

Salvia News

NUMBER 69



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

Spring 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.
4. Maintain our Display Garden at Nobelius Heritage Park for the group and the general Public.
5. Manage our website and Facebook page.

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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SALVIA NEWS SUBMISSIONS

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'
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SALVIA NEWS

VICTORIAN SALVIA STUDY GROUP

Website: www.salvias.org.au

Welcome to the Spring edition of Salvia News.

This edition is filled with so many photos that the computer has been groaning under the load, crashing at each new page. As you know we are all volunteers and the equipment is mostly personal not commercial. I am using Word to do the layout, write articles etc and Corel Photoshop to add photos. It goes to the printer as ready print, this saves time and costs by being done inhouse. It's completed and hopefully there is something of interest for everyone.

We have a couple of new writers this edition, Garden Visit write up by Andreina Chinn with photos by Patrick Hogan, (page 6) and My Garden by Vivienne Smith (page 8) Both make great reading and I am sure you will enjoy them..

Potty About Salvias II is an update of more than one article by Pat Anderson and with so many interested in potting Salvias is a must read (page 12).

This edition's article from SE Queensland is written by Mick Nanka of Mudbrick Cottage Herb Farm. The Perennials Poppys Group Inc of SE Queensland have some very talented gardeners as you already know, who are generous in the sharing of their knowledge and experiences in every edition of Salvia News – this issue page 15.

These and much more should give you some happy and informative reading in the pages ahead.

Salvia News Subscriptions are due 1 July each year. Hopefully you have renewed your subscription for the coming year. For those who haven't, hopefully it is an oversight and you will either submit immediately or contact Meg Gadd, the subscriptions officer should you have any queries. If you are not submitting, I would love to hear from you as to what we need to include in the newsletter to bring back your interest. All comments good and bad are very welcome.

We are thoroughly enjoying life in Temora NSW, that is my husband Norman and I. It is the coldest winter I have endured; although Norman is Scottish it is the coldest winter he has endured in Australia. Temperatures have been as low a -6, frosts are many. Luckily we are on a hill and more sheltered than even a street or so away so that the damage isn't too great. Some of my salvias, such as S. 'Timboon' S. madrensis I thought would have been safe. It wasn't the frost that has done the damage, just that it is too cold. We had to travel to Melbourne for some medicals and dear friends thought they would assist by watering the salvia gardens and gave them a good soaking not realising that they didn't need it when we were only away a few days. The front fence booked 6 months earlier is at last completed, and the new green/hot house is almost completed. The bare rooted fruit trees are not planted. A couple more garden beds have been added to the front yard. Apart from the roses, other plants including lots of salvias we had on order with Lyndi and collected prior to returning home, have yet to be planted. Just waiting until at least most of the frosts for this year have passed. Even without leaving home there is plenty to do

Happy Gardening, Beth Gilchrist

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**Copy Deadline for next edition
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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

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.

September 9 Sat 10 am

LAKESIDE GARDEN EXPO

Jarlo Dve, Lilydale Mel: 38 D7

*The Salvia Group **WILL NOT** be selling at this event*

A new Garden Expo produced by the Box Hill Institute. Lots of plant and food stalls

Come and view their horticultural achievements

September 10 Sun 12 midday

SALVIA SUBSCRIBERS LUNCH AT NOBELIUS

Nobelius Heritage Park, Crighton Rd, Emerald, under the Packing Shed Mel: 127 G4

This is our way of saying 'Thankyou for being part of the Salvia Group'; Lunch under the Oak trees.

Come and partake of a delicious spread. Tea/Coffee will be provided.

See the progress of the Display Garden, see how the Salvias are growing, what new varieties have been planted, meet other subscribers, it's your chance to catch up. Bring a chair (essential) or rug and plastic bag for cuttings. Although there will be no plants for sale, if you have a particular salvia you are looking for, please email Lyndi with your request. Phone Lyndi if coming (03) 9803 4534. All subscribers welcome.

September 17 Sun 2-4pm

PRUNING SALVIAS

VSSG Salvia Display Garden

Nobelius Heritage Park, Crighton Ave, below the Packing Shed Mel: 127 G4

A great couple of hours learning how to prune and when to prune your Salvias.

Tea/coffee provided. Bring secateurs/ snips and plastic bags (to take cuttings home), a chair and appropriate clothing for the day. Phone Lyndi if coming on (03) 9803 4534.

