

Salvia News

NUMBER 68



Official Newsletter of the
Victorian Salvia Study Group
www.salvias.org.au

Winter 2017

THE VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP

A BRANCH OF THE HERB SOCIETY OF VICTORIA INC.

THE AIMS OF THE SALVIA STUDY GROUP ARE:

1. To grow and collect Salvias for the purpose of enjoyment and study
2. Promote and encourage the growing of Salvias
3. Correctly name existing and new Salvias.

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

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

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Please post your copy to: Beth Gilchrist - Editor 'Salvia News'
13 Williams Street, Temora NSW 2666

or email: beth.c@bigpond.com (Don't forget the dot between beth and 'c')



SALVIA NEWS

VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP

Website: www.salvias.org.au

Welcome to the Winter edition of *Salvia News*.

Our garden in Temora is thriving even at only a few months old, giving much pleasure, loads of colour, already bringing the birds and bees. The vege patch has been very productive and now mostly planted out for the next season. Some concrete paths are in which allows me access in all weather and prevents me from getting bogged in the wheelchair or taking red dust and mud inside. The side fence is in, as is the garden shed and second water tank. The front fence, although ordered some months ago, is still to come. I am waiting (im)patiently for completion so that the front landscaping can be completed. I am told that the green/hot house has commenced, will be mostly built off site and then brought in. It is being custom made, wheelchair drive through will give me full access, assist with airflow, benches to suit my wheelchair and how I intend to use and will allow me to manage almost everything myself. I am very lucky, very excited and will share with you in due course. I am looking forward to growing tomatoes all year round without fruit fly which is now rampant here, as well as to start off seeds and salvia cuttings and who knows what else I will be able to grow. It also gives me access to the yard in poor weather.

Its been a devastating time for many in parts of Queensland and northern New South Wales after severe flooding and damage earlier in the year as a result of Cyclone Debbie. I have spoken with some who say that even though they havent been flooded, they have endured over a month of continuous rain every day and still have much to clean up. Too many have to start again having lost everything. We can only send our good wishes for their recovery and hope their devastation is not too great.

News from S E Queensland on pages 8 and 9, Carol Kerkin tells about her garden and how she is managing the past few months of drought and flood. Also check Surviving the Wrath of Mother Nature on pages 17-18 which is a learning curve for us all. There are many who are really having it tough out there.

Meg Bentley tells about a new *Salvia* with pictures on page 7, a must read for all *Salvia* enthusiasts. Read about other new *Salvias* in 2017 page 6.

Have you ever been to a nursery and bought a *Salvia* or any other plant, only to get home and find you already have it by another name. Lyndi has found another *Salvia* incorrectly named and gives you the details on page 13.

These articles and more are inside this issue and its hoped you will enjoy. Don't forget your feedback is always welcome. We are a Study Group and its important that we get it right. Everyone is a volunteer with a love of *salvias*. We would love to hear from you, and even receive an article about your garden or a *salvia* you particularly enjoy.

With rising costs to produce and post, *Salvia News* subscriptions have increased. Effective immediately, they are now \$20.00 per annum for four (4) copies posted, online copies remain at \$15.00 per annum. Subscriptions are now due and it is hoped that you will all renew, and that those reading this newsletter for the first time will consider subscribing. Any queries please contact the Subscriptions Officer Meg Gadd on telephone (03) 9584 8005 or email gm1214.gadd@gmail.com

Happy Gardening, Beth Gilchrist

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Copy Deadline for next edition
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17 July 2017
email to; ..
beth.c@bigpond.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Remember to check the website regularly for any changes and additional information www.salvias.org.au
Take your plant lists to events or email your list to Lyndi prior to the event to ensure you don't miss out.
Should you have any queries phone Lyndi Garnett, VSSG co-ordinator on 03 9803 4534 or email
lgarnett844@gmail.com

In addition to events open to the public on the website under *Calendar of Events*, you will also find *Garden Clubs* where Lyndi is speaking and a contact number for further information.

