

Salvia News

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Official Newsletter of the
Victorian Salvia Study Group Inc

www.salvias.org.au

Winter 2026

VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP inc

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www.salvias.org

Find us on  **Salvia Study Group Vic**

THE AIMS OF THE SALVIA STUDY GROUP ARE:

1. To grow and collect Salvias for the purpose of enjoyment and study.
2. To promote and encourage the growing of Salvias.
3. To correctly name existing and new Salvias.
4. To maintain our Display Garden at Nobelius Heritage Park for the Group and the general public.

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 Plant Trust registered garden collection.

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Website: www.salvias.org.au

EDITORIAL

Welcome to our 2026 Winter Edition. In reading the contributions for this edition, I was reminded that generosity is central to both gardening and the work of the VSSG. The generosity of the plant world is well illustrated in Geoff Crowhurst's article on *Salvia coccinea* 'Brenthurst', a self seeding salvia that has never failed to provide Geoff with its welcome gifts of extra seedlings year after year. And Lyndi Garnett's photos of Nobelius in Autumn are a fitting testament to the genus's generous seasonal displays and to the joy and beauty salvias bring to our gardens. Heather Lucas's two articles on recent garden visits demonstrate just how generous our open garden hosts are—their preparation, their hospitality and their willingness to share their knowledge always make these visits a highlight not to be missed. Then, there's the generosity of the members who help at working bees, selling events and all the other jobs that keep a group like ours functioning.

Lyndi's 'Clean-Up' article attests to that. And let's not forget the magazine's contributors, past and present. For this edition, Maureen Scoble has written three articles, all different, but all sharing her sense of humour and extensive gardening knowledge. And, thanks to Julie Kavanagh, the Group's Facebook administrator, we have a new contributor, Kerin-Lea Kelberg, a horticulturist from Tasmania, who has written an account of growing salvias in cool temperate zones. Thanks Kerin-lea, and please keep in touch. And finally, Kristen Mathews, from South-

East Queensland's Perennial Poppies, shares the story of her shift to a Lifestyle Village where she and her mother converted the garden into a magical space. Just look at the photo!

Happy Winter Gardening!

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Copy deadline for the next edition of Salvia News is
1st August 2026

Please email your articles and photos to: salvia.newsletter@gmail.com

Cover Photo is *Salvia leucantha* 'Pink Velour'. Photo by Lyndi Garnett.

Please check website for dates and times for any event
in case of errors or a cancellation.

www.salvias.org.au

Read more of what's happening in June on page 16.

JUNE SUN 7TH | Propagating and Potting Up Day | Nobelius Heritage Park, Emerald (Crighton Rd, beneath the Packing Shed, along the Puffing Billy Train Line – in front of the Emerald Museum) – 1pm-3pm

- Learn how and when to propagate Salvias
- How to take cuttings of difficult Salvias
- Learn how and when to pot up those cuttings or repot plants.
- Take home pots of cuttings & repotted plants

Bookings essential. Email or phone Lyndi if coming – 9803 4534, lgarnett844@gmail.com.

Tea/coffee provided.

JUNE SAT 13TH | A Gardener's Day Out | CANCELLED due to lack of interest

JUNE WED 24TH | Gardening Day | Salvia Garden, Nobelius Heritage Park, Crighton Rd, Emerald – 10am-3pm

All welcome, to come and learn how to grow and identify Salvias.

What to bring: secateurs, gloves, a tarp, plastic bag for cuttings, a hat and a plate to share for lunch and appropriate clothing for the day.

Tea/ coffee will be provided.

Please phone Lyndi if coming. Ph 9803 4534 or email lgarnett844@gmail.com.

Other dates: Wed July 29th/ Thursday 6th Aug – Wed 26th Aug / 3rd Sept.

SEPTEMBER SUN 27TH | Visit Ailsa Hemphill's Gorgeous Flower Garden | 201 Tucks Rd, Main Ridge – 11.30am

Please phone Lyndi if coming – 9803 4534.

SEPTEMBER WED 30TH | Gardening Day | Salvia Garden, Nobelius Heritage Park, Crighton Rd, Emerald – 10am-3pm

All welcome, to come and learn how to grow and identify Salvias.

What to bring: secateurs, gloves, a tarp, plastic bag for cuttings, a hat and a plate to share for lunch and appropriate clothing for the day.

Tea/ coffee will be provided.

Please phone Lyndi if coming. Ph 9803 4534 or email lgarnett844@gmail.com.

Any queries, contact Lyndi Ph: 9803 4534 Email: lgarnett844@gmail.com

News From The Perennial Poppies Southeast Queensland

Text and photos by Kristen Mathews

Mum and I moved to an over 50's Lifestyle Village nearly a year and a half ago and it wasn't hard to make decisions on what plants we wanted to take, but on what plants we could fit in our now small garden. We knew that we wanted to take as many salvias as we could but they would have to be the smaller growing microphyllas and greggii forms.