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 Enquiries phone 03 5766 6275

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

Entry \$6.00.

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.

October 14 Sat – Nov 8 Wed 10am-4pm

COUNTRY FARM PERENNIALS SPRING OPEN DAYS

96 Laings Rd, Nayook

Merryle & David Johnston, phone (03) 5628 4202

Specialist growers of hardy and unusual plants.

Annual Spring Garden & Nursery Open Days not to be missed. Refreshments available at weekends, or bring a picnic - the urn is boiling.

www.countryfarmperennials.com.au

October 21/22 Sat/Sun

MORNING STAR ESTATE

1 Sunnyside Rd, Mt Eliza

5 Gorgeous gardens open around Mt Eliza over the weekend. VSSG will have a stall at Morning Star with a good variety of Salvias and Salvia books for sale. Bring plants/ flowers to be identified. Email your list, so you don't miss out. Check the Morning Star Estate website for more information.

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.

October 29 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 Glynn's 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.

May 2017 Visit to VSSG Publicity Officer's Garden

Andreina Chinn, Photo: Patrick Hogan



garden in the process of being established. Fiona is progressively filling this garden with hues of red, purple, cream and pink so that, by summer, it should be a riot of colour.

A stand of russet-coloured, tall chrysanthemums planted in the middle of the large bed that sweeps around the house was another eye-catcher, as were the numerous flowering salvias dotted throughout the garden. Some of the standouts among the salvias were Marine Blue, Hot Lips, the pink velour and maroon leucanthas, Joan, Meigan's Magic and Anthony Parker. Fiona has found that an added bonus of the latter two are that they are virtually kangaroo proof, making them a useful addition to a garden frequented by native fauna. Off to one side of the house is a large fenced area containing the vegetable garden and Fiona's collection of propagated cuttings and seedlings. Fiona grows these many cuttings and seedlings to share with visitors (lucky us), as additional stock for the garden and for Salvia Study Group sales. And to complete the garden and the trifecta of flowers, vegetables and fruit, an orchard, just beyond the back lawn, provides a variety of seasonal fruit which Fiona makes full use of for her preserves and cordials.

Lunch included Pat Anderson's warming pumpkin soup, a welcome starter in the late autumn chill, followed by the tasty savoury dishes and sweet treats we always enjoy at Salvia Study Group events. Then, as we finished our lunch imagine our surprise and delight when Fiona mentioned that the beautiful salvia flowers in a large vase decorating the kitchen window were actually labelled cuttings for us to take home! The afternoon review of the garden proved the adapted adage "two tours are better than one" as we noticed features we had missed on the morning tour. Among these were two large pots of small-leaved, trailing pelargoniums with striking, lipstick pink flowers, an array of potted succulents and some more wonderful begonias.

Fiona and Rowan are hosting our Christmas get-together and I am looking forward to seeing the garden's summer display including that newly established greggii/microphylla garden which will be in full flower by then. Thank you, Fiona and Rowan, for sharing your magnificent garden and thank you, Fiona, for all the plants and cuttings you so generously gave us during our visit.

Footnote: A piece of the above mentioned chrysanthemum which I have planted into a galvanized steel bucket is doing very well and I am looking forward to the display it will provide next year.

Spring 2017. Notes from Gruyere

Meg Bentley, Gruyere, Vic

The birds tell me Spring is just around the corner and I guess by the time you get this Salvia News it will actually be Spring.

Whilst it has been a very cold Winter the days have warmed up when the sun did appear and I am sure many gardeners have suffered with heavy frosts this year, even my own garden which normally escapes the heaviest of frosts did suffer frost burn. Most of the salvias of course will recover. They have been really frosted on new tip growth and buds on some of the winter flowering salvias have all but burnt off and dropped. Even the large shrubby Salvia 'Timboon' burnt on the tips, which is new for me but I know it will recover.

I won't be cutting anything back until after the frosts have finished – if they do and this is what I recommend to everyone...don't remove the burnt growth yet, wait till later on. Plants usually reshoot lower down beyond the frosted area.

We had to remove a very old, large cypress from the front of the salvia garden area which did open it up for frosts but it also gave me new open spaces where I have planted many hardy salvias from Sth Africa, California and the Mediterranean areas. This space is also ideal for succulents, ground covers and one or two new roses.