June 17 Sat 9.30am

RHS GARDENER'S DAY OUT

Deakin University,

Burwood Campus, Burwood Hwy, Burwood

Melway: page 61 B5

3 inspiring presentations through-out the day. Awards for the recent MIFGS Hanging Basket Competition; a number of niche vendors with unusual plants and allied goods.

\$10 entry. Light lunch avail for \$15, MUST be prebooked.

Book now so as not to miss out, contact Jennifer Rickerby RHSV Secretary on 03 5367 6363 or via plantzia@bigpond.com. www.rhsv.org.au

Salvia plants, books and seed will be for sale. Huge range of plants and products, demonstrations and displays. Bring your list, bring plants to be identified, to avoid disappointment.

email: lgarnett844@gmail.com

October 7/8 Sat/Sun 10am – 4pm

MACEDON GARDEN LOVERS FAIR

Bolobek, 370 Mt Macedon Rd, Macedon

You will find a wonderful selection of plant and garden treasures.

The gardens will be open to have the opportunity to walk through.

Salvia plants, books and seed will be for sale. Bring your list, bring plants to be identified, to avoid disappointment email Lyndi prior to the event to make your order: lgarnett844@gmail.com

October 7/8 Sat/Sun 10am-5pm

BIRCHWOOD NEAR BENALLA, OPEN GARDEN WEEKEND

Directions on website: www.birchwoodnearbenalla.com.au

All proceeds to Benalla and Wangaratta Hospitals and Cancer Council of Victoria

Entry \$6. 18 & Under Free.

Vast range of Spring bulbs & perennials on display in sloping one acre garden. *Over 200 different salvias*. Garden sculptures & features and shaded spaces with views of rolling hills.

North East Artisans exhibition & sales in the garden with Benalla Senior Music Students performing. Crafts & plant sales. Morning & Afternoon Tea and sandwiches. Children's activities.

Enquiries phone 03 5766 6275

October 21/22 Sat/Sun 10am-4pm

BOTANIC AND RARE PLANT FAIR, BOTANIC GARDENS MELBOURNE

The Diggers Club, the Royal Botanic Gardens and the Friends of the Botanic Gardens will again be holding the Botanic and Rare Plant Fair

\$10.00 admission for the General Public

A large range of Spring Salvias will be on sale along with Salvia books and Salvia seed.

Please email your lists of Salvias that you're wanting so they can be put aside for you.

continued page 5...

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

... continued from page 4

October 22 Sun

IVANHOE GARDEN CLUB FESTA

**Bellfield Community Centre,
Cnr Oriel Rd & Bell St, Ivanhoe**

Wonderful flower and plant display, a Community Veggie garden and much more.
Displays, Demonstrations and Speakers during the day.
Salvia plants, books and seed will be for sale. Bring your list, bring plants to be identified, to avoid disappointment email Lyndi prior to the event lgarnett844@gmail.com

November 4/5 Sat/Sun 1pm – 5.30pm Sat, 9am-4pm Sun

Rose Society of Victoria SPRING ROSE SHOW

Mt Waverley Community Centre,

Millers Rd, Mt Waverley, opposite the train station

Melway: page 70 E1

This is an annual event not to be missed, something for everyone. Rose Exhibition, thousands of roses on display. Speakers, Floral art, competition, raffles, trading tables, nurseries, Devonshire Teas. Salvia stall will include Salvia plants, books and seeds.

As always at these events bring your plants to be identified, bring your wish list and to avoid disappointment email Lyndi in advance of the plants you are wanting to purchase.

lgarnett844@gmail.com

November 19 Sun 12pm

ANNUAL SALVIA PLANTS AT NOBELIUS

Nobelius Heritage Park

Crighton Rd, Emerald under the Puffing Billy Train Line Melway: page 127 G4

Not to be missed, the VSSG huge annual end of year sale held alongside the Salvia Display Garden so that you may get to see the plant you wish to grow in flower prior to purchasing.