We removed all the plants they had in the front garden and planted tabernaemontana as a small feature tree and then we planted as many salvias as we could fit in; the final number being around 20. Some of these were proven old favourites like *Salvia* 'Angel Wings', *S.* 'Mrs. Bucket', *S.* 'Denver' and *S.* 'Pink Velour'. But the majority are seedlings that we have grown on like *S.* 'Jazzy', *S.* 'Remy', *S.* 'Mardi Gras', *S.* 'Masquerade', *S.* 'Towers Gold' and *S.* 'Mayzie' to name a few.

We have also planted a few in big pots down the sides of the house but they only get a couple of hours of sun so they do struggle a little.

We trim our salvias at anytime throughout the year and we do cut back quite hard. We then feed with an organic fertilizer, mulch and water well.

We have so many favourites in the small growing varieties but I would have to say that *S.* 'Jazzy' is a must have. It grows in a dense round ball that is massed in two-toned pink flowers growing to 60cm x 60cm.

We often have people in our village who are out walking stop and tell us how beautiful our garden looks and it is surprising how many people have never heard of salvias before.

We have no more room in our small front garden so have been adding plants to the communal garden over the road from us. When that is full, we may just keep on working our way down the gardens.



Salvia 'Jazzy'



Salvia 'Mayzie'



What's Not To Like About This One?

Text and Photo by Geoff Crowhurst

I have grown *Salvia chiapensis* for many years, but since it was only discovered in the wild, in the Mexican province of Chiapas in 1981, I couldn't have had it all that long. Its suitability as a garden plant would have ensured its rapid spread around the horticultural world. I am not aware of any hybrids from *S. chiapensis*, which would be very interesting if they came about. The wild plants grow at a considerable elevation, in what are called 'cloud forests' – moist habitats in partial shade. They will spread both by seed and suckering of the rootstock, though never becoming a problem in the garden.

The bright flowers, often described as 'fuchsia pink', in the right garden conditions will come year-round. Betsy Clebsch (*The New Book of Salvias*) says it is a 'tireless bloomer' and John Whittlesey (*The Plant Lover's Guide to Salvias*) adds that it is 'cheerful and long blooming'. The leaves are a nice shiny mid-green, and if cut, the willowy flowering stems would make a nice addition to a bunch of mixed flowers.

In my own garden outside a single front Victorian terrace house, *S. chiapensis* forms an elegant ground cover to three tall Tea roses inside a low brick wall. Facing south, the garden bed is mostly in shade in winter, but sunny in summer, with the salvia continuing to flower whatever the season. It needs a modest amount of water. So far, I haven't tried to spread mulch,

but have a bag of sheep manure which should do the trick. From time to time, I trim the stems to about a foot high to encourage new growth. It would seem to do best in positions out of the hottest afternoon sun.

I have never had seed on my plants, but cuttings are easy to strike, so I should get busy and grow some new plants for my local garden club. I have rarely seen plants for sale at retail nurseries or seen them growing in gardens, so it seems a very garden-worthy plant that has gone under the radar.



Salvia chiapensis

New Kid On The Block

Text by Lyndi Garnett

Most people go to a nursery, either Bunnings or their local nursery, to browse, having a look at what's on display, perhaps finding something new, especially something new in Salvias. When people find something new, or think they have found something new, they look at the label and think, "I haven't got that one", but looking at the photo, they keep looking and thinking, I'm sure I have this one, I'm sure it's called something else??

They are well-founded in those thoughts, as there is a New Kid on the Block – "Elite". There are many nurseries that stock some of the Elite range – but not Bunnings yet.

The Elite range covers a very large range of flowering perennials, including some Salvias. They hail out of a very good nursery in SA, but what has happened is that Ball Australia has sold the **Genetic Rights** of many of their plants, including most of the Mirage Group of Salvias.

They will be known as Elite 'Pale Pink' or Elite 'Cherry Red' etc Some other Salvias have been renamed (Ball Aust must have bought the name rights to some of these common Salvias some time ago and resold them to Elite). Some like the *Salvia leucantha* 'Velour' series will have an Elite at the beginning of the name, e.g., Elite 'Velour Pink' or 'White', but in small print on the back of the label will be that the plant is a Salvia. Others like S. 'Black and Bloom', S. 'Mesa Azure' and the 'Salmia Series' have all been renamed; why because they can!

So don't be duped into buying more plants with the label of Elite, thinking it's a new Salvia, as you probably already have this plant growing in your garden.

Check out Poplar Grove Nursery – they produce some wonderful colourful displays of plants in baskets, tubs and balcony plants – but you might know them as something else.

A Short Salvia Story

Text and Photo by Geoff Crowhurst

I've had *Salvia coccinea* 'Brenthurst' for some years now. But it came up in my garden quite unexpectedly – I don't remember having planted any seed, and it certainly grew in the wrong place, and had to be transplanted. It sets seed very readily, so I won't be without it whether I plan anything or not. A while ago, I acquired a rectangular planter box on legs, which fits two 28cm square plastic pots. I've got the salvias in these, which look nice through the glass doors of my kitchen annex, which are only opened a bit to let air in when needed. Out in the back garden, I have another salvia surprise. A bright red *Salvia coccinea* (with green calyx) has suddenly appeared, and I certainly didn't plant that! I am looking after it carefully, so I can save some seed. A garden is never without surprises – mostly of the good kind.



