



GARDEN DESIGN STUDY GROUP

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Newsletter
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Leader's Comments

Happy New Year to you all! Ros and I are very grateful for the rain we had after Christmas but the very hot weather since has not helped the garden much. Still, we and the plants have to cope.

We have recovered from the Conference in November which attracted over 200 registrants. As part of the Conference, we had a meeting of Study Group Leaders with the new ANPSA Study Group Coordinator Jane Fountain and the previous Coordinator Neville Page. There was discussion about the issue of archiving the various newsletters since the National Library has written to us saying they no longer want to do it. The Australian National Botanic Gardens Library told us that they would be happy to collect all the hard copy newsletters from all the Study Groups. We are also going to encourage all Study Groups to load their newsletters on the ANPSA website and also to update the descriptions of their activities. In addition, we want to encourage each Study Group to index their newsletters. The GDSG has all its newsletters from the beginning loaded on the website and they are all indexed. If you haven't tried the index, it is well worth using as it is a very easy way of finding articles in the whole collection ([link to the index http://anpsa.org.au/design/GDSGnews.html](http://anpsa.org.au/design/GDSGnews.html)).

The next evening, members of the GDSG who were attending the conference met and talked about future activities. About 20 people gathered and we all talked about the future of the Study Group and how to make it more popular. Lawrie Smith volunteered that he would try to get some members in the Brisbane area together to visit gardens and write reports for the *Newsletter*. Lib Bartholomeusz in South Australia is trying to do the same thing. There was enthusiastic support from the group to expand the activities and interest in gardens to other regions. As in all activities, it takes someone to serve as a catalyst to get things started.

At the Conference, I was elected President of ANPSA. It is my goal to work with Jane Fountain to reinvigorate some Study Groups and to get the website more up to date. The ANPSA rules and regulations under which we operate also need to be examined and updated. This was last done over 10 years ago.

Correspondence

Jeff Howes, NSW

Ros,
Hi another great NL

This article was in last Saturday's Sydney Morning Herald 5 Dec 2015 and Angus is asking why we need to look at kangaroo paws as just plants so they can form part of everyone's garden and not just grown in 'native' gardens. A perennial subject for our GDSG.

Not sure about copyright but interesting none the less.

<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/-gl90mn.html> (see page 6)

A great article on the Eucalyptus Seminar Friends of RBG Cranbourne conducted written by Diana Snape.

A few comments if I could:

Many years ago (1974) I purchased from the NSW Forestry (as it was then known) tree nursery in Sydney *Eucalyptus ficifolia* var. 'Guilfoylei' which they stated as "very plentiful around Sydney". In 2006 I asked for clarification as to what Eucalyptus it actually is. They replied it was *E. calophylla* var. *ficifolia*. It is still growing well in my garden and is about 8m in height and flowers every year at Christmas. I have seeds from the trees large gum nuts and have successfully grown them on. The flowers are, luckily for me, the same as the parent plant. Has it been renamed as *Corymbia* or stayed as an Eucalypt?

Another small eucalypt I have successfully grown and had it flower profusely was *E. pressiana*. It grew to 1.5m tall and lasted for 5 years then died due to Sydney's humidity and a wet summer. (see photo next page).

The other small Mallee that I am growing successfully but has never flowered is *E. olivacea* 'Lorikeet'. It is about 3m height and multi trunked.

Should we be growing small local eucalypts from seed or asking nurseries to stock a range of them as they are unavailable from nurseries especially in my part of Sydney?



Eucalyptus calophylla var. *ficifolia* Photos by Jeff Howes



Eucalyptus preissiana and lorikeet

Pam Yarra, Vic.

Hi Ros & Ben,

Hope you & your garden are surviving the summer heat.

I am in the process of designing to soon plant out a new garden bed. A very large 35 year old *Banksia spinulosa* snapped off a large branch, which was rotted. As the remaining branches & trunk were rotted, I now have a clean slate. I am only planting drought tolerant plants, including some indigenous. For me it is such a waste of time & water to be now putting in water dependent plants. One of my best heat surviving plants is *Crowea*, both *saligna* & *exalata*. The tank water for the vegetables has been used up, so I use mains for them & they are thriving. Great to eat home grown produce, tastes nothing like those bought in shops.