Hurry, be early, great bargains until stocks run out.

If ever there was a time to email Lyndi prior to the event to avoid disappointment, this is it!

lgarnett844@gmail.com

Salvia plants, books and seed will be for sale.

Don't forget to bring along plants to be identified.

December 3 Sun 11am

VSSG CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

65 Glynns Rd, North Warrandyte

Each year the Group celebrates with a Christmas Luncheon in a lovely garden. For those who have attended in the past, they know it's a very special event. What is the criteria to attend? All subscribers of Salvia News are invited. It's a great way to meet other enthusiasts, catch up with old friends, celebrate the season, and to enjoy another special garden.

This year it is to be in our own Publicity Officer, Fiona William's magnificent Country Garden. Join us. Bring a Christmas plate to share and a chair. Join in all the festivities of the season.

Please ensure you let **Fiona** know if you are coming on **mobile 0417 323 785**

Mark it in your diary now. Let's all celebrate the Season and the end of year get together for Salvia enthusiasts in this very special garden.

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK...

Check out the Salvia Study Group page on Facebook.

Thanks to Patrick Hogan, VSSG is now on Facebook.

Any queries Patrick can be contacted by emailing;

patrick.hogan@optusnet.com

NEW SALVIAS IN 2017

as appears on the VSSG website

www.salvias.org.au

Lyndi Garnett, Glen Waverley Vic – VSSG Co-ordinator

Salvias are always being discovered in gardens, here in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and overseas. Most of the new salvias coming in from overseas, come in via seed. Other new releases are from plants found in peoples' gardens as a chance find, and others are specially grown for nursery releases.

The Salvias are placed when they generally appeared in circulation, when they were given to the group



Salvia 'Purple Jewel'



Salvia 'Cardinal'



Salvia 'Purple Passion'

Salvia 'Purple Jewel'

Small shrub 40wide x 60cm tall, full sun, hardy

Salvia 'Cardinal'

small shrub 40cm tall, full sun

Salvia 'Purple Passion'

small shrub 40 wide x 60cm tall, full sun

Notes from Gruyere Winter 2017 *Meg Bentley, Gruyere Vic*

NEW SALVIA – *Salvia ‘Rosalie’*

I have been trialing a new salvia plant in my garden that came up as a self sown seedling in a pot of *Salvia patens* and it is different in many ways to so many other salvias that I grow. This is what we have to do with any new cultivars that come up as a seedling. Test them out, observe how they grow and perform, check their flowers and flowering times and type of foliage and whether they are likely to become a pest by self seeding everywhere or spreading by underground suckers. One could look upon them as our little children that you are speaking about, after all, if we were recommending them to someone then we do know all their little quirks and behavior patterns. Why then can't this same principle be applied to the chance seedlings as well.

The new little plant I am growing in my garden is a beauty and has everything going for it. I have named it *Salvia ‘Rosalie’*, see the following article.



Salvia ‘Rosalie’

Margins are crenate. Leaves have a slight fragrance and corolla and calyces have a very nice fruity fragrance.

Salvia ‘Rosalie’ grows into a shrubby bush approximately 1.4m to 1.5m. retaining foliage lower down and responds well to pruning and shaping but not too harsh. Removing spent flowers and / or cutting down by approximately 1/3 will help promote a second flowering and keep the plant in good shape. *Salvia ‘Rosalie’* propagates readily from cuttings taken in Autumn to Spring, growing from seed is not recommended as seed will not produce the true cultivar of *Salvia ‘Rosalie’*.

Salvia ‘Rosalie’ (pronounced as = *Rosa lee*)

This plant came up as a seedling in a container of *Salvia patens* in 2015. It was situated under a plant of *Salvia involucrata ‘Joan’* with *Salvia ‘Pink Gruyere’* nearby, so one can't name exactly the parentage of this cultivar. It is a hardy plant that flowers for quite a long time...Autumn and Spring into Summer with a few blooms appearing in Winter. It seems to be frost hardy but not sure how it will go in heavy frosts.