Salvia coccinea 'Brenthurst'

What Is It About Blue?

Text by Maureen Scoble, photos from VSSG website

I had the Salvia Group to my garden on 15th February. It was a perfect day. Not too hot or windy and the garden looked okay despite no rain for 7 weeks. I cut it back just before Xmas. Everything was starting to get too big and floppy so out came the secateurs. The plants looked happy and healthy by February, but quite a number were not in flower. I am actually writing this in early March and after decent rain last week everything is flowering. Typical! I also think absolutely everything in the garden grew by ½ metre overnight.

How nice it is to have garden visitors. You know when the Salvia Group visit, they will wander around, talk about the plants, admire the good bits and be tactful about the not so good. We exchange ideas and plants and take cuttings of things we lust after. Great fun.

This morning as I walked around the garden, I thought it was missing something. In the last Salvia Newsletter I wrote about “Renovations at Avondale”. Now I am thinking of more ... well perhaps not a big renovation. I just want more blue. Already here are *Salvia uliginosa*, *S. azurea*, *S. 'Black and Blue'*, *S. cacaliifolia*, *S. chamaedryoides* and *S. patens* 'Cambridge Blue'. It is not enough. I have lots of mauves and purples and lilacs but not enough true blue.

I think blue is a favourite colour in the garden for many people. So many flowers though are not true blue. They have shades of mauve or lilac or lavender in them and if the flowers are small they can disappear at a distance. Christopher Lloyd at Great Dixter



Salvia azurea



Salvia chamaedryoides

mixed his blue Salvias with orange Marigolds. There ... that got your attention. He certainly made sure they were not overlooked. Of course, there were garden visitors who called it poor taste but he just laughed. He thought those visitors were too precious to enjoy gardening. Even Gertrude Jekyll felt that a complete blue border was a mistake. A blue border needed a contrast near it to prevent it looking dull. I can see that making this new garden bed is not going to be easy. If I need to add another colour, what should it be? Too many other colours and it is no longer a blue border is it? Perhaps just one other colour ... say some fire engine red. In my imagination I have a whole garden bed filled with all my blue Salvias plus other blue plants like Echinops, Love-in-a-Mist, Ceonthus and Baptisia. Then perhaps dotted here and there could be the reds like *S. 'Josh'*, *S. miniata*, *Crocasmia 'Lucifer'* and scarlet Penstemon.

On the other hand I have just stopped to gaze at a patch of *S. patens* 'Cambridge Blue'. What a glorious thing. Why is it so stingy with its flowers? It should be covered with them. Maybe instead of renovating a flower bed, I could just squeeze in another 20 plants of *S. Patens*. That might satisfy my passion. What do you think?

**Benefits of being
a Member of the
Victorian Salvia
Study Group**



Being a member gives you:

- Discounted pot prices
- Discounted book prices
- Discounted Seed – buy 2 pkts, get 1 free
- Exclusive access to visiting private gardens
- Exclusive access to the Group's Salvia Library
- Exclusive access to Living Salvia Collections

Nobelius in Autumn

Photos by Lyndi Garnett



S. purberula



S. 'Bethelii'



S. lasiantha



S. 'Anthony Parker'



Pinks and purples



S. madrensis



S. 'Lolita', *S. 'Meigan's Magic'* and *S. 'Joan'*



View of Nobelius looking towards Puffing Billy Station



S. elegans (pineapple)

- Opportunity to purchase rare and unusual Salvias
- Receive the *Salvia News* Magazine
- Great resource of information on How to Grow Salvias
- Identification of Salvias
- Notification of sale days and garden festivals

- Opportunity to maintain the Salvia garden to learn how Salvias grow.

Join up to receive these exclusive benefits

Pruning and Associated Nightmares

Text by Maureen Scoble, photo from VSSG website

I have been meaning to write this article for quite some time. There have been problems. Firstly, I couldn't make up my mind on the title. Initially I thought something like 'To Prune or not to Prune, that is the Question'. However perhaps you would think that I am making fun of Shakespeare? The next title I thought of was 'The First Cut is the Deepest' but I couldn't remember who sang that song so I went with 'Nightmares'.



Salvia 'Christine Yeo'

Please understand that this subject is fraught with danger. You could be physically injured from secateurs, chain saws, knives and stakes. Health insurance is mandatory. Stay off ladders ... just hire a teenager.

Not only plants lives are on the line here, but working relationships can fail and friendships falter. This subject is dynamite so you had better pay attention and take notes. I know all this because my pruning technique leaves proper gardeners gasping for breath. Plus after they have watched me in action, they need to lie down in a darkened room with a stiff whisky (make that 2 glasses). Poor Lyndi has to keep a close eye on me at Nobelius. She knows my pruning technique usually involves a very close 'short back and sides'. If there is much left of the plant she considers it a good day. However, I think we have a reasonable working relationship now. Lyndi steers me towards plants that can survive this treatment. When I am finished, as she says, you can certainly see where I have been. As for me, I am learning also. I can see that Nobelius is an important National Collection of Salvias. Some are very touchy about their pruning requirements. Also Lyndi wants them to flower so that people can see what they look like. What is needed and appropriate for a private garden, would not work at Nobelius.

