

# SalviaNews

Victorian Salvia Study Group  
A Branch of the Herb Society of Victoria

September/October 2002

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*It is so interesting to read about the salvias growing in your gardens. We all want to know about their behaviour, either good or bad! This is what the Salvia Study Group is all about isn't it? At the meeting on November 17th at the Nobelius Garden there will be some salvia plants to be given or exchanged in return for reports on their growth and habits in your gardens. It will be on a 'first come, first choice' situation. My polyhouse and the heating pad has been a very exciting thing for me. I do so love success! Thank you for your input to this Newsletter. And please keep sending in your news or ringing me. I take dictation over the phone too. A series on 'My Favourite Salvia' is starting in this issue. Be fun to know how many of us like the same one. I admit that I am so fickle that my choice is likely to change.*  
*Trudi*

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**Attention !!! don't forget the 20<sup>th</sup> of October when Colleen Muir will show us how to prepare Herbarium Specimens to preserve & record our salvias.** At her home 6 Kildare St. Hawthorn East

Bookings will be necessary—Ph. Trudi 9754 4041 or Ray 9754 4889

Time 11am

BYO Lunch

This is a great opportunity for us. Do your best to be there.

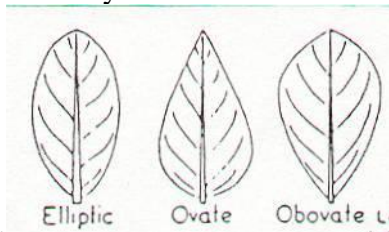
November 17<sup>th</sup> Picnic 11am at the Collection Site Nobelius Park  
Off Creighton Rd,  
Emerald

## HERB EXPO

- ❖ Where-- Burnley College enter from The Boulevard Mel. 59 A
- ❖ When --October 26<sup>th</sup>&27<sup>th</sup> 10am to 5pm
- ❖ What's on? --Garden tours, talks, workshops
- ❖ What will be there?-- Heaps of interesting things
- ❖ **AND A DISPLAY AND SALE OF SALVIAS**

Admission \$3 Refreshments available in the College Cafeteria  
Or BYO picnic or BBQ

**Botanical Terms** are handy to know. Scattered around *Salvia News* will be some



illustrations for you.

### **Latest Workshop News**

A propagation workshop held at Trudi Fry's lovely home and garden on 18<sup>th</sup> August was attended by about 10 people and conducted by Graham Ellis. Those who couldn't make it missed out on delicious gourmet food and a walk around Trudi's garden. We enjoyed our garden walk viewing all the salvias and were amazed to see so many flowering still in Winter. While we walked Graham collected cuttings ready for our workshop, set it up and then it was time to eat again. Some of us propagated cuttings for the Herb Expo at Burnley in October to sell and others for themselves.

Personally I found it very interesting to see the size of cuttings you take to strike. Looking back, my cuttings are too big, so now I've been trying this new technique and will share with you later the results. I would like to thank Trudi for her warm hospitality and opening her garden and home to us all.

I have potted some of red & black calyx *Salvia gesneraeflora* for our section at The Herb Expo at Burnley on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of October. *Salvia sagittatus* – 'Mosquito' I got from Sue Templeton last year is not looking at all well and I hope it will come back as I just love it.

*Jane Lee* Stratford

### **Queensland News**

What a harsh winter it has been in SE Queensland - frost has occurred in areas that have never had frost and one member of our salvia group who lives in a rural suburb of Brisbane on the range had minus 7 deg! Needless to say her garden did not fare very well. However she is pleased to report that the salvias frosted are shooting again and many appear to have survived the attack.

The Perennial Poppies Group are keen to record the growing of perennials in such a diverse climate. Our members come from all over SE Queensland. Beaudesert and district, which is an hour south of Brisbane regularly reports frost whilst in the summer they can record higher than average temperatures and are prone to long dry spells. In the region we had very little summer rain, and a very dry winter, which is not encouraging for those folk without a good underground supply of water - dams are very low, some empty. At the end of August some areas received good rainfall, however not enough to make much difference to water supplies.