Extreme heat or cold can give the leaves a deep wine to purple tinge which looks very attractive, especially set against the lovely rose-magenta flowers. The corolla has a microphylla type lower lip but not as wide. The flowering stem approximately 10-15cm long appears to have the *S. involucrata x microphylla* formation of calyces which are green with a tinge of light red. The leaves are shaped *S. microphylla/ neurepia* type, rather oblanceolate 6-9cm long and widest near the middle 1-2cm. Leaf tip has a slight point.

News from S E Queensland

Carol Kerkin,
Kingsholme Queensland

Mother Nature has not been kind to we gardeners here in S E Queensland these past six months. Our 'wet season' was almost non-existent with the added complication of extended stretches of well above average temps. Here in the northern part of the Gold Coast hinterland we don't have the luxury of town water and as the dam level was dropping rapidly before our eyes our garden simply had to make do with-out watering from late November. What water we did have was saved for our little nursery. The potted specimens in our pergola were kept alive with our precious tank water. Having an acreage garden it is impossible to keep an eye on everything all the time but our main salvia garden gets a little TLC as this is where our grey water is used. It got to the point that I wasn't moving the sprinkler systematically; I would simply look for which salvia looked the saddest on any particular day and that would become the grateful recipient.

It never ceases to amaze me how some plants in a family group will shrivel and die and yet others will not bat an eyelid; some you could say even thrive. A row of 8 *S. Phyllis Fancy* planted along our front fence make the back wall of the rose garden. These have made a most magnificent display for months; not one sign of sag or droop in spite of the heat and the dry. A mass planting of *S. Dwarf Red* outside our pergola has supplied not only an endless splash of colour for the eye but also music to the ears with the buzzing of literally hundreds of bees from sun-up to sun-down.

Another salvia that has been bringing much pleasure is a seedling that our group have been trialing for the past 18 months or so. We call it *S. 'Rosh Ede'n* after the garden where it was discovered and we believe it to be a cross between *S. leucantha* and *S. 'Phyllis Fancy'*. A good 9 months of flower before we cut it back hard. (It doesn't send that lovely soft silver tell-tale new growth that *S. leucantha* does).



Salvia 'Rosh Eden'

husband is forever telling me that I am far too giving and I now hope that my giving nature will pay off. Hopefully someone who I have given plants to over the years will be able to return the favour and spare some fallax cuttings for me.

One of my favourite winter flowering salvias is *S. involucrata* 'Pink Icicles' and it received more than its fair share of our grey water as it seemed that every second day it would have the mighty sulks. It dropped more and more foliage every day and its stems seemed to shrink in upon themselves. I was certainly beginning to prepare the eulogy. And then Mother Nature decided that it was time for a change. Mid March we had 280ml of rain

continued on page 9...

News from S E Queensland *continued from page 8*



Salvia involucrata 'Pink Icicles'

over a 2 week period and the garden sucked up every little bit of it with a very grateful sigh. Our tanks filled and overflowed and our dam had enough run-off to be lapping at the spillway. Another week later and the heavens opened again delivering a deluge of 250ml (10 inches) in a day and a half. Needless to say the tanks ran over some more and the dam overflowed and is still doing so 2 weeks later. Everything is rejoicing; the grass, the plants, the weeds and us. And S.'Pink Icicles' has been resurrected; foliage regrew to fill the almost bare branches, fat buds appeared almost overnight on the ends of the stems and the first fat furry flower spike was there smiling at me this morning. Give it another week and I will again understand why it is one of my firm favourites.

Now to wait and watch for a few more weeks to see what other little miracles may occur.
No matter what; we gardeners will endure.