Yellow Robin

Everywhere I work in the garden I have bird companions, Yellow Robins', that come and see what I am doing and sometimes, overnight, it's the wombat and wallabies that come and investigate the goings on; I know they have visited by their calling card and scratchings that they leave behind. I have also been following up on salvias that have tubers at their base, one doesn't know about this until they remove the plant from a pot to see the tubers and it is much better to do it this way rather than dig up a plant to see. I have come across a few as I've been repotting plants and the latest one is *Salvia stolonifera*. I presume they are for food storage since I can't find out more than that at this stage. However, when I placed the root ball onto a bench for better viewing and to take a photo of the 'stolens', the dearest Yellow Robin wanted to get into the act so here is the photo of the plant, root ball ...and the Yellow Robin.

My Garden

Vivienne Smith Croydon Nth, Vic

I moved into the first home I had ever owned January 23rd 2012. It is a two bedroom unit in a complex of 12 units in Croydon. Until that day I had lived at my childhood home in Notting Hill not far from the Clayton campus of Monash University. That home had belonged first to my parents and then after their divorce, to my mother. It was a regular brick veneer house on a 1/4 acre block. My mother gardened in the back yard growing fruit, vegetables and assorted trees and shrubs. I gardened in the front garden growing four to five hundred roses, most of which were heritage roses. I also grew anything that would grow well under and alongside roses, including geraniums, iris, assorted perennials and a small number of salvias.

My mother passed away in July 2010. This left me with the need to find a new home and the means to purchase that home. My brother in 2011 set about making Mums house and garden more presentable for sale. This consisted of turning most of Mum's garden back into lawn and I was to be given time to save the plants that would move with me to my anticipated much smaller garden. I potted up about 100 plants for the move. These included 50 roses and my collections of clematis and geraniums, plus a few other plants. Three salvias were among those plants. They were microphylla 'Hot Lips', a salvia that was eventually identified as 'Phyllis' Fancy' and a large leaved thing of Mums we had never seen flower probably because we kept cutting it back at the wrong time.

My new garden turned out to be quite a reasonable size for a unit and consisted of a weedy silver birch and some scraggly Hebes in the front garden and an enormous Buddleia right against the fence in the back garden. Otherwise it was a blank canvas. The unit complex next door was sitting about half a metre higher than the land my unit complex was built on. The ground along my longest fence line sloped down into my garden. I decided to get a sleeper retaining wall built about 3 metres away from the fence and have a large raised border where most of the plants I had brought with me would go. I realised early on that the drainage in my garden was not very good and that anything not planted in a raised bed could end up sitting in water during wet weather.



In my first year, I had a patio built out the back and shade sails put over the top. The posts for the shade sails are quite substantial and the holes for these were dug by a bobcat. This left a set of deep ruts where the machine had driven in and out of my garden. I had enough soil from the holes to fill one of those ruts the other I decided to line with stones and use as a decorative rill and somewhere for the water to drain into as the low point of my garden. The grass had been killed off and the ground covered with bush mulch. I had read about bog gardens when I was a teenager and had wanted to build one. It however became obvious that trying to accomplish this in my mother's garden was not practical. Now in my new garden I decided to work with what I had instead of trying to grow plants in the wetter parts of the garden which really would not appreciate wet feet. In the area between the back patio and the rill I have planted native sedges, reeds, lilies and iris. I have started to branch out to a few species roses and exotic plants such as water iris which also don't mind being water logged for reasonable periods of time.

Continued on page 9..

..My Garden

Vivienne Smith, Croydon, Vic
.. continued from page 8

It was in the first or second year in my new home that I became involved with the Salvia Study Group. I had encountered the group a number of times at the Victorian Rose Societies Annual Show. I also belong to Heritage Roses Australia and many of the members there had been telling me what great companions salvias made for Heritage Roses. I started buying more salvias and found they were right. My mother's big leafed salvia unfortunately did not survive a hard prune in autumn and the frosts that winter. This is when I realised I didn't know much about them and should join a group who did. My garden today has about 70 species and heritage roses and over 100 salvias, plus an assortment of fruit trees, grasses, clematis, bulbs and native plants. Not all of my salvias are planted in the raised beds. Salvias such as Blue Cloud, forskoahlii, gesneriiflora and some of its cultivars, plus many greggii and microphylla are in some parts of the garden that don't get flooded when it rains.