In Buderim we are most fortunate to have great supplies of water and I am pleased to report that my salvias through the winter and into the spring have been wonderful. Every report I seem to mention the old favourites, *Salvia* Costa Rican Blue ( **is it Rican or Rica - Sue spells it with an n?**), *S. Waverly*, *S. Purple Majesty*, *S. mexicana* lime calyx, all the *S. greggiis* and *S. Indigo Spires* as they are such great contributors to a year-round colourful garden.

The winter flowerers are *S. wagneriana*, *S. puberula*, *S. karwinskii*, *S. involucrata bethelli*, *S. involucrata x karwinskii*, *S. dorisiana*, *S. 'Pink Icicles'* and *S. madrensis* put on a good show and *S. fallax* is now in full bloom for spring. *Salvia* 'Harmony' is a great low grower that

seems to flower all year round and makes a good filler in the garden. *S. Chiapas* with its beautiful pinky red flowers is a picture. *S. chiapensis* is another that is almost never without a flower and I am keen to spread it throughout the garden as it is one that should be duplicated in the garden. Such a great plant. A more recent acquisition *Salvia lavanduloides* has been flowering for some time. *Salvia mellisadora*, although not stunning, is rarely without a flower – another treasure.

*Salvia involucrata* 'Joan', *S. sagittatus* 'Mosquito' and *S. rubescens* 'Venezuelan Beauty' are new to my garden and are flowering beautifully. It has been interesting for our group to discover that for years what we have been calling *S. involucrata bethelli* is not! Sue Templeton recently sent us the correct one which is much more controlled and with a smaller flower. We figure what we have is just *S. involucrata* - very large and unwieldy with a mind of its own!

*Salvia* 'Omaha Gold', a new release from Sue, is doing well – it is very similar to Costa Rican Blue only it has gold margin in its leaf – I suspect it is going to be similar in its growth pattern and will be a wonderful addition to the garden. *S. muirii*, also a new release, is a small growing salvia with a mauve flower that is going to be great as an edging plant.

Our salvia group has been remiss in documenting our collection however we are planning on meeting on a more regular basis to exchange information. Our gardens are at Tamborine Mountain, Brisbane, Buderim and Gympie with very different climatic conditions so it is interesting to note the variations.

**Barb Wickes**

### ELTHAM NEWS

I'm slowly learning the habits of the varieties of salvia that I have. While not quite sure in some cases I am pruning anyhow when I see they have become tall and in danger of falling over. I have spent the last week or ten days cultivating and fertilizing my entire garden, finished today (in fact it's a wonder I even have the energy to type this), and the salvias are looking great and putting on growth so I must have done something right.

One salvia that has been a mass of flowers is *Salvia africana-lutea*. I wouldn't say it is a beautiful colour but certainly very unusual and *en masse*, certainly looks stunning. I've done a bit of swapping plants about; a very small *S. spathacea* I bought at the Expo nearly died in the garden (my friend Liz up the hill lost hers). I lifted it before it expired and potted it where upon it revived so when it was looking better I re-planted it and it is now looking great. Similar thing happened with *S. lyrata*, that is now in the garden.

Liz Damaschi, up the hill has many more salvia than I have and one of her favourites is *S. 'Costa Rican Blue'*, in fact she likes it so much that she has many of them dotted around her garden and it is a running joke between us that it is another 'Costa Rican Blue' that she has planted. Her *S. gesneraeflora* 'Tequila' is at present huge and still a mass of flowers. Isn't it a beauty? Mine is still comparatively small but I noticed today that it is growing apace. *Salvia* 'Waverley' is looking very nice, a little more understated but I like it, has great long flowering heads.