Happy Gardening

Editor's Note: We are saddened by the devastation that many have suffered these past months regarding the massive flooding in parts of Queensland and northern NSW.

Anyone who can assist Carol with cuttings of Salvia fallax (now known as Salvia roscida – A Manual for Salvia Growers) please email me with details and I will forward your emails.

The New Book of SALVIAS

by Betsy Clebsch

Book @ \$15 each x copies \$

Plus P&H \$10 per copy \$

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

Send remittance and completed form to:

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

Enquiries phone VSSG Lyndi Garnett 9803 4534

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\$15
per copy
(RRP \$29.95)

JINDIVICK RARE PLANT FAIR – April 2017



VSSG banner at Jindivick Rare Plant Fair



The 3 Amigos

The Jindivick Rare Plant Fair is held every year in April and once again it was a very successful event. VSSG presented their usual professional display with salvias, books etc for sale. Lyndi shared that the flowers at Jindivick were wonderful and that Jillian Barkell once again did a great job with the display. She and others supply flowers. Everyone could put a flower to a name, see what they are purchasing. The display of pots for sale are colour co-ordinated with photos in front along the stand with vases of fresh flowers, salvias of course, positioned throughout the display.

Great photos Vivienne, thankyou!



Photos: Vivienne Smith

FERNY CREEK PLANT FAIR -- PLANT COLLECTORS SALE & GARDEN EXPO.

Heather Lucas, Heathmont Vic



The first event for the Salvia Study Group in 2017 was the Ferny Creek Horticultural Society's Annual Plant Collectors' Garden Expo which was held on Saturday, 11th and Sunday 12th March from 9am to 4 pm at 100 Hilton Road, Ferny Creek.

As this was the first selling event for the year and the fact that it has many different and rare plants for sale, it is an event that most plant lovers flock to. I myself have missed the last 4 years, as we go away with another family for the long weekend, but as our girls are now 18 and 20, they didn't want to come this year and I took the opportunity to go and help on the stall and of course shop for some different plants.

The weather forecast for the 2 days was in the mid to high 20's, but with rain and thunderstorms predicted for the Sunday. Luckily this did not occur, although I think that it kept people from coming on the Sunday, as the attendance was very low and our sales for that day reflected same. However the Saturday was a very good day, with good attendance and we had an excellent day of plant sales.

As I now had the weekend free I decided to help on the salvia stand on the Sunday and to go on Saturday morning to have a good stroll around and purchase some special and different plants. So I arrived bright and early and said hello to all on the salvia stand and

then headed straight off to the Ferny Creek Society's stand, as they always have interesting and different plants that they have propagated. Believe it or not, I now am purchasing plants that aren't salvias, probably as I have run out of salvias to purchase and am rather enjoying getting plants like geraniums, campanulata and other small plants which fit in very nicely with and between my salvias. So I purchased the following plants, Campanulata Rotundifolia, Campanula Latiloba Alba, Geranium Patricia, Geranium x Magnificum, Geranium Chris Canning, Geranium Macrorhizum, 3 different coloured Asters, Pelargonium Sidoides and a Gentiana Acaulis, which is a lovely little alpine plant with flowers in the most amazing shade of deep, true blue. I have purchased this before and lost it, so will have another go. Then lastly but certainly not least, I purchased a climber, Rhodochiton Atrosanguineum, which I was told was a rare climbing vine, this one being with red little bell shaped flowers. I then helped at the stand for a couple of hours and did end up with a couple of salvias (Purple Majesty and Iodantha, which I had lost) and then wound my way down the hill to home after some delicious lunch from the canteen in the main hall at Ferny Creek.

All in all, a lovely couple of days and well worth going to, to kick off the year with some new and rarer plants.