That now brings me back to what I do here at Avondale. Firstly, I am not a good pruner. Certainly no expert. So what I say here is how it happens in my garden. Why you garden and how you garden are for you to know. What

plants you like and how you put them into your space makes your garden specially yours. In my own garden I like LOTS of plants. I like to plant them close so they cosy up together. Not for me the plant/soil/plant/soil type of garden. If I see any soil, it is missing a plant so in one goes. The inevitable consequence is I fight a constant rear guard action to keep plants reasonable. Some try to totally obliterate their neighbours. I can generally keep things under control but

sometimes total destruction is called for. When I am overwhelmed, I must do this. I like chaos to a point, then order must be restored. I'm a Virgo so I can't help it.

After a big cut back the garden still must look okay. You know what I mean. I'm obsessive/compulsive so the paths must be clear, no weeds in the beds and everything straight. It must look cared for. Of course, some plants need help to stand up. I have a series of small fences I got from Bunnings, plus stakes and guards to help keep them upright. For example, I grow *Salvia* 'Christine Yeo' and she tends to fall forward. If I put a little fence in front of her she just pokes her flowers through and I can still use the path. Another thing that worries me is that some of the bigger Salvias flop over. *S. macrophylla* does that. When the outer branches flop over the next-door plant I cut it off. I do not like the way it looks then. The legs do not look good. I am trying to be very restrained this year and not rip it out. I have planted something in front to hide the legs. I will try to hold on until next year but I make no promises. I can only be good for a limited time. I am reading a book called 'In Kiltumper' which is about a garden in Ireland. They don't have an easy life there. If a storm is expected when all the Dahlias are up, they go around the garden and stake them all. Anywhere from 50 to 100 and it is done individually! What am I complaining about? Really though, we all want our gardens to look nice and we all have our own methods of achieving this. Enjoy your way and sleep well without Nightmares.

Growing Salvias in Cool Temperate Zones

Text and photos by Kerin-Lea Kelberg, Horticulturist / Artist, Fascinating Botanicals
<https://fascinatingbotanic.wixsite.com/fascinating-botanica?fbclid>



Growing salvias in cool temperate zones like Tasmania takes some research. Many salvias don't like the harsh cold and the wet winters. Therefore you are best to select varieties that are perennials and are suited to these conditions. Following are my tried and tested varieties that last for many years in these conditions.

Salvia greggii

Salvia greggii are perennial shrubs that grow to around 90cm in height. I have found these are best grown in the warmest part of my garden. I have a footpath garden that is divided by a concrete footpath. The stored heat in the concrete and the full sun position makes this the perfect spot for this variety.

Salvia greggii prefers well drained soil that is on the alkaline side. They are very hardy and can handle frost and dry conditions. They are also perfect for pots.

Flowering in spring through to autumn in shades of red, peach, pink, purple and white. My favourites are Candle Glow, Mirage Soft Pink, La Luna and Tangerine.

Salvia nemorsa

I can't get enough of these plants. This variety is on the smaller side growing to around 40cm in height. In flower they are a sight to be seen. I have mine growing in pots to assist the roots of clematis staying cool. However, I am about to create a garden to showcase low growing plants which will feature my collection of *Salvia nemorsa*.

Salvia nemorsa is a hardy perennial native to parts of central Europe and western Asia. Knowing the origin of plants is a great indicator of their growing conditions.

My other salvias

- *Salvia verticillata* 'White Rain' a perennial growing to a height of 45cm. Verticillata is a common wildflower in Europe, so perfect for Tasmania.
- *Salvia urea* and *Salvia lanceolata* both of these are from South Africa. Both of these varieties are known for their aromatic foliage and unusual coloured flowers. These are both a wonderful addition to floral arrangements. These are growing in a protected area at the base of my roses.

- *Salvia forskahlei* is a stunning perennial with its massive spikes of blue flowers. This plant originates from Turkey and is suitable to Tasmania's climate. Excellent cut flower.
- *Salvia involucrata* 'Mulberry Jam' has been a wonderful surprise. I have it growing in a mixed pot in full sun. It has been flowering nonstop for months.
- *Salvia involucrata* 'Bethellii' growing to 2m metres this is breathtaking in flower. Another excellent salvia for cut flowers. I grow this plant on the edge of my woodland garden in a protected warm area.
- *Salvia uliginosa* (Bog Sage) with its blue flowers is a favourite of the bees. I adore this plant with its long spikes of flowers that dance in the breeze. This salvia is very adaptable and hardy. It can spread but I have never had an issue with maintaining it. Sadly this salvia isn't suitable for cut flowers.

I do grow other more common salvias like Hot Lips and African Sky in my gardens. My passion is plants from the Northern Hemisphere especially North America and I am Sweet Pea expert. I have created and filled large beds to create meadows, woodlands and prairies. From these I harvest seeds and stock from by business Fascinating Botanicals. These gardens are also the inspiration for my botanical artwork. I have planted a large orchard and grow lots of unusual edibles which I then turn into jams, syrups and so much more. There is heaps of information on my website and I have a Botanical Library – Snail Mail that is posted each month that features a plant and horticultural tips. Please have look around my website and social media. I am always more than happy to help.