Long before I became so interested in salvia I bought *S. forskahlei* and it is one of those salvia that die away in the winter and then have a large mat of basal leaves in spring; it sends up a long stem of lovely blue flowers but only appears to have that one flowering meaning that the rest of the year it is rather dull but never-the-less I have two plants of it. *S. corrugata* has been 'super' but it's pretty droopy and straggly, isn't it?

Not that I mind, I just prune the heads off, at present it is a nice shape. And guess what, yesterday when I was cultivating around it I found two pieces had layered so you can imagine they were quickly potted up.

I'll have to wait till later in the season to tell you how some of my other salvia have performed.

*PADDY CHILDS GREEN*

### Remark News *Mary Ann's Favourite Salvias*

During my short love affair with Salvias I would have to say that my consistent favourite has been S. 'Indigo Spires'. It is planted against a fence beside a Pierre de Ronsard rose and the two intermingle and make a pretty picture when both are in full bloom. In winter the outer leaves turn a purple-bronze colour which looks great against the yellow-green leaves of it's other neighbour, *Salvia somalensis*.

The flower spikes of S. 'Indigo Spires' grow to over 35cm and I am repeatedly dead-heading to keep the bush growing upwards instead of sprawling outwards under their weight. It flowers all year until a good frost makes it pull it's head in until early spring. It has presently put out much new growth and even a few flower spikes.

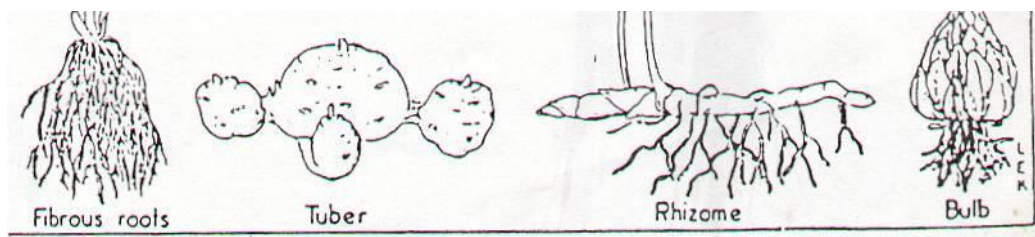
Of course, if *Salvia iodantha* flowered all year round, it would definitely supplant S. 'Indigo Spires' as my favourite. Its 8 foot high stems entwined in the branches of a mulberry tree were covered in a glorious shag pile carpet of cyclamen-purple. I call it my 'velvet chenille bush'. *Mary Ann Dyer*

### Geelong News

Bill has been kept indoors a lot this winter but is feeling better now. We visited his garden after our tour of Geelong's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Garden and it was good to see so many salvias there, many donated by Bill. The Geelong Botanic Garden is stunning, designed to be waterwise reaching out to the public domain of Eastern Beach. This garden is a 'must see' and will be a garden to observe over the years.

Bill met us at the Botanic Garden where we enjoyed his company and met his many friends. We were later welcomed by Shirley and Bill, and after a delicious afternoon tea, wandered around their garden. Bill has the best *Salvia munzii* in full flower. About 4' tall and masses of cornflower blue flowers. *Salvia pulchella*, with trusses of velvety red flowers is another stunner. In fact there are so many great plants that it just proves that salvias are generous growers and put up with enforced neglect. In fact the garden didn't look neglected at all!

Bill writes that he has taken a number of cuttings of *S.munzii*, *S.confertifolia*, *S.madrensis* and *S. fruticosa* 'Greek Skies' potted into a mixture of coir and sand. The result of this trial will be reported to us.