CORRECTION

Apology for incorrect labelling of a photo in the last issue



*In the last edition of Salvia News Number 6, Autumn 2017 on page 7, Salvia 'Allen Chickering' was marked down as *S. patens* 'Allen Chickering'. This photo appeared in an article written by Kathy Basiaco of Brisbane who submitted the photo as Salvia 'Allen Chickering', she does not have a *Salvia patens* by this name. I apologise for the mistake.*

As we remind our readers regularly, this is a Salvia Study Group and correct name of these plants is imperative. If I/we make a mistake, if we find salvias that have been incorrectly named, then we must advise accordingly.

Thankyou Kathy for bringing to my attention, again my sincere apologies for the error.

Beth Gilchrist/ Editor

MY FINDINGS SO FAR....

Lyndi Garnett, VSSG Co-ordinator

In the world of the promiscuous *greggii* and *microphylla* Salvias, there are many that look the same or extremely similar to one another. This group like to marry each other willy nilly, causing a lot of headaches along the way.

Thus far, I have found:

'HotPink' = Heatwave 'Sizzler'

'Fuschia Doll' = Heatwave 'Sparkle'

'Kate Shann' = 'Ribambelle'

'Jo Anne Shann' = 'La Luna' (but a larger flower)

'La Siesta' = 'Cecilia' (same flower/ calyx, different leaf)

'Dwarf Peachy' = 'Sierra Pink' (same flower/ calyx, different leaf)

Red Salvia (no name) in Bunnings under banner of Garden Jewels is a seedling of 'Red Beacon'

Purple Salvia (no name) in Bunnings under banner of Garden Jewels, renamed as 'Purple Jewel'

So Cool 'Violet' & 'Purple' = 'Mesa Azure'.

S. involucrata 'Boutin' = *S. involucrata* 'Bethelii'

No doubt there will be a few more next season. Its worthwhile observing your Salvias and knowing what you have in your garden so you don't buy another plant with a different name only to find that you've "already got one of those".

Incorrectly named Salvia plants for sale 31/01/2017

Lyndi Garnett, VSSG Co-ordinator



When you're next in Bunnings, you might see a new purple and a new red Salvia, under the big banner of "Garden Jewels". These have been propagated by Haar's Nursery who supply Bunnings with a lot of plants without names - or plants they haven't paid a licence to propagate - hence all the "No name" plants, all under the banner of "Garden Jewels".

They said the plant is a *Salvia greggii*, which it certainly is not, but definitely a *microphylla*. I have renamed it 'Purple Jewel'. This is obviously a seedling of possibly 'Mesa Azure', but married something red to create the rich purple colour. See photos

The other red Salvia is a well grown seedling of 'Red Beacon', so I'm not worried about those plants.

Characteristics: 'Purple Jewel': flowers well, probably most of the year, grows to at least 60cm, nice and compact, ovate leaf, well clothed, good rich purple flowers.

Most of their pots have solid roots, often root bound so are ready to be put into the ground but will need to be teased out and fed and watered for a bit to settle them in and so that the roots go out into new soil.

See what you can find on your next trip to Bunnings.

GARDEN VISIT TO 'Hopedale' Dirnaseer NSW

Beth Gilchrist, Temora NSW

I have joined the Temora and District Gardeners Club, a great way for gardeners to meet new people and learn more about the town and its surrounds that we now call home. They are a wonderful group. The first garden visit was in March and it was at the home of Helen and Robert Oliver of 'Hopedale' Dirnaseer which is about 40 minutes' drive from Temora. Once we left the town of Temora we passed only about 3 or 4 houses on the way so you get the drift of open space. In my opinion it's truly beautiful countryside.