Bog Sage (*Salvia uliginosa*)
flowering in my garden

Names Can Be Confusing

Text and photos by Lyndi Garnett

Plant names can be confusing and a bit tricky to remember, especially if they contain the name Raspberry and if you don't grow some of these plants.

We have several *Salvias* that contain the name Raspberry:

'Raspberry Surprise'
'Ripe Raspberry'
'Raspberry Royale'
'Raspberry Ripple'
'Raspberry Swirl'

The other problem with remembering these names is that Raspberry is often confused with Strawberry; both are small berries of similar colour, and most of the names refer to the colour of the flower, which resembles the colour of the fruit, both Strawberry and Raspberry, so no wonder people get confused with which is which, they are both extremely similar. I'm pleased to note that *Salvias* don't have many names that include Strawberry.

Now back to names containing Raspberry. The first two names are medium to tall *Salvias*, and the others are microphylla/greggii type plants, so small growing shrubby plants 40-60cmH.

I will try to sort through those differences:



'Raspberry Surprise': A bushy, dense shrub 2-2.5mH, one of its parents being *S.karwinskii*. A really nice neat shrub, with almost a conical shape. Leaves are large, lanceolate, mid-green coloured with a short pinkish petiole.

Flowers appear late winter/early spring, with magnificent globes of raspberry coloured flowerheads with tubular flowers and crimson calyces. In the right light, this really looks a lovely raspberry colour.

Having *S.karwinskii* as a parent, it is tougher than many others with large leaves. It will tolerate a lot more sun, wind and a light frost. This is a good plant to have in the middle of a large bed or at the back of a small bed or even on a corner of a path (conifers are often used in this manner). Easy to grow and moderately quick-growing. We have a lovely specimen at Nobelius, which is starting to bud now.



'Ripe Raspberry':

This has perennial type growth, creating a clump, meaning many stems come straight out of the ground rather than creating a bush/shrub with one stem.

Growing approx. 1.2-1.5mH, leaves are elliptic/lanceolate, mid green and slightly hairy (again, *S.karwinskii* is a parent). All stems are well clothed up to the flowerheads, which are large clusters of a beautiful, rich raspberry colour semi-tubular/microphylla type of flower and dark calyces. Flowering in Autumn and Winter, they appear well above the foliage to attract passing insects. A great plant for the middle or the rear of a large mixed border. Growing in a sunny position, the raspberry colour would be stunning, very much an eye-catching plant when in flower. Growing under a tree or too much shade will make the stems lanky, but a protected full sun position will be perfect. Although hardy when well established, it will need some extra watering during the hot, dry summers. A plant well worth a try.

'Raspberry Royale' (greggii): This was one of the first greggii hybrids to come into Victoria in the 1990's. Unfortunately, it has been taken by various nurseries and sold under various names including 'Navajo Raspberry' and 'Navajo Pink'. This is a small bushy shrub 40cmH and being a greggii, it has only one stem (not multiple stems as some microphyllas can



produce), all stems are very well clothed with small linear leaves, some have pointed tips, while others are obovate shaped. Flowers are a beautiful raspberry pink colour, a typical greggii/microphylla style flower with raspberry-coloured calyces, which really enhance the colour of the flower. Once in flower, they seem to flower constantly, more or less the whole year, covering the whole shrub; these gorgeous brightly coloured flowers are held above the foliage to attract bees and other pollinators passing through. The greggii Salvias seem hardier for our dry, hot summers than many microphylla hybrids. Although they will tolerate light frosts, they hate wet feet or being waterlogged, so good drainage is a must.



‘Raspberry Ripple’ (greggii): This is a small bushy shrub 40-60cmH. When this was first introduced, coming down from Qld, it was only known as ‘Raspberry’; we added the word ‘Ripple’ to the name to stop confusion with *S. greggii* ‘Raspberry Royale’. This has a more

open habit and growing that little taller. The stems are not as densely clothed with leaves as in the former plant; leaves are mid-green, still small, oblong, with the midrib clearly showing. Flowers are the same greggii/microphylla style, but a brighter red with very dark calyces, rather than the pink of ‘Raspberry Royale’. Again, a small tough hardy plant for the edging border or within a mixed border, loving a sunny open position in most well-drained soil types.



‘Raspberry Swirl’ (microphylla): This is a small, open, bushy shrub, 40-60cmH. Another *Salvia* that came down from Qld. Growing mainly from one stem to form a shrub; leaves are much longer and darker with an undulation to the edges, making this plant quite different from the others. Whilst still the typical greggii/microphylla type of flowers, they are quite different, as the two side lobes are often branched outwards, these add to the lovely raspberry coloured edge around the whole flower, and the middle lobe is a paler pink colour, giving it a two-tone swirling appearance for its very apt name when the flower moves in the wind. Grown in an open sunny position, it is proving quite hardy in our dry, hot summers, cold winters and tolerating a light frost.