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

SALVIA CARDS ***by Meg Bentley***

only **\$10** pack

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plus \$2.50 per pack posted

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send to*

*VSSG
844 Highbury Road,
Glen Waverley Vic 3150*

MEG'S SALVIA CARDS ORDER FORM

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.....	Assorted packs
or	Single Flower packs -
.....	<i>Salvia patens</i>
.....	<i>Salvia roemeriana</i>
.....	<i>Salvia microphylla var neurepia</i>
.....	<i>Salvia gesneriiflora 'Tequila'</i>
.....	<i>Salvia leucantha</i>
.....	Total packs @ \$10 per pack \$
	<i>Plus</i> \$2.50 per pack posted \$
	<u>Total cost of order:</u> \$

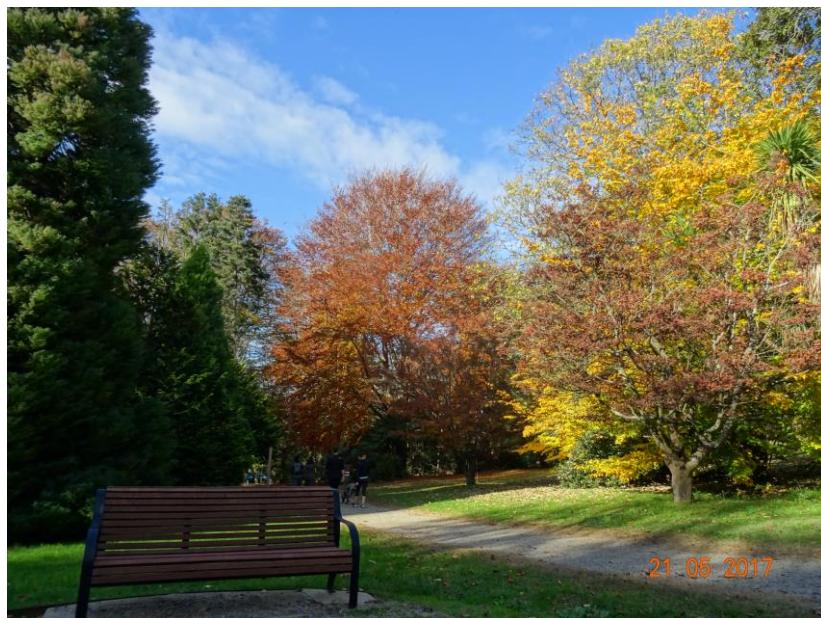
VSSG Salvia Display Garden

Nobelius Heritage Park, Emerald

Photos pages 10 & 11, Patrick Hogan

In Salvia News and on the VSSG website you often read about the Salvia Display Garden at Nobelius Heritage Park. In earlier editions last year you read about its history. Many of you have visited. There are quite a few events held there throughout the year. It's a beautiful park and the VSSG is very proud to have their Display Garden below the Puffing Billy Line. You are welcome to wander further than just the Display Garden and it's a great place to picnic. It's easy to find and there is free parking. Don't forget to wander the Salvia Display Garden too.

Patrick Hogan is often in the Park including many visits to the Salvia Display Garden, and his own Salvia Garden near the Station and keeps a record of his visits through photographs. He has once again submitted these for our enjoyment. Thankyou Patrick!



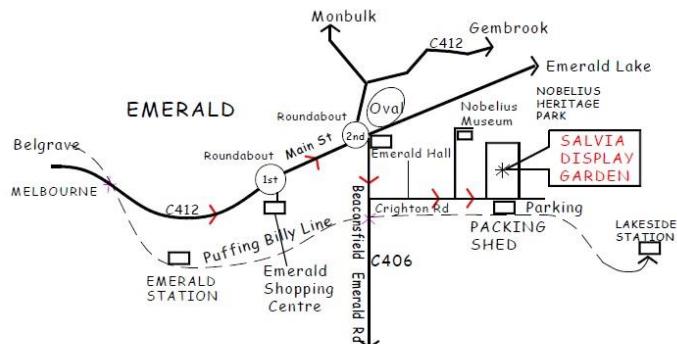
Nobelius Heritage Park - 21 05 2017



Salvia Display Garden, Nobelius Heritage Park

Crichton Road, Emerald under the Puffing Billy train line – Melway page 127 G4
Photos - Patrick Hogan

DIRECTIONS TO SALVIA DISPLAY GARDEN



Display Garden, right,
taken May 2017, and
below Spring 2016



Check the Calendar of Events on pages 4 and 5 of this issue of Salvia News for the next event to be held at the Display Garden at Nobelius Heritage Park in Emerald. Or why wait, make a visit soon and enjoy all that Nobelius Heritage Park has to offer.