The Oliver's property is 1000 acres with their home about 2 klm down the long driveway, they have sheep and grow canola and a legume. The garden club meeting and a shared afternoon tea brought along by the members, was enjoyed under a very large pergola overlooking part of the garden and Robert Oliver shared some information regarding his beautiful garden before we got to wander. The garden itself is a couple of acres. It's only about 3 years old. When they arrived it had some trees around the homestead but he has added many more, mostly natives. He wants it private so that when he comes in from working the land, he can't see it and can turn off for a short time. Like Temora and its surrounds it is very windy and the trees give some shelter too. Although there are gardens surrounding the home perimeter full of standard iceberg roses with liriope as a border, the rest of the garden is kidney shaped mounds with lawn pathways both sides that cuts off the view without following the pathways. The large mounds are planted on both sides which gives further shelter and a lot of interest.





before, mulch for the garden beds is even more important. He uses a 20 cm thick coarse mulch including around the salvias. It is heavy enough that the rain can seep in and around it and soak the ground while protecting from the harsh climatic conditions.

No wonder Robert enjoys his early morning coffee under his very large pergola overlooking part of his garden, or better still taking a walk around the garden along its many paths.

Thankyou Robert and family for our visit. It was a lovely Sunday afternoon very much enjoyed by all.

Robert tells us that he isn't a gardener (?) and that many of his plants are from cuttings from family and friends. The garden is filled with a large variety of natives, additional coloured roses, numerous shrubs massed throughout and even includes a few salvias in several areas. There are also a number of garden ornaments that bring additional interest.

The beautiful green lawns are the result of three truck loads of manure and a lot of manual labour!

The soil is thick red clay, or in the wet about 60cm below the surface Robert tells, is a red river. In an area that is much windier than I have ever encountered

He uses a 20 cm thick coarse mulch including around



*Salvia patens, Salvia roemeriana, Salvia microphylla var neurepia,
Salvia gesneraeiflora 'Tequila', Salvia leucantha*

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only **\$10** pack
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Salvia News

Victorian Salvia Study Group

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Surviving the Wrath of Mother Nature 2017

Ian McDonald, Warwick Queensland

As the heat of Summer moved in on us the week before Christmas 2016 we were to have no idea of what lay ahead of us in the weeks to come.

We are The Southern Downs Garden Centre located in Warwick Queensland. Warwick is a unique gem in Queensland's well known warm to hot climate. Why unique you ask? Warwick can and in most Winters see minimum temperatures slip below -8 degrees Celsius and sometimes a degree or two colder.

As a retail production nursery we live by the weather. Our growing plan is based on "normal" seasons. The Summer of 2016/17 was of course far from normal. By Christmas 2016 we were averaging daily temperatures in excess of 37 degrees. As we were getting these temperatures week in and week out we had to stop propagation and growing and move into survival mode.

Our *Salvia* range (130 named varieties) is a key part of our business. *Salvias* in Queensland are difficult to get and when you can source them it is in a very limited range. So as you can see our *Salvias* became very important when we were looking ahead past the weather we were encountering.

It is normal at any time of the year that we only water our *Salvia*'s at "first wilt". We have over the years trialled all of our range in both Summer and Winter so we knew that we could get our *Salvias* through the heat. By the end of January we had seen twenty-eight (28) consecutive days where we did not drop under 38 degrees.

My son who is a trained horticulturalist began to look at temperatures in and around the garden centre. The temperature on one of our racks in retail was 55 degrees at 3.00pm. One of the fences in our garden centre is 1.8 metre colour bond and we had to move quickly to protect the rack nearest to this fence as the plants were cooking. We built a fence 400mm inside the boundary fence from bamboo. This gave us immediate relief by dropping the rack temperature by 12 degrees.

Our luck was going to take a turn for the worse. By mid February we were staring down the barrel of temperatures above 40 degrees. The first thing I thought of was to pump water into my *Salvias* to make sure I had mother stock to cut from when the weather finally broke. This was where I made my biggest mistake. Even though in a 140mm black pot the temperature was above 64 degrees. Of course when you pour water onto these plants with those temperatures you cook them. It is as simple as that. We lost about 40 pots of *Salvias* and if I had have practiced what I preach I doubt that I would have lost any *Salvias* at all.