Wishing you both a happy & healthy 2016,

Kind regards,

Pam

Cloudy Hill garden - Spring 2015

A country garden located in the high country near Blayney

Fiona Johnson, NSW and Canberra

Spring is here. Finally! Winter well and truly overstayed its welcome this year. Not only did we have unusually heavy frosts (and the snow of course) but the cold weather seemed to linger far longer than was usual - or necessary, from my point of view.

However it was interesting to see what survived/thrived/died. Not surprisingly, eremophilas (emu bushes) suffered badly. Surprisingly, some westringias and leptospermum also suffered - perhaps not to the same extent (ie, didn't actually die) but showed signs of severe stress or frost burn which they've never done before. Also surprisingly, some grafted grevilleas and hakeas suffered no apparent ill effects and even went on to have their first ever flowers. But really, the vast bulk of the garden just hunkered down and waited for the warmer weather without showing any obvious signs that winter was a bother.



Callistemons and leptospermums

So, what with my already-planned removal of plants and winter's unplanned removals, I have had plenty of opportunity for planting this spring. I've had a bob each way with this. In some places I went with sensible choices, like replacing an underperforming small grevillea with the prostrate form of *Banksia paludosa*, a delightful plant which seems to do well here. And in other places I went with riskier options, like various grafted grevilleas from WA. Of course, this had nothing to do with going to the Kariong Plant Lovers Fair in September and discovering all the delights Philip Vaughan brought with him from Victoria. Oh, for deeper pockets and a softer climate!

I've decided Spring is a four-dimensional rainbow, although not quite following the accepted colour sequence. Very early on we have the violet/indigo pea flowers of hoveas, followed by the yellow of wattles and billy buttons. Next we have a wave of white with the philotheca wax flowers, and currently the various pinks of the leptospermum tea trees and callistemon bottle brushes dominate. Purples are starting to be seen in melaleuca shrubs and it won't be long before the drama of reds and golds appear with the kangaroo paws. Green accompanies each colour wave and various other colours appear and disappear as the season progresses.



Leptospermum 'Silver Fantasy'



Isopogon formosa

Trying to pick favourite plants is difficult and it often seems to be whatever has just started to flower. This spring I'm particularly enjoying the soft colours of *Leptospermum* 'Jervis Bay' and the delicate pinky white flowers of *Pimelea spectabilis* and *Pimelea sylvestris*. *Pimelea spectabilis* is new to the garden but *sylvestris* has been delighting me for several years now. Among the stronger pinks, *Eremophila* 'Yana Road', *Isopogon formosus* and *Leptospermum* 'Silver Fantasy' are always favourites. Earlier in the season *Grevillea flexuosa* had rich creamy yellow flowers with the added bonus of beautiful perfume. The Rylstone form of *Persoonia chamaepitys* has rich green pine-like foliage with bright orange flowers, a delightful combination.

This is the last of my 2015 seasonal updates for Cloudy Hill garden. I've tried to give a bit of an idea of the character and appearance of the garden and how it responds to different seasons and weather conditions.

Thanks so much, Fiona, for these garden updates. They give such a detailed idea of how your garden is developing and how it responds to the seasons. Other members – please be inspired by Fiona and write your own garden updates. Thanks, Ed.



Left: *Persoonia chamaepitys*



Right: *Pimelea sylvestris*

Gardening: kangaroo paw, our fuzzy furry friends

Excerpted from December 5, 2015 *Sydney Morning Herald*

Robin Powell



Lilac kangaroo paw. Photo: Angus Stewart

Kangaroo paws are hot in California. In coastal gardens they share the sun with succulents, salvias, agapanthus and other heat and salt-hardy plants. But here at home, instead of welcoming their fuzzy furry textures, bold, long-lasting colours and towering height into any garden, we tend to categorise them as belonging in a native garden, at home with grevilleas and banksia. It's a habit that drives Angus Stewart crazy.

Stewart has been breeding kangaroo paws for more than 35 years and reckons he is finally starting to see a change in how local gardeners use them. "We've been giving our native plants this status as natives, and they've not been seen as garden plants. There's been this idea that a proper garden is English in style, and perhaps there's a bit of cultural cringe about including natives in that mix."

The English-style flower garden has always been cheerfully multicultural, featuring plants from around the world. Stewart thinks we are finally taking the same approach, making choices based on colour and form and texture and what a plant can add to our enjoyment of the garden rather than where it comes from.

As well as restricting Australian plants to native gardens, Stewart says we are also guilty of assuming native garden plants need no actual gardening. Like any plants, he says, they respond to proper pruning, watering and feeding regimes with better growth, more flowers and longer lives.