Potty about salvias II

Pat Anderson, Warrandyte, Vic

I read, with sympathy, the article by Ian McDonald in the winter issue of *Salvia News*, concerning the wrath of Mother Nature in 2017 dealt to their nursery stock pots in Queensland. Coping with such climatic extremes with pot culture is certainly hard, and must be doubly hard when your livelihood is at stake. The only good thing about pots is that they can be moved around, although not on the scale of a nursery.

Thinking about this made me reflect that there are other considerations to take into account with pots beyond coping with extreme heat. I wrote in *Salvia News* (2003: "Potty about Salvias") and 2014 ("Hot pots") about dealing with heat, but below I will touch on a range of topics, most of which are related, namely: extreme heat, extreme cold, watering regimes, growing media and drainage, fertilisers, pests and the need to re-pot. In general, plants will cope much better in the ground than in pots, but there are many situations where having plants in pots is unavoidable. Think of Lyndi and Jillian with their backyards full of pots for sale, as well as the many others who also contribute plants for our plant fare days. I like to keep back up plants for those species that are a bit dodgy to grow, and of course a pot full of cuttings will generate more than one back-up plant, so that I too usually have heaps of extra plants. For many years Trudi Fry, in Selby, had her famous "Great Wall of Salvias" where she had a fine set of *S. greggii* and *S. microphylla* species and crosses, when there was a manageable number of these in circulation. Now that there are at least 180 named cultivars floating around, I am aiming at keeping one of each in a pot for ease of comparison as so many are so similar. This will add to my pot culture problem considerably. But everyone has to cope with salvias in pots at some time. It may be that you have bought up greedily at a plant fair but have to wait until a new bed is ready or for right conditions for planting, or you may be getting ready to move house.

Plants will cope best in nice, large terra cotta pots, but keeping pots on a large scale inevitable means using plastic and usually black plastic at that. Any black, or dark coloured, material will absorb far more solar radiation than will lighter colours, while shiny material will reflect heat. When I conducted my series of experiments in 2003, I waited for the shade temperature to reach 30 °C then I inserted a thermometer just inside each of a set of seven different coloured pots of identical size and potting mix (no plants) and recorded 54 °C just inside the black pot, but the white pot, while the coolest of the range, still recorded 43 °C. A covering of aluminium foil reduced the temperature to 37 °C, but foil is not a practical solution and other strategies are needed to bring the temperature down.

After a lot of fiddling about, by which time the ambient shade temperature had reached 34 °C, I recorded the lowest temperature of 31 °C where my pots were standing inside a polystyrene broccoli box at the bottom of which I had a layer of wet stones. To do this, I cut holes in the sides of the box about 2 cms from the bottom and filled this layer with stones and water. The cooling effect comes from evaporation of the water. Why not just stand the plants in water you might ask? Well I have done this occasionally but to leave a pot like this for any period of time, unless it is water lily or something similar, the roots will start to rot as they become deprived of oxygen.

Meg Bentley has a lot of success with standing pots in a polystyrene box lined with a good wad of wet newspaper. This certainly works, but before long you will have mass of roots growing through the paper so regular vigilance will be necessary to prevent this.

What about shade, I hear you say. Well of course this is the best approach for hot spells. You may be fortunate to have a suitable area under trees where pots can be stored, but then many species want some sun for flowering. Perhaps you could keep pots near a fence, from which you can pull out some shade cloth when necessary. This could help with vegetables too.

I am fortunate to have a potting area above which I have retractable shade cloth – running like horizontal curtains on steel cables (the original cables have been replaced with stainless steel which is much better). I got this idea from seeing the vegetable patch in Renmark of Jillian Barkell's brother and sister in law. Special butterfly clips, obtainable in hardware stores, make this possible. The additional tensioning devices in one of the pictures improve the situation.