I hope these descriptions help sort out any confusion between the names, but the best way to stop the confusion is to grow each plant and make your own observations on how each one grows and flowers.

How Did You Start?

Text by Maureen Scoble, photo from VSSG website

I was thinking last week about how my garden started. Why it ended up looking like it does. Then I thought it would be very interesting to know about other people's gardening history. Maybe like me they have only gardened in one place. Perhaps they have had several gardens and had to deal with different soils and climates. If I tell you my gardening history, will you tell me yours?

I live in Avondale Heights in the West of Melbourne. We bought a little brick veneer house on a suburban block in 1985. We lived in it for 10 years before we pulled it down and built our current house. It had to be done ... Bob paints in his spare time and the old house could no longer cope with it all (neither could I!). The garden that was here was like most of the others in the street. The front was dominated by a beautiful Liquid Amber. The back yard had a large lawn with garden around the edges. Centre stage was an apple tree and a Hills Hoist.

During the first few years I messed around with native plants which certainly gave quick results. I was working shift work in a new job so of course gardening wasn't yet top of my list. When things had settled down at work, I started to think more about what I was doing outside. It wasn't good. I do remember being away for 3 weeks in October and coming home to mind blowing loveliness. All those native plants had grown and flowered and it looked wonderful. It didn't last of course. Like many people, I didn't know that you actually had to do some work in a native garden. Things kind of fell apart while we had the new house built.

In 1998 Bob and I planned a month's holiday in England. We hired a car and drove ourselves to some wonderful places, including gardens I had admired from my books. Any gardener knows that Sissinghurst is a Mecca. It was absolute perfection of course. However, even an amateur like me could tell it wouldn't work well in Avondale Heights in Melbourne. Our rainfall simply wouldn't allow it. There were a couple of other gardens that gave me some great ideas though.

Beth Chatto gardens in Essex. Believe it or not, they have quite a low rainfall in her area and she had made a dry garden in an old carpark.

When I saw it, I said immediately ... "when I get home I'm going to do this". I did. Her plants went directly into gravel and she used tough plants to make a magic, glorious garden that just flowed. It was and still is a wonderful garden. The plants were watered in and then had to survive on rainfall. That is my aim too. I have no lawn. I hate that the brown and dead look over Summer. When it is hot and horrible I don't want my garden to look hot and horrible.

Then came Christopher Lloyd at Great Dixter. The garden there was tightly planted so there was little bare earth to be seen. He had wonderful colour combinations that certainly made you sit up and take notice. I noticed the Salvias of course, but it wasn't until much later that I discovered how hard they had to work to keep them alive in England. Most had to be lifted and stored over Winter! Great Dixter is open to the public for 7 months of the year. It had to look perfect all that time so he was an expert in succession planting. He was truly a master craftsman.

At Hidcote I admired the lovely red border which featured Salvias that looked so happy I added them to my list. Lots of *S. patens*. What a beautiful blue it is. Hestercombe was wonderful. Lots of stone work and brick paving with self-seeding plants scattered throughout. There is a very long pergola which forms a backdrop to the Great Plat. The Great Plat is a huge sunken garden divided into 4 sections. Each section contained salvias but they were annuals so I didn't write them down. Looked good though. One of my favourite memories was Barnsley House which is Rosemary Verey's masterpiece. Her Laburnum Walk underplanted with purple alliums or red tulips is recognised world-wide. While there I trotted off to look at a particular combination of plants, leaving Bob to take photos of the famous Walk. When I returned, I found him chatting to Rosemary Verey. What was he discussing with the world-famous gardener? The roof tiles! I kid you not! She seemed quite happy though so what do I know?

Our month in England went very quickly but on our return I got busy. Lots of pulling out, digging

up and moving about. Gravel ordered too. Our backyard was a mess for months. In went lots of my salvia selections and other tough plants from my favourite nursery. Gradually it started to look better and I stuck to my plan. Water the new things through there first summer but after that they must just cope with rainfall.

The next stage of my gardening life was influenced by a trip to France. I have already mentioned that Bob paints in his spare time (art not house!). We went to France with a group of painters who had hired a Chateau in Provence. How wonderful was that? Those of us who went as partners not painters, went for long walks in the country-side, visited villages and shopped in local markets. Magic. One day I discovered that there was a famous garden about 43 kms away. The garden was La Louvre and it was created by Nicole De Vesian. The garden is set on a steep hillside so is really a series of terraces. Lots of clipped local fauna, rocks and

stone, old brickwork and very few flowers. I was determined to get there. Nobody else wanted to go so I hired a taxi. There were problems. I couldn't speak French and he couldn't speak English. I handed over a piece of paper with the address and off we went. Then he said "you like, you no like" ... pressed the CD button and on came "You ain't nuthin but a hound dog, cryin all the time". So all the way there (43kms) and back(43kms), I had 60s rock. Actually though I enjoyed every minute. When we got to the town, we were early. He took me to a bar and bought us a glass of wine and we managed a sort of communication with lots of hand signs etc! I paid for him to come into the garden with me. We both enjoyed it very much. Of course when I got back home to Melbourne I turned our front garden into my version of Nicole's wonderful creation. What memories.