Stewart's new book, *The Australian Native Garden: A Practical Guide*, co-written with Melbourne writer A.B. Bishop, published this week by Murdoch, addresses some of these

cultivation issues. It also has handy advice on the best available cultivars. When it comes to kangaroo paws, Stewart's recommendation is for his 2015 releases, called the "Landscaper series". His goal for these plants was "tall and tough". There is one with a lime green flower, an orange with red stems, a yellow with red stems, a two-tone pink and a lovely soft silvery lilac on deeper purple stems. All will tower up to two metres.

When the flowers are finished, the stems should be cut down to ground level, along with the fan of leaves supporting the stem. In fact, the whole plant can be cut down to the ground in late summer to allow for new fresh clean growth. They will flower regardless, but give a great show if fed with a slow-release fertiliser formulated for natives in autumn and coming into spring.

The only thing that slows them down is when the clump becomes overcrowded, so every five years or so, it's a good idea to divide the clump, replant and use the remainder to repeat the effect in other parts of the garden, or share with friends. Especially those who don't have a native garden.

Olive Pink Botanic Garden, Alice Springs, NT

Words Ros Walcott, Canberra
Photos Ben Walcott Canberra

The Olive Pink Botanic Garden is a 16-hectare botanic garden on the eastern side of the Todd River in Alice Springs, specialising in plants native to the arid central Australian region. It is now eight years since we visited this fascinating garden, and we are overdue for another visit. All of you who have already visited this garden will know that it exercises a pull to return.

The Australian Arid Regions Native Flora Reserve, now the Olive Pink Botanic Garden, was founded in 1956 after lobbying by Miss Olive Muriel Pink, (1884-1975). An anthropologist, an advocate for Aboriginal rights, a botanical artist and a woman who promoted the cultivation of Australian native plants, Miss Pink was the Garden's Honorary Curator from 1956 until her death in 1975, aged 91. Julie Marcus has written her biography, *The Indomitable Miss Pink*, for those of you who would like to read more about this remarkable women, (hard copy 2001, paperback 2002).



Photos from net

The Olive Pink Botanic Garden was opened to the public in 1985 and there are now over 600 central Australian plants represented in the garden, with 145 of these occurring naturally within the rocky hill habitat. There are also 40 rare or threatened species present. A network of walking trails takes visitors around the garden and up on to Annie Myers Hill, where great views of Alice Springs, the Todd River and the MacDonnell Ranges can be seen. There is excellent birdwatching and wildlife viewing. We saw numerous honeyeaters in the garden. Euros (hill kangaroos) are often seen, also perenties, and over 80 bird species have been recorded.

The delightful Bean Tree Cafe at Olive Pink Botanic Garden will not only feed you well but entertain you with the antics of the Western Bowerbirds while you eat. We found several bowers of this beguiling bird in the garden. The café also offers Breakfast with the Birds every day.



Western Bowerbird Photo from net



My favourite tree, amongst many delights, was the appropriately named Shiny Leaved Mallee, or *Eucalyptus lucens*. It is endemic to the MacDonnell Ranges, has a smooth trunk and exceptionally shiny green leaves. The other name for the tree, Glistening Mallee, gives you a clue to its jewelled image (middle tree below).



The original rocky hill merges into the garden almost seamlessly . In fact, one comment from a visitor reported on the Olive Pink Garden website was that he could not tell the difference between the garden and the desert, a backhanded compliment of sorts. We visited the garden at the beginning of our visit to Alice Springs and were so happy that we did so, as we returned every day after that for the peace, the birdsong and the excellent coffee. If you have not visited this garden yet, please do so, and others, like us, who have already enjoyed its ambience, please return.



A new garden and on the right, Olive Pink. Photos from the internet

Grannes: Australian garden design for dry climates

Angus Stewart Excerpted from GardenDrum, November 5, 2015

Every so often, serendipitous encounters come along that challenge my thinking about plants and gardens. I recently had such an experience on a horticultural trip to The Grampians in Victoria. I was on assignment at the Pomonal Wildflower Show, an annual event that brings local plant enthusiasts from the area together to display the best native plant specimens from their gardens. All sorts of amazing people turn up to exchange wisdom about what, how and why they grow the native plants they do.