We grow a vastly wide range of these wonderful plants. Our range includes *greggii*, *microphylla*, *gesneriiflora*, *involucrata*, *madrensis*, *leucantha*, *discolor* amongst others. We found that after temperatures above 43 degrees most of our *Salvia* range behaved as though it was Spring. We spent a week or so with good sharp cutters giving a selective haircut to our *Salvia* range and within about two weeks we had them back to normal.

Cooler temperatures saw us take a big deep breath and feel a little more relaxed and we then started to look at what we could propagate. Then along came cyclone "Debbie" We were warned well ahead of time and had done all we could to prepare for the associated big wet that "Debbie" dragged down with her. We received about 100 mm of rain from "Debbie" and had received about 110 mm about three weeks before "Debbie" affected us.

Surviving the Wrath of Mother Nature 2017

Ian McDonald, Warwick Queensland

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Stock that we have propagated since both the heat and cyclone “Debbie”.

Unlike many of our associates in the industry we were lucky in all the rain. Sadly many nurseries in Queensland have been wiped out and some I fear may never make a return. Our heart goes out to these people. We really benefitted from “Debbie” with good sub soil moisture going into Winter.

We have decided to honour just how well our Salvias performed in these extreme conditions with a weekend later in the year. It will be called the “Weekend of 100 Salvia’s”. For a weekend we will have at least 100 different varieties on show and of course for sale. We hope this will generate some interest in these wonderful garden gems.

For anyone in Queensland we can be contacted on (07) 4667 0884 and our email address is: brent@southerndownsgardencentre.com.au you can also like us on Facebook .

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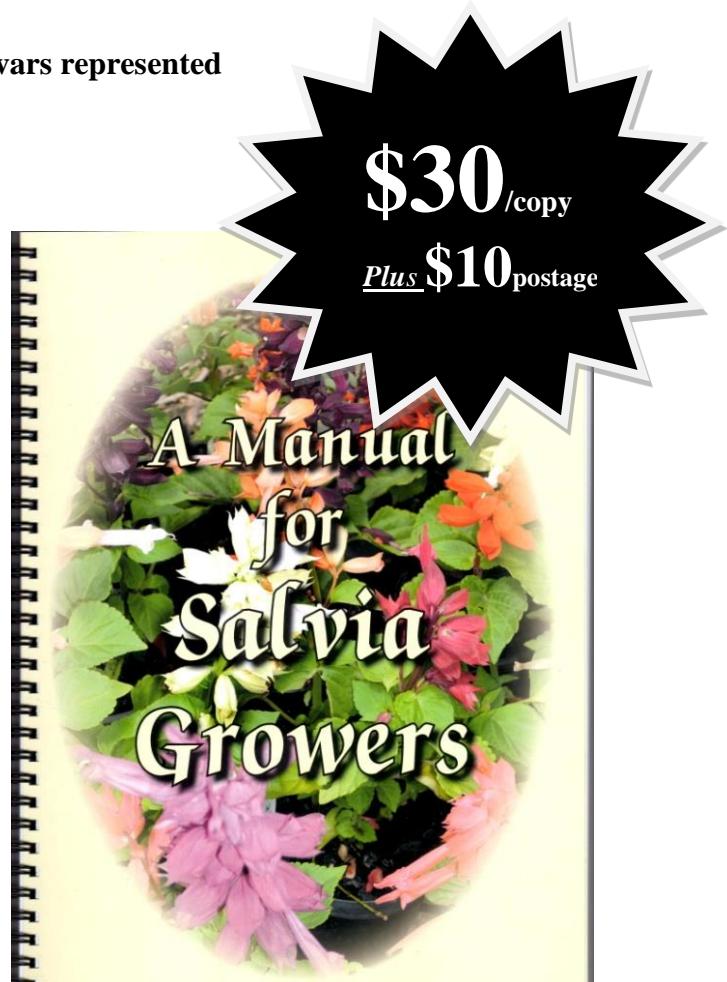
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A Manual for Salvia Growers *by Meg Bentley*

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