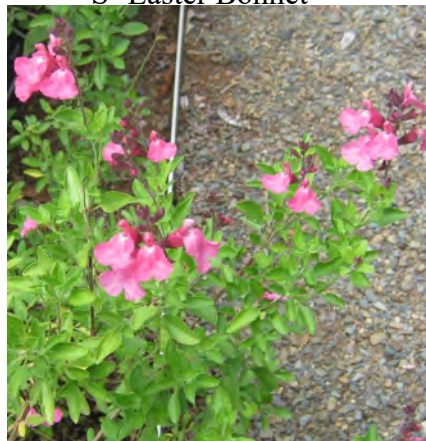
S 'Easter Bonnet'



*S oxyphora*



*S omeriana*



S 'Flare' (Heatwave)



S 'Anthony Parker'



# Sunnymeade

Tine Grimston, Rowville, Victoria

I (Tine) visited Sunnymeade garden in 2019 on a bus trip with the Knox Life Activities Group and was very smitten with it. They have a single bedroom cottage in the garden that can be booked, and I immediately added a stay in it to my wish list.

When COVID lockdown eased in November 2020 and my husband Wayne suggested a couple of nights away in a regional area, I straight away contacted Sunnymeade and was able to book for 2 nights midweek. It was GLORIOUS. The garden is currently only open to guests at the cottage, so we had the entire garden to ourselves.

It was wonderful to be able to wander the garden in the evening, the morning, the middle of the day.... you get my drift. The cottage was well appointed and the fresh orange juice squeezed from the properties own trees was a delightful bonus.

It really is a garden to immerse yourself in. There are so many different "rooms" each with their own personality. Some areas are clipped to perfection and very formal, others are also immaculately planned and planted but feel wilder with plantings almost swallowing you as you make your way to the next thing that has caught your eye. There were many rare and beautiful plants which I have not seen elsewhere. Craig has created the garden himself over more than 30 years, and done all the stonework, statuary, paths and structures himself. Much of the stone was collected on the property, or from neighbours nearby.

The garden is an amazing creation and I urge you to see it if you ever get the chance. My words cannot convey the glory. There is a website and a facebook page if you want to see more pictures. There is also a short video on the website which has some drone footage of the garden which really shows the structure, variety and beauty of the garden.

I now have an Autumn visit to Sunnymeade on my wish list.



# Working Bee

Julie Kavanagh, Ferntree Gully, Victoria

It was a fine sunny day when I met Lyndi to help at Nobelius Salvia Garden. I was taken back by the number of salvias that she had in her van that had to be planted. But we started off very civilised with a cup of tea/coffee. Lyndi walked me around the garden and explained the different species, the 'landing strip' for the bees, the difference between herbaceous, deciduous and annual etc. My head was buzzing with all this knowledge, but I know that it will gradually sink in and I will remember some of this information.

Whilst Lyndi placed the plants where she wanted them to be planted, I got out the trusty spade and began digging. I never thought to tell her that my husband Michael always digs the holes for me at home, but quietly went about digging and planting the salvias. And I didn't realise that quite often Lyndi placed salvias in the middle of the already growing plants and you had to carefully climb in and around these plants so that you didn't destroy them! After a few hours, it was time to sit in the shade of the large trees next to the garden and enjoy a quiet lunch together. Except we had a friendly magpie saying hello to us and Lyndi asked whether I could give the bird a tiny bit of my crust from my sandwich. I felt very guilty as I was hungry after all that exertion and had even eaten the crust which I normally don't do!

Later that afternoon I counted how many plants I had put into the ground and was surprised when I counted sixteen empty pots. Now we had to water them in. This was where I had a great laugh - into the men's toilet I headed with a huge bucket, a little bucket and a watering can. My big decision was whether to close the door or leave it open. I decided to play safe and lock the door in case a man needed to use the toilet. There was a half sink with a tap which didn't have much clearance, so hence, you fill up the small bucket to empty into the large bucket. Easy but time consuming.

What fun I had on my first working bee. I will go as often as I can now because of course I enjoyed helping in the garden but also learning so much about salvias. Thank you for a great day Lyndi. (Lyndi is the person busy in the first photograph). Come and join in the fun at a working bee.



# Salvias invading the Begonias

Fiona Williams, North Warrandyte, Victoria

There is absolutely no logical reason why someone who gardens on a hot, sunny, fire prone and dry hillside should become interested in growing Begonias. But logic has nothing to do with it and somehow, I've become interested in these humidity loving plants. Which meant I needed a place to grow them.

Just down the hill from the main garden there is a small valley which looked promising. It has plenty of shade from the local eucalypts and ephemeral water running down from the driveway after rain so I decided to give it a go.



I laid down a 'lasagne' garden bed with thick layers of weeds and other garden clippings, garden compost, old straw, compost from a garden supplier, handfuls of dynamic lifter and finally euca- mulch. There was a slight setback when I tested the material from the garden supplier and discovered it had a pH of 9.5 but copious additions of sulphur over a couple of months brought it back to a more balanced state. The intention is to limit hose watering so the plants can cope with what they get naturally.

Now for the planting. I put in a wide-ranging collection of begonias and everything took off. I don't know whether it has been a fairly kind year (limited frost, not too hot and a bit of rain), the delight of getting their roots in the new soil or the joy of being far from the house and my tender care but the new garden bed started frothing with the white, pink, red and orangey flowers of begonias. But not just begonias!!

The new shade bed became a magnet for other plants that had been languishing in pots for years awaiting the time when there would be a garden bed that suited them. Hellebores, plectranthus and fuchsias leapt from their pots and the salvias followed.