The climate and soils of this region of western Victoria create a rich opportunity to grow plants from both eastern and western Australia together in a way that mostly eludes gardeners in other parts of the continent. The Grampians mountain range rises like a camel above the parched mallee country that surrounds it and the rugged topography creates an intriguing range of environments for gardeners who would like to explore the possibilities of some of the more difficult to grow native plants such as feather flowers and ornamental flowering eucalypts.

Amongst the eclectic range of gardeners I met at the 2015 Pomonal Wildflower Show was a couple from nearby Stawell, Greg and Glenda Lewin, who invited me to look at their garden based on Australian plants. They have created an unusual and distinctly Australian landscape at their rural property 'Grannes' outside Stawell near The Grampians where the uniquely designed buildings have a strong Australian architectural flavour that has been used as a backdrop for the garden.



Splashes of red from *Dodonaea* and red flowering gum signals a welcoming entrance at Grannes

The extensive landscape was originally designed by a horticulturally talented friend by the name of Barbara Reading. Since then, Barbara's work has been ably maintained and extended by a young horticulturist.

The overwhelming atmosphere in the garden is that this is a seasonally dry, and rather inhospitable environment to create any sort of garden. The summers are usually very dry, very hot and very long, whilst winter can be very harsh and frosts down to -5° Celsius are possible. This is a place where plant selection is absolutely critical to creating a sustainable landscape and the Lewins, to their credit, have been prepared to experiment in this regard. They have also given creative license to their garden designers to use the plants in interesting ways.

The river wattle, *Acacia cognata*, has become a popular foliage plant in many parts of southern Australia, and the various cultivars of this species have been used extensively to create something of a signature plant for Grannes. The flowing foliage and form of the various cultivars such as 'Limelight' and 'Lime Magik' make the perfect foil for the rounded, corrugated buildings and reflect the rather rounded mountains of The Grampians in the borrowed landscape beyond.

The rolling foliage forms throughout the garden are highlighted by carefully chosen flowering plants that provide focal points that draw the eye, such as red flowering gums (*Corymbia* cultivars), rose mallee (*Eucalyptus rhodantha*), mottlecah (*Eucalyptus macrocarpa*), flat or clay wattle (*Acacia glaucoptera*) and white plume grevillea (*Grevillea leucoptervis*).



Purple *Prostanthera rotundifolia*



Eucalyptus macrocarpa and golden *Acacia cognata* 'Lime Magik'

Emu bushes (*Eremophila* species) are another recurring theme through the garden, with the silvery foliage of *Eremophila nivea* and *Eremophila glabra* being perfectly suited to the semi-arid climate. Grass-like narrow-leafed lomandras provide mass displays of tussocky foliage forms that also work well in this sort of environment.



Mounded garden beds planted with silver *Eremophila nivea*

Rustic metal sculptures are also carefully placed throughout the garden to reflect a sense of the farming culture in the area, as the European settlers who survived the harsh climate were those that could get by with only a piece of fencing wire to fix many of their practical problems. Welders and wire cutters have become the current tools of local artisans who are celebrated here.

From a practical point of view the garden is predominantly mulched with gravel which better suits the semi-arid environment perhaps, but also demonstrably lowers the risk to property from bushfires. It also mimics the environment of some of the spectacular Western Australian species, something I have also found works well in wetter and more humid climates closer to the coast in eastern Australia. Another feature in parts of the garden is raised mounds to enhance the drainage in parts of the garden where clay soils can create drainage issues, on the rare occasions when the region experiences extended wet periods.



Tufts of *Lomandra* surrounds one of the rusty sculptures

The artistic side of the garden such as the sculpture installations is another core element of Glenda and Greg's philosophy. Both are heavily involved in the push from the region to create the Wildlife Art Museum of Australia (WAMA) on an impressive site that has been purchased in the foothills of The Grampians at Halls Gap. This is a garden that will provide inspiration to the many gardeners that live in inland Australia who despair at the lack of relevant gardening content provided by city-centric media outlets. As one of those many Australians who have grown up and gardened mainly in the frost free mild coastal climate of the East coast I take my hat off to the resourceful, adaptable souls who can create such a beautiful landscape in such challenging conditions.

How to grow Australian orchids for a stunning display

Excerpted from GardenDrum December 10, 2015

Jeff Howes, NSW

I have been growing Australian orchids in my Sydney native garden for nearly 30 years. Every year, I get a stunning display that wows everyone who sees it.