That is the story of my garden. So far anyway. What is your story?



Patens Blue

Lynne Cannard's Garden, Freshwater Creek, Geelong and Chris Tournier's Cottage Farm Perennial Nursery, Gnarwarre, Geelong

Text and photos by Heather Lucas

On 22nd March, 2026, we were lucky enough to be able to visit not one but two great gardens. I was also very lucky to score a lift with my fellow committee member, Norm Winn, and we were all blessed with wonderful weather for the day as well.

What is also great is that all our garden visits are different, with large, small, dry, coastal, in the hills (Dandenong's) and suburban gardens. This particular garden visit day was an absolute treat as we had two different gardens, one very large garden with a cut-flower paddock, and secondly, one with a nursery and coffee shop. What more could one ask for!!

So, the first garden was Lynne Cannard's garden in Freshwater Creek, a very large garden with lots of salvias and perennials, as well as an extensive garden area of dahlias of all sorts and a beautiful cut-flower paddock. What a treat this was. When we arrived, we all had a cup of tea or coffee, and there were also some wonderful scones with jam and cream, and other treats to have for a morning tea. Lyn had some wonderful and very large salvia plants, among them were *Salvia semiatrata*, *S. 'Waverley'*, *S. 'Phyllis Fancy'*, *S. leucantha*, *S. 'Indigo Spires'*, *S. 'Wendy's Wish'* and *S. 'Kisses and Wishes'*, to name a few.

Then the dahlia garden beds, oh my, I was very tempted to jump from salvias to dahlias (okay, said with tongue in cheek, as we all know my first love is salvias), but her dahlias were superb. Then on our very extensive and great garden walk, there was the cut flower paddock of all sorts of flowers that Lynne cuts, makes bouquets and sells.

It was hard to pull ourselves away from her garden, but on we went to Chris Tournier's garden, nursery and coffee shop/tea house in Gnarwarre, Geelong.

Oh, and what a great visit this was. We parked in the car park area and walked through a gravel

pathway with several lovely garden beds, past the nursery (which we would go and peruse after our lunch), and on to the beautiful coffee shop area with a lovely, large, roofed wooden deck area with tables and chairs to have one's coffee, tea and cakes that Chris sold. We were allowed to bring our lunch items that everyone bought to share at these tables, so that made it a wonderful feast and a get-together for all of us to share.

Then we went and checked out the nursery, which was full of lots of different plants and from which I actually bought a dahlia (hmm, the start of my next collection of plants!). I then walked around the garden surrounding the cafe with a lovely wooden arbour with lots of plants. I also spotted some wonderful glass ceramic plants on stakes – one orange liliiums and also a gorgeous pink protea (hit a spot with me, as I grew up in South Africa, where the King Protea is the national flower), but I resisted the urge to purchase one. Now, of course, I wish I had, so maybe a trip back to Geelong in the future will be required.

All in all, an extremely enjoyable day with great gardens and lovely hosts; many thanks to both Lynne and Chris for letting us come and share their gardens.



Lynne's cut-flower garden



Lynne's cut-flower garden close up



Chris' walk-way towards the nursery and coffee shop



Chris' garden viewed from the coffee shop



Chris' carpark and entrance



Some more of Lynne's dahlias



Another view of Lynne's garden

WHAT'S HAPPENING THIS WINTER

2026

JUNE – SUN 7TH

Propagating and Potting up Day – Nobelius Heritage Park, Emerald (Crighton Rd, beneath the Packing Shed, along the Puffing Billy Train Line – on the lawn in front of the Emerald Museum) – 1pm-3pm

- Learn how and when to propagate Salvias.
- How to take cuttings of difficult Salvias.
- Learn how and when to pot up those cuttings or repot plants.
- Take home pots of cuttings & repotted plants.

Tea & Coffee provided. Bookings essential.
Email Lyndi if coming.



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JUNE – SAT 13TH

A Gardener's Day out –

CANCELLED dues to lack of interest

CONTACT LYNDI

Email: lgarnett844@gmail.com | Ph (03) 9803 4534

JUNE – WED 24TH (LAST WEDNESDAY IN THE MONTH OR THURSDAY 2ND JULY – FIRST THURSDAY OF NEXT MONTH)

Garden Day – Salvia Garden, Nobelius Heritage Park, Crichton Rd, Emerald – 10am-3pm

All welcome, to come and learn how to grow and identify Salvias.

What to bring: secateurs, gloves, a tarp, plastic bag for cuttings, a hat and a plate to share for lunch and appropriate clothing for the day.

Tea/ coffee will be provided.

Please phone Lyndi if coming. Ph 98034534 or email lgarnett844@gmail.com

Other dates: Wed July 29th / Thurs 6th Aug –
Wed 26th Aug / 3rd Sept

Come and see the new season's Salvias. All bright new colours to match and contrast everything growing in your garden.