Some of the success stories were dramatic. I've always grown *Salvia patens* in self watering pots during summer but I planted a couple of scraggly seedlings in the new bed and they flourished. I've now got masses of those intense blue flower spikes. *S. lyrata* is looking better than I've seen it look for years and of course *S. forskahlei* is loving the conditions. *S. coccinea* is also looking very healthy in the shade and the peach like colours look great with the Begonias.

I put in spare plants of various *S. mexicana* and they are much happier in the shade than the same plant in the hot sun, and the same for *S. 'Costa Rican Blue'*. I'd expect *S. miniata* and *S. corrugata* to flourish but *S. rubescens sub dolichrothrix* is growing about twice the size I'd come to know. It all reinforces an old truth. All the begonias and many of the salvias that are doing well in the new garden bed originate in tropical areas with shade and higher humidity. I might be able to force them to cope with heat and sun but they are much easier to grow with a shade and a bit more water.

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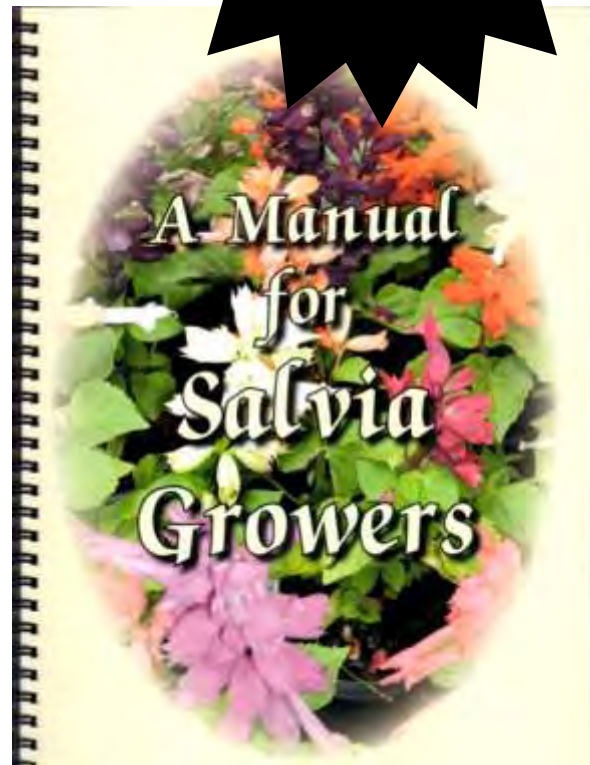
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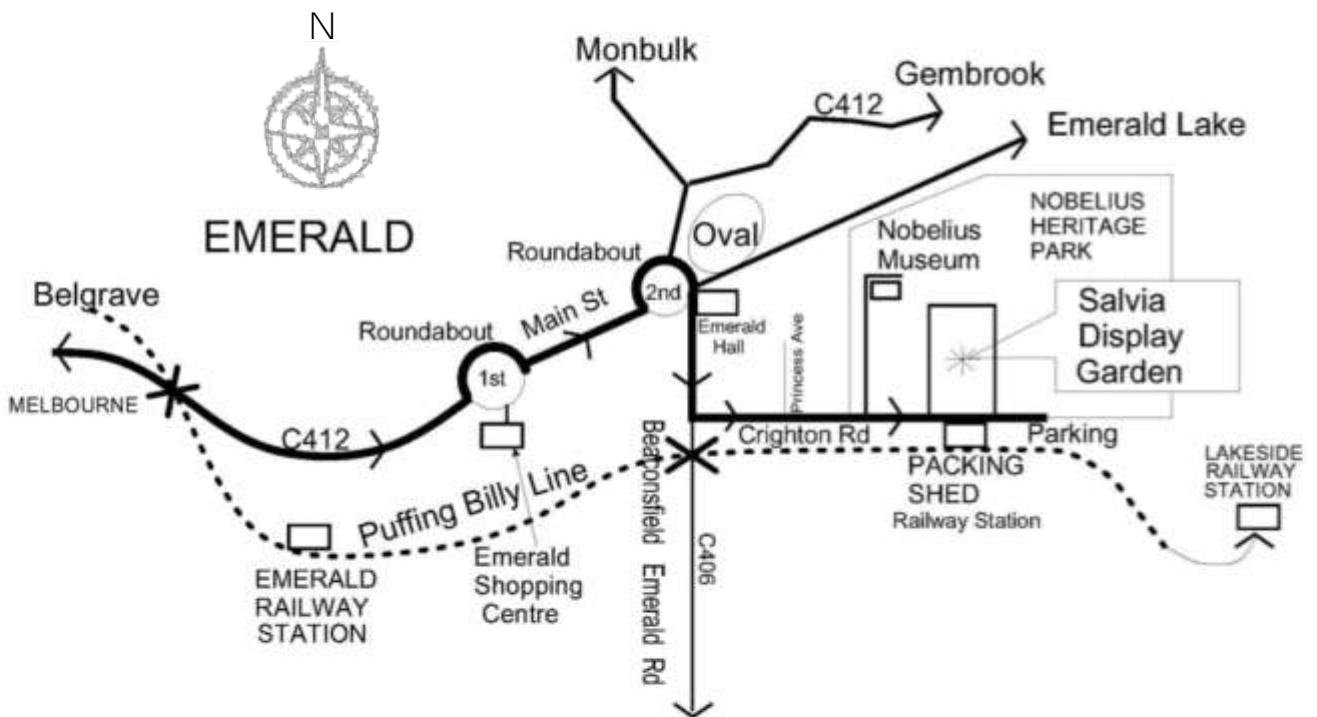
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**ISSN 2208-1089 (Online)**

*Salvia News* is printed by  
Eureka Printing  
702 High Street Road, Glen Waverley Vic 3150