Hardy Australian orchids

In Australia, we have over 800 species of orchids in 107 genera, all belonging to the Orchidaceae family. My favourites are the *Thelychiton*, formerly called *Dendrobium*. These orchids are very hardy and can endure extreme drying out. In fact, many are killed by too much kindness and water. They flower best in full sun to one quarter shade.

How to grow *Thelychiton*

One of most frequent questions I receive is how do I manage to grow *Thelychiton kingianus* and *Thelychiton speciosus* orchids on my rocks and 'apparently' in the ground?



Our front courtyard filled with Australian plants, including many orchids

To establish them on large rocks, follow these simple steps:

1. Obtain some shoots that have been removed from existing orchids or cut off from existing clumps. These are called aerial roots and ideally have three or four pseudo-bulbs.
2. Hold them down with small rocks (or even tie them down with old stockings) and surround them with plenty of old leaf litter. Use an open, friable litter that does not hold too much moisture and drains well.
3. Keep the orchids moist (not wet) until new growth commences and then only water occasionally and apply more mulch as they grow.
4. You can apply liquid fertilizer monthly during spring and summer at half strength if you wish, but this is not really necessary, as they get enough nutrients from the decaying leaf litter.

To appear to get them growing in the ground (which they won't), place a few 50 mm thick paving blocks on the ground and follow the above method. In no time at all, they will multiply and reward you with an abundance of flowers.



Thelychiton speciosus, formerly *Dendrobium speciosum*, growing happily in the courtyard of our Westleigh home.

Figuring out which plants work for you

Whenever people see my orchids, they ask: which ones do I grow, how do I grow them, how do I keep them healthy? I start off by saying that Australia has over 20,000 unique plants, including the orchids. They grow from coast to desert, north to south, in many different conditions. So I suggest that people ask themselves a few simple questions, to better understand their microclimate. These include:

How much sun is present?

What type of soil is it? Is it well drained or does it retain water?

Will my plants compete for nutrients with other plants?

There are some great resources to draw on to help you with the answers to these questions including specialist orchid nurseries, a great book called *Native Orchids of Australia*, by David Jones, published by Reed Books and our Australian Plant Society website has some great information: *Starting out with Native Orchids* by Brian Walters and Les Nesbitt's *Australian Native Orchids*.

Why not give these beautiful orchids a go in your garden? You'll be amply rewarded for many years with exquisite, fragrant blooms.



Native orchids thriving on rocks in Sydney backyard, with a backdrop of *Grevillea* 'Misty Pink', *Banksia* and *Senna artemisioides*, the yellow flowering shrub. Photo: Jeff Howes



Thelychiton kingianus (formerly *Dendrobium kingianum*), is commonly known as the Pink Rock Orchid. It has masses of beautiful regally coloured flowers in late winter and early spring. Photo: Jeff Howes

Report of Melbourne visit to Chris Larkin's garden, Sunday October 11 Words and Photos by Diana Snape, Vic.

Chris Larkin began her garden in 1991 and it is now a mature and beautiful garden. She says there are so many aspects to juggle when designing a garden and I think that hers shows that she is a successful juggler.



Grevillea 'Superb', Pultenaea pedunculata and Scaevola aemula (possibly 'Mauve Clusters') on part of the steep slope

The block is quite steeply sloping, so managing this slope successfully has always been a challenge. Over the years, for safety, Chris has introduced nearly horizontal pathways that wind their way up the garden. Swales also help retain and harvest water for plants, preventing washouts. Rocks help stabilise the slope and, in addition to their practical functions, add aesthetic interest with their forms and texture.

Chris stresses the importance of getting it right from the ground up - forming the soil, then mulching, then planting. She had initial assistance in earthworks and stone-work from Roger Stone, who emphasized to Chris the importance of scale in a garden.



Chris Larkin and GDSG members in her back garden

Recently, screening from neighbours has become vital because of closer, more suburban development and Chris has had to reinforce her earlier screening. Planting includes selected callistemons, eucalypts and acacias such as *A. pravissima*.

The framework of trees throughout provides the height appropriate for this large garden (just over an acre). Plants range from trees down to groundcovers, which are used extensively to provide space so paths are not crowded by shrubs and there are vistas through the garden. This layering of plants gives an attractive, natural look.