Figure 1: Jillian's brother's vegetable patch



Figure 2: butterfly clips for loosely attaching shade cloth to the cable



Figure 3: Pat's system under construction



Figure 4: Tensioning devices for the cables



Figure 5: Shade cloth in use

keep it off the leaves of the tricky ones. The other good thing about hand watering is that you can quickly see if any plants are failing, or being eaten by something or are so dry that they need dunking. Individual plants can end

A regular misting system would help keep plants cool but this isn't usually an option for the home gardener. Certainly Ian's experience in Warwick, of pouring water on plants in pots when the black pot temperature was 64 °C was fatal. I can just imagine the steam rising from those poor little plants. Some salvias don't like overhead watering (either in pots or in the ground for that matter). I think this is true of the Mediterranean and Turkish ones in particular. They can cope with prolonged heat and dry conditions so long as they are not overhead watered and as long as the drainage is good. So, when keeping a lot of salvias in pots, it will pay to keep these and most of the silver-leaved plants separate from the others for watering regimes. I really prefer to water by hand from a hose with a sprinkler nozzle. This way I can control how much water each pot gets and also

continued on page 14..

Potty about salvias II - Pat Anderson, Warrandyte, Vic

..continued from page 13

up in a “rain shadow” with overhead sprinkling. In really hot weather I like to water twice a day – early morning and then again in the evening.

Before moving off the subject of temperature, I should mention the other extreme – frost! We have had plenty of that here recently and down to -4.5 °C. Thankfully, the back-up plants in the glasshouse look OK but the ones in the ground are a mess. There is a product that you can buy called “fleece”, which is a like a roll of very thin Vilene. It’s a nuisance to use and tears easily, but it can be helpful for protecting pot plants. Again, tree cover would be a help, but it would probably cut down on air circulation.

There are other products available, such as “Stressguard” which are supposed to prevent frost damage. Well, I have found this to be useless, again by doing comparative tests against a control – either side of a plant and in and out of the veranda cover.

Plants in pots will need fertilising much more frequently than those in the ground. This is because each thorough watering will tend to wash some of the nutrients out. A slow release fertiliser will help in this respect, but it’s probably worth giving a monthly dose of liquid fertiliser. I am very bad at remembering to do this so I am not the best person to be describing what to do.

Another aspect of pot culture is the need for periodic re-potting. Left to themselves the roots can quickly fill a pot, replacing the pre-existing potting medium with a root mass. Such a pot will have little material to hold any water and so a pot-bound plant will obviously succumb to heat faster than a healthy one, especially as a large proportion of the roots will be in contact with the outside – the hottest part of the pot. Even if you keep the same pot, you can tip the plant out and reduce the roots considerably before re-potting. Also, reducing the amount of foliage will also help reduce transpiration on hot days. This may mean missing out on flowers for a spell, but probably worth it to keep that special plant.

Potting mixes are made from composted bark. With time, these will further ‘compost’ and gradually collapse, both giving less ability to retain moisture as well as reducing drainage. The quality of the various mixes available is also relevant. The cheaper, supermarket ones tend to collapse very quickly. So this is another reason for re-potting periodically.

Some salvias, like the Mediterranean and Californian salvias, or the Asian salvias in winter, or those with underground tubers in winter, need excellent drainage. No matter what mix you are using, these plants will benefit from the addition of grit or sharp sand. Perlite can be helpful too because, as well as opening up the medium for drainage, the pellets will retain water for your plant. Be careful with the addition of “water crystals” in a small pot or you may find your plant heaving up out of the mix as the crystals take on water.

Finally, a note about pests and pot culture. While salvias aren’t too bad in this respect, white fly can be a problem, in the absence of small birds, when conditions are humid and the air is still. These conditions will be exacerbated when pots are crammed together and in the shade. So be vigilant or they can spread quickly, particularly in a glasshouse with poor circulation. Similarly, 2 spotted mites can be a problem in hot, dry conditions, for some species. From my experience, the plants that are stressed - not growing in their ideal conditions, including in pots – are the ones that will be more susceptible.

Slugs and snails can also manage to hide amongst closely-crammed pots. While their effects on foliage are more immediately obvious, alerting us to the problem, it is easy to miss them when they are decimating the newly emerging foliage of, for example, *S. patens* or *S. nutans* in spring. I have twice lost the latter species this way, and as it seems to take a couple of years to flower, that is a disaster.

One more tip, though more relevant to propagation. It is really important to tip prune the young plants that you pot up. They will quickly grow upward and leggy, but if you want a well-shaped plant with lots of flowers, you must regularly tip prune back to a node.