Looking up the hill Nobelius

SEPTEMBER – WED 27TH

Visit Ailsa Hemphill's Gorgeous Flower Garden – 201 Tucks Rd, Main Ridge – 11.30am

Phone Lyndi if coming – 9803 4534



Beautiful view over the Bay



Sunny garden path leading to loftier shady trees filled areas



A garden path through vibrant perennials and clipped shrubs, leading to more surprises

JUNE – WED 30TH (LAST WEDNESDAY IN THE MONTH)

Garden Day – Salvia Garden, Nobelius Heritage Park, Crichton Rd, Emerald – 10am-3pm

All welcome, to come and learn how to grow and identify Salvias.

What to bring: secateurs, gloves, a tarp, plastic bag for cuttings, a hat and a plate to share for lunch and appropriate clothing for the day.

Tea/ coffee will be provided.

Please phone Lyndi if coming. Ph 98034534 or email lgarnett844@gmail.com



Looking up the hill Nobelius

Maureen Scoble's Garden, Avondale Heights

Text and photos by Heather Lucas

I have been to Maureen's garden twice before, 3rd April 2011 and 17 February 2019, both times coming away with awe at how gorgeous her garden is. Well, it just gets better each visit. This garden visit was on Sunday, 15th February 2026, and I had the most wonderful day. The garden blew me away, just an incredible wow of plants, and all sooo healthy and perfectly positioned.

Maureen has lots of different plants and lots of salvias to make any salvia lover happy. As she is lucky enough to have a garden with good volcanic soil, her plants just thrive and grow far more floriferous than any of my equivalent salvia plants. Particularly gorgeous was a Fisher Signature Salvia, called 'Lavish' which has deep purple flowers. The Fisher series of salvias was bred in Australia by John Fisher and includes

'Vivacious' (magenta), 'Ocean Blue' (vivid blue), 'Glamorous' (magenta-purple) and 'Elegance' (deep magenta pink). Other salvias in Maureen's garden include *S. 'Heatwave Glow'*, *S. oxyphora*, *S. macrophylla*, *S. coccinea* 'Tavistock' and *S. 'Amistad'*. Plants that particularly caught my attention were Berberis, Odontonema, Dwarf Pomegranate, Tradescantia, Ceratostigma, Mirabilis multiflora (monkey plant) with brilliant hot pink flowers and a wonderful Hibiscus Syriacus Single White, which was simply stunning.

Of particular note was the fact that both the front and back gardens have absolutely no lawn areas at all, with small gravel-stoned areas and paths with plant beds. There were also many pots, large urns and obelisks with Clematis Golden Tiara, Clematis Integrifolia Rooguchi, and a personal favourite of mine, at least 3 pots/



obelisks with a climber *Maurandya Barclayana*, which has purple trumpet flowers.

There were a good number of people who came, and of course, our lunch, as per normal, was full of all types of different delights to eat. Then, to top the day off, Geoff Crowhurst had brought a tray of pots of *Salvia coccinea* 'Tavistock' for everyone to take one home.

Wonderful garden, lovely people and great conversations, oh and of course Maureen, the hostess with the mostest.



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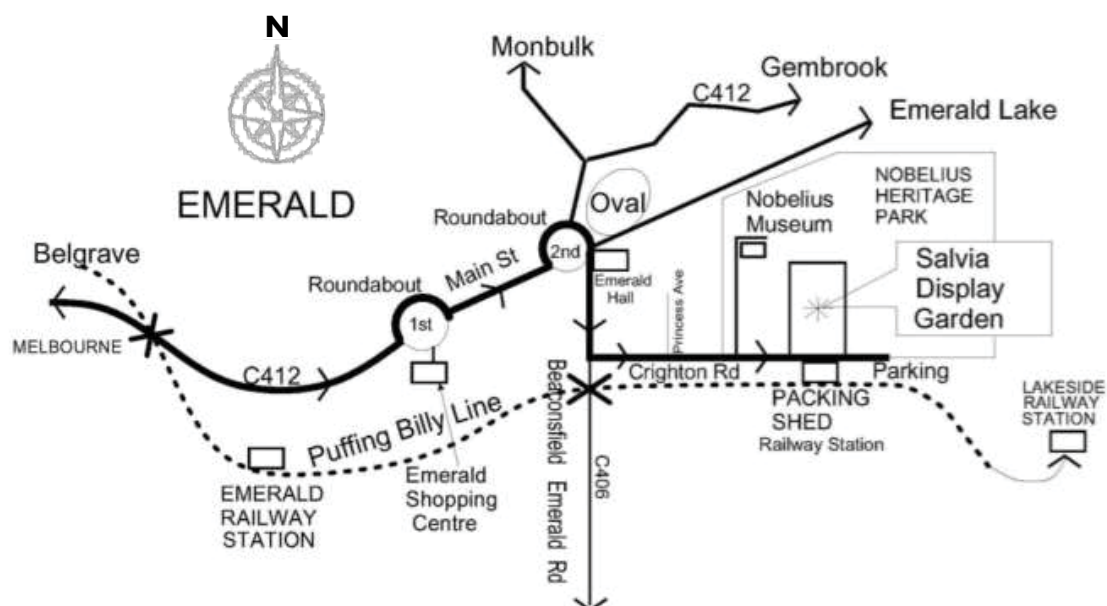
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DIRECTIONS TO THE SALVIA DISPLAY GARDEN



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