Dampiera linearis 'Cobalt Mound' in foreground with large rocks



Looking down a path to *Eucalyptus pauciflora*, framed by *Baeckia virgata* on a large sloping bank

Just a few examples of the many groundcovers used successfully are: *Pultenaea pedunculata* on a large sloping bank near the front entrance *Dodonaea procumbens* edging paths in the sun; *Goodenia ovata* prostrate; blue and white scaevolae that self-sow in appropriate places; *Myoporum parvifolium* and *Kunzea ambigua* prostrate, both on a steep slope above a pool where work has been carried out recently. This pool is adjacent to a well-established pool with beautiful planting. In this shady area, for a simple landscape, the large lomandra, *L. hystrix*, will be repeated, with westringias, thomasias, baeckeas, an upright calothamnus and the local correa. Chris is aiming for long-term planting.



Pultenaea pedunculata on a large sloping bank



A well-established pool with a variety of reeds and rushes

Chris is a plantswoman with extensive knowledge of the plants suitable for her garden. It is impossible in a short report to indicate the extent and variety of plants used. It's almost a crime to name individual shrubs out of so many but a pink-flowered *Eremophila racemosa* and a small, lemon-flowered prostanthera, *P. serpyllifolia* were very appealing.

Repetition of plants at all height levels provides cohesion and gives the garden a restful feeling. In between the repeated framework there is still a great variety of different species. A selection of indigenous species In one section near the drive includes *Pomaderris racemosa*.



Appealing plant combination of *Prostanthera serpyllifolia* with *Hibbertia pedunculata*, a dampiera and dryandra foliage

In terms of maintenance, Chris says pruning takes the most time and happens frequently. Most is inconspicuous. One notable example is several dwarf *Acacia pravissima*, pruned extremely hard (and successfully) when they intruded on a path. Another is a group of low, grey *Westringia* 'Milky Way' near the small, back pool, kept to a low, rounded shape.

There are very few weeds now, except those introduced from neighbours' gardens. Fortunately, two neighbours are now also growing Australian plants! (She has found that both the Victorian and Tasmanian clematis can act as weeds.)



Screening plants with, on the right, heavily pruned dwarf *Acacia pravissima*; on the left, *Grevillea* 'Bonfire' and the local form of *Lomandra longifolia*; foreground, prostrate *Goodenia ovata*

Visit to the garden of Margaret Streamer and David Herald in Murrumbateman, NSW 15 September

Margaret Streamer and David Herald, Canberra

The winter of 2015 was hard on our garden. We had too many -6° nights and strong winds. Even though we had wrapped some plants in frost matting, by mid September when the DAGS /GDSG visited from Canberra, the garden was looking pretty sorry. Despite this, we were still hopeful that some plants would spring back into life. Some did but others were added to the compost heap.

Two 'plant envies' that found their way to the compost heap were *Grevillea* 'Robyn Gordon' and *Grevillea* 'Bulli Princess'. Both grew rapidly after planting, with 'Robyn Gordon' giving us a stunning flower display all summer and autumn. Both plants teased us by slowly losing their foliage over winter and up until late August we were still hoping that they would survive. A week of -6° nights put paid to that optimism.

We have several bushes of *Eremophila maculata* cerise scattered around the garden. They always suffer in our winters and need a good prune in spring. Last winter was no exception but this spring they have rewarded us with the best flower display ever. Other plants with exceptional spring flower displays were all species of *Hakeas* with *Hakea sericea*, pink, in particular, covered in blooms; the Tumut *Grevillea*, *Grevillea wilkinsonii*; *Grevillea* 'Scarlet Sprite', flowering for the first time, and all our *Acacias*, with the bright yellow balls of *Acacia covenyi* contrasting enjoyably with the grey foliage.



Grevillea wilkinsonii



Grevillea 'Scarlet Sprite'

We had planted four *Eremophila* 'Summertime Blue' around a trellis that shelters our Wollemi pine. They were entwining themselves through the trellis and had already reached half a metre in height. Three of the four succumbed to the winter but one is slowly recovering. We can't explain why one survived and not the others. The good news is that our Wollemi is growing magnificently and has already added an extra 15cm since winter. Only the upper side of the foliage on the northern side bronzed during winter while the rest remained green. We presume the early morning sun striking the frosted leaves caused the bronzing. Unlike the usual Wollemi pine, ours has multiple stems, presumably the result of judicious pruning during propagation. The end result is a plant that is much bushier (and, in our opinion, more attractive in a garden setting) than the normal Wollemi.