Happy potting, Pat

News from The Perennial Poppies Group Inc Southeast Queensland

Mick Nanka

Mudbrick Cottage Herb Farm

Well it's late June here in the Gold Coast Hinterland and it's a balmy 23 degrees. The overnight temperatures have been getting down to 10 - 12 degrees. It's one of my favourite times of the year, very pleasant.

I am sitting in the sun near the chook pen watching the native and European bees buzzing around *Salvia* 'Timboon' and *Salvia* 'Meigan's Magic'. They are having to compete with a blue faced honeyeater feeding on the nectar in the flowers. The *S.* 'Timboon', normally about 2.5m high in our garden, has been reduced to 2m as the heavy sprays of cerise flowers arch towards the ground.

I probably should have cut back *S.* 'Meigan's Magic' by now. It is looking a little untidy and there is a lot of new growth about 50cm high, coming from the base. But there are still plenty of flowers and after seeing how much the bees and birds are enjoying themselves, I may have to leave its untidiness a little bit longer.



Salvia oxyphora in a nearby bed, has travelled a little from its original planting position. This area, which is also a storage area for next year's firewood, is about 3m long and quite narrow. The top soil here is fairly shallow and although we still can enjoy the dark green leaves and fluffy pink flowers for most of the year, the position tends to keep this salvia under control. I know that some people in our area of southeast Queensland have problems with its suckering habit.

The other side of these stored logs is quite shady and only 25cm wide. I have a run of *Salvia sinaloensis* here. It is probably a bit too shady for optimal flowering of its bright dark blue flowers, but there is the bonus of the

bronze flush of new foliage throughout the year. *S. sinaloensis* only grows 25cm x 25cm and is one of my favourite small salvias.

Salvia 'Desley', at about 2m x 2m is in full flower at the moment. A probable cross between *S.* 'Black Knight' and *S. splendens* 'van Houttii', I don't think it has ever been without a coverage of its dark plum-maroon flowers in the 2 years it has been planted. Situated in front of a variegated *Ficus benjamina* and with an underplanting of variegated vinca, I have never pruned this salvia and it still retains a full rounded shape. I think it is very happy in this position.

On the back wall of our dam there is a variety of newly planted small trees, shrubs and salvias. While not much is happening with them yet, there is an existing favourite salvia in full flower, at the moment. *Salvia rubiginosa* is flowering profusely. The older woody stems have dropped to the ground with the weight of the flowers and have begun to layer. A mass of young shoots is reaching straight up from the middle of the plant. The shoots have many new buds which will provide a continuous display of white throated, bright blue flowers with purple maroon calyces and bracts, for a number of months. At first, I was disappointed with the way the older stems had collapsed to the ground, but I have come to like the carpeting effect of the flowers and with a light pruning of the flower heads and new layered shoots, I am going to achieve a larger plant more quickly, and ready for next year's spectacular flowering season.

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THANKYOU KATHIE

Kathie Thomas is no longer working for VSSG or Salvia News. She has worked with Salvia News for some years. She assisted Trudi Fry, the original and long time editor of Salvia News, and later took over as editor while a replacement was found. In the meantime she also assisted Lyndi with setting up and maintaining the website. Each edition of the newsletter was uploaded by Kathie for those who have online subscriptions. Over the years you may recall that on quite a few occasions Kathie has allowed us to print some of her numerous professional photos of birds on salvia bushes.

Kathie, thankyou so much for your generous support. Best wishes from all of us.

INTRODUCING BRETT

Introducing Brett Horan, an IT Specialist who will be managing the website for VSSG as is needed. Brett is a subscriber to Salvia News and helps regularly at the Working Bees.

Welcome Brett and thankyou for your support

A GOOD REVIEW FROM GOOGLE

There has been a good review from Google regarding our Victorian Salvia Study Group website maintained by Lyndi. Much of the information has been collected and collated by Lyndi and updated regularly to ensure the information is available for you.

638 people checked out the site in July

5 asked for directions, 150% up on the previous month

Victoria Salvia Study Group has a 4 star rating on Google

It is hoped that you may find time to have a look at the site and make your own comments. It contains a wealth of information and loads of photos. There is an up to date Calendar of Events too and worth checking on a regular basis to ensure there are no changes to events you have decided to attend.

Would love to hear from you too both positive and negative comments. Is there something that you believe should be added. It's a lot of work but to assist in growing the Group and the interest of new and old gardeners, it is essential.

Thankyou Lyndi.

Salvia News

Victorian Salvia Study Group

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