<b>Salvia Seed Available</b>		<b>Books for Sale</b>
<i>Salvia patens</i>	<i>S.urica</i>	We have the 2 books of Christine Yeo for sale at \$20 each to members. Christine has a NCCPG Salvia collection in South Devon and has been collecting and growing salvias since 1978. She is generous with her knowledge as we discovered when she visited several of our gardens a few years ago. The books contain clear, concise descriptions of the plants, and until we get a book written for our conditions, I highly recommend them.
<i>S. sclarea turkestanica</i>	<i>S. viscosa</i>	
<i>S. virgata</i>	<i>S. tomentosa</i>	
<i>S. disermis</i>	<i>S. spathacea</i>	
<i>S. stenophylla</i>	<i>S. judacia</i>	
<i>S. jamensis Sierra Pink</i>	<i>S. rugosa</i>	
<i>S. x jamensis Pink Blush</i>	<i>S.greggii</i> bicolor	
<i>S. coccinea</i> Lady in Red	‘Fulhams Red’	
<i>S. coccinea</i> ‘Tangerine’	<i>S. judiaciae</i>	
<i>S. coccinea</i> bicolour	<i>S. plectranthoides</i>	
<i>S. mexicana</i>	<i>S. officinalis</i>	
‘Limelight’		
<b>Contact Lyndi Garnett ph 9803 4534 or buy at a VSSG Workshop</b>		
844 Highbury St      Seeds 50c with a stamped self addressed envelope Glen Waverly 3150		

### **Through The Microscope By Meg Bentley**

Eyesight is a marvelous thing... all the little details that one can see, for example, fine hairs, textures and various shapes etc...but, when these same objects are observed through the microscope it opens up a whole new world... a world you never thought existed.

Take for example the fine hairs on a salvia, hairs that look like ordinary fine stubble to the naked eye. Under the microscope these hairs take on mammoth proportions and it is incredible to see that so many hair follicles produce oil glands. These oil glands can either be at the base of the hair or on the tip of each hair or they can in fact produce clusters of ‘bubbles’ on the under sides of leaves, in the hollow of each indentation. Some leaves produce both glandular hairs and ‘bubbles’ or oil glands.

When you rub certain leaves they emit an aromatic fragrance or can be quite sticky to touch. How many of us have rubbed one leaf or another, just for the joy of smelling its perfume.

The first salvia leaf I saw under the microscope was that of *Salvia mellifera*. A leaf that looks quite glossy on the surface of the blade and rather dull and felty on the underside. With closer observation under the microscope, the underside of a leaf from *Salvia mellifera* looks for all the world as though it is infested with small translucent fat bodied insects. Touch these with a fine implement like a needle and they burst upon contact. Then you realize that these are minute bubbles of liquid, the oil glands. It is the act of bursting these oil glands that produces the fragrance or aroma and makes a leaf sticky to the touch.

This is not the case with all salvias, some species from the tropics or semi tropical areas, where there is plenty of moisture, have glossy leaves and don’t appear to have these oil glands. Salvias from the drier regions...the ones that produce the most fragrance, are more likely to have an abundance of oil glands.

I wonder if an abundance of oil glands will act as a great deterrent to help keep away bugs and pests like rabbits and possums in the garden?

## For a Dry Garden

### Salvia, Succulents and Silvers

My garden is on the top of an exposed granite ridge, no soil, plenty of big rocks and 'floaters'. The view is wonderful. The only water supply is from tanks. The land has no clay at all and drainage is instantaneous. Nothing much was growing on the 2 acres when we built in 1972. We were such innocents. We saw it as a clean slate for a dream garden, not realizing nothing grew because there were only a few pockets of soil and that was so dry. Thirty years later and, with a lot of hard work, there is a garden but now I am alone and I am making it a garden that is possible for me to enjoy for many more years. Enjoy is a very important word. I can't see any point in being a slave to my garden. This garden is for me and it encompasses beauty, interest and low upkeep.