Acacia covenyi

Wollemia nobilis in the garden



One huge disappointment is our *Adenanthos sericeus* 'Silver Streak'. It survived the winter of 2014 with just some burnt tips and grew vigorously over the summer of 2015. It looked good until the DAGS/GDSG visit in September and then, just one week later, the foliage started to grey off and shortly after most of the plant looked dead. Only two branches at the base of the plant are now struggling to grow. It's hard to think that the plant will ever return to its former glory.



Adenanthos sericeus 'Silver Streak' - before and after winter

At a slightly higher elevation in the garden, an *Adenanthos cunninghamii*, barely 20cm high, survived its first winter with just a few burnt tips. We have now planted another 'Silver Streak' even higher again in the hope that it will survive.

In spring 2014, we transformed an area of grass by the western wall of the house. The grass had been hurriedly laid by the previous owners as a sales gimmick, never looked good and required far too much watering. The area is now a magnificent 'tapestry' inspired by the one at Horse Island featured in an earlier issue of the Garden Design Study Group *Newsletter*. We are stunned by the growth speed of plants in this area as we thought the soil to be fairly poor. How wrong we were. The following show the area just after we had planted it out in Oct 2014, and later in Sept 2015.



Our tapestry: at planting and 11 months later.

During this first year, the *Acacia howitii* in the tapestry outgrew other ones we had planted in other areas a couple of years ago. Everything survived their first harsh winter apart from two (out of five planted) *Acacia howitii* 'Honey Bun'.

We have tried to achieve contrast with foliage colour and are already pruning plants to shape. Plants include:-

Leucodendron laureoleum 'Burgundy Sunset' - a non-native but used for its scarlet-brown foliage.

Callistemon salignus 'Great Balls of Fire' - for its bright pink new growth.

Prostanthera incisa; *Acacia howitii*; *Acacia howitii* 'Honey Bun' - all for their different green foliage, texture and form.

Atriplex nummelaria and *Rhagodia spinescens* - for their different shades of grey and forms. While our tapestry is not fully established it shows great promise and is so much more interesting and low maintenance than the grass it replaced.

Over winter we developed some new garden beds. For our own convenience, we name all the garden beds. 'Babylon' is not quite as grand as its biblical counterpart but it is the only area we have where plants can cascade over a wall. Dave built a retaining wall to create a large elevated garden bed by part of the driveway. This was hard but rewarding work and of course the area is so much improved. We were able to plant out this area during the crazy, hot October we had, all the time hoping a late frost wasn't going to come along and kill our young plants. So far these plants are thriving.



Babylon, under construction and planted in October, 2016.



The trio guarding Babylon

As always, we start with a sketchy idea and the plan develops as we proceed. We always intended a circular garden bed in front of Babylon but this has become a trio, each with a feature plant. One plant has already been replaced - a *Telopea* 'Braidwood Brilliant'. Ros Walcott had warned me that it was difficult to grow and it succumbed to a mild November frost that didn't even kill my tomato plants!! So it was certainly doomed.

The previous major addition to our garden beds is an area we call 'Stonehenge'. It is a somewhat circular garden bed with one side being defined by some large rocks that came from our neighbour. The following three photos show the area when we first constructed it 2 years ago (December 2013), 6 months later May 2014 (with the initial plantings barely visible), and 16 months after that (September 2015) showing how quickly the plants have grown.



Stonehenge, under construction in December 2013, May 2014 and September 2015.

One very pleasing success with Stonehenge has been with kangaroo paws, which survived winter and thrived. Previously any kangaroo paws planted in the garden haven't survived the winter. We attribute our current success in Stonehenge to planting the kangaroo paws in the deep soil by the north face of the rocks which absorb the winter sun. We have now doubled the number here. We have also added some garden art to Babylon – in the form of 3 emus. A long section of our driveway aligns with Babylon, and the emus provide a pleasant sight when driving in.

One aspect of the success we have with our garden is the mulch we use. The mulch comes from the local tip – where they mulch trees etc together with some dirt. It does not rate high on a scale of visual attractiveness. And it contains a fair bit of undesirable rubbish (bits of plastic, cloth etc) which has to be removed when putting it in place. However the plants thrive under it, and the ground fauna (worms etc) love it. The photo shows one of the first garden beds, 'The Meadow', we established over the top of a rocky seam. *Calytrix tetragona*, *Philotheca* 'Profusion' and *Bulbine glauca* all do well in the comparatively shallow soil, enhanced by this mulch.



The Meadow



A misty morning with roos Photo by Fiona Johnson

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