Now we get to the Salvia bit. By building brick walled beds and back filling with all sorts of organic matter there are lovely lush Salvias growing and other plants too. Each year one or two beds get top-dressed and mulched and look a picture. But the garden bed near the road and surrounded by a curved driveway on the other sides is not only blessed by trees but is so well drained that one wonders how any thing grows. Well they struggle really. Mind you, *Salvia greggii* 'Raspberry Royal' as well as *S. microphylla neurepia* have given 12 years of colour. The wrong colour. This bed is to be The African bed. Tough, interesting, hardy and easy to grow. *Salvia africana lutea* screams at reds and pinks but looks just right with its fellow Africans. I have just removed a pile of acanthus and will also take out the agapanthus and then spread compost topped by semi-composted mulch, water if possible and, when the worms are in action, plant. There are 2 or 3 forms of *S. africana lutea*, 2 forms of *S. africana caerulea*, *S. dolomitica*, *S. disermis*, *S. muirrii*, *S. runcinata*, *S. somalensis*, *S. scabra*, *S. lanceolata*, and *S. chamelaeagnea* waiting in pots ready.

The succulent *Aeonium arboreum* 'Zwartkop' whose very dark leaves in summer just match the bracts of *S. africana lutea* will be massed to take up any space weeds could occupy. The silver *Cotyledon orbiculata* is already draped along the rocky edges as are several obliging silver plants. The latter are plants anon. until someone I.D.s them for me. There are some agaves and aloes that seem to be appropriate too as well as *Euphorbia wulffeni*.

*Trudi Fry*

### Watch These Salvias!

A salvia which grows prolifically in some soils may need tender loving care to exist in others... for example I treasure the few plants of *Salvia forskahlei* I manage to grow in my heavy clay soil, whereas in Trudi's light soil this same salvia runs amok (*but beautifully*) and crowds out other plants and weeds. On a recent visit to Geelong Botanic Gardens we noted *Salvia verbenaca* growing as a weed in grassed areas adjacent to these Gardens. The spreading rosettes of this species quickly inhibit lawn growth.

After sighting a low growing salvia growing profusely on an upper escarpment of the Lederderg River (near Bacchus Marsh) I was convinced that I had discovered an Australian native salvia—the plants were growing amongst indigenous undergrowth and well away from farm gardens and homesteads. However it was identified by Dr Roger Spencer as a naturalized salvia, *S. reflexa* which was introduced to Victorian gardens in the early days of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Note *Salvia reflexa* is an annual.

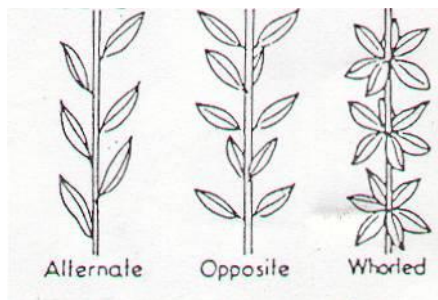
There have many examples of salvia which have escaped from gardens in Australia, some have become noxious weeds. In many parts of the Western District in Victoria *S. haemotodes* can be seen as a roadside plant, *S. verbenaca* and *S. pratensis* (meadow clary) have also become ‘feral’ in Victoria and NSW. In Emerald *S. pratensis*, *S. forskaohlei* and *S. haemotodes* ‘escaped’ from our trial garden within 2 years of the establishment of the plot. In damp situations *S. uliginosa* (bog sage) can also spread its underground roots for several metres becoming a pest plant if undisturbed. Likewise the fleshy rhizomes of *S. guaranitica* can become invasive.

On my first visit to Far North Queensland I noted many examples of *S. coccinea* (Apricot or ‘Coral Nymph’) growing in the wild. Again my notion of discovering a native salvia was dashed when I discovered that this attractive salvia is commonly grown in home gardens and self seeds readily in the warm, tropical soils.

The moral of this story is to watch your salvias and if any tend to ‘take over’ be ruthless and let us know. The same watchfulness is necessary for all garden plants of course. Most of the salvia treasures are not invasive.

Ray Boatman

**Trudi’s Favourite Salvia is *Salvia microphylla neurepia*---** dear old *Salvia Grahamii*... red and delicious to suck nectar out of when I was a child as my grand children do now. Why did they change the name?



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