From the Branch Head

 Appropriately for the beginning of another year this was going to be about new things - new plants, new ideas, new projects but before there was time to make a start a very kind member arrived on the doorstep with a basket of figs, surely one of the oldest Mediterranean fruits. How fortunate we are, indeed blessed, to have such delicious food literally dripping off the trees. Plummy purple without, covered with a dusting of silver bloom and pale golden brown within the figs are simply epicurean. Eating them raw is a delight enjoyed too infrequently but there are enough to do something else with; made into jam or lightly stewed with port and spices they will add pleasure to several meals at least.

Also on the old Mediterranean theme is my summer reading of which one book is reviewed herein. Others will follow as space and time permits.

New plants are included in the following pages, and Scott Robinson will introduce more when he show-cases plants he is bringing from his Zephyranthus nursery in WA to illustrate his talk at our first meeting for 2015.

The committee has raised some new ideas for your consideration over the course of the year, principal of which are the possibility of organising some sort of regional conference for MGS members in Australia. It is very early days yet but if the idea is taken up we will have some support from the Victorian branch. Such a venture will, of course, be dependent on volunteers who can bring skills and time to its fulfillment.

Our branch hand-book is also due for revision and bringing up-to-date. A new survey form has been developed that is designed to simplify information gathering. It will be distributed at the next meeting and I urge everyone to fill it in so the work can begin.

Over the holiday break several members have commented that the SA Water Mediterranean Garden in the Adelaide Botanic Gardens is looking rather tired and in need of change and refurbishment. Steve Forbes, the Director, is interested in developing a partnership to review the garden and see what can be done. Given the financial strictures faced by the Botanic Gardens of SA, and the limited funds of
the MGS it seems obvious that whatever happens will most likely be a revamp of the plantings with the architecture of the site staying as it is. As with all new ideas this one needs first to be discussed by members, and if approved, volunteers to form a working party. That will take time. However, as the naming rights contract between SA Water and the BGSA does not expire for another 18 months, the MGS has ample time to consider any possible future commitment to such an idea.

We have, in the main, enjoyed a fine, mild summer and our gardens of vegetables, fruits and flowers have been rewarding us with almost unaccustomed luxuriance of growth, productivity and even some greenery; quite my kind of Mediterranean summer. I trust you enjoyed it too.

Trevor Nottle (after a hard day in the garden)

A Gallipoli Garden
Merilyn Kuchel

I was very interested to read the Tylers’ article in the summer 2014 newsletter ‘Gardening in the real Mediterranean’, and when Jon Lamb asked me recently to write something for SAGOL (available now free from most nurseries and garden centres) about the plants found around Gallipoli I googled Gocek, Turkey to see if it was anywhere near Gallipoli. The answer was No but that didn’t come as a great surprise as Turkey is a big country—with a land mass approximately the same as South Australia but with more than 80 million people. It is often referred to as the land bridge between Europe and Asia and the climate and geography of Turkey vary dramatically from region to region resulting in huge botanical diversity. While searching the internet for information about the flora of Gallipoli, I discovered that compared to the whole of Europe (which has around 11,500 species distributed over an area thirteen times larger) Turkey alone has more than 9,000 species and of those about 3,000 are endemic. One of my favourite and frequently used books ‘Wildflowers of the World’ by former Botanic Gardens director Brian Morley, was a useful resource as was the website [http://yabanicicek.com](http://yabanicicek.com). There is also a relatively new book which I do not have but would like ‘Wildflowers of Turkey Vol 1’ by L. Yasemin Konuralp—(perhaps the Tylers might like to purchase it for using when over there and lend it to me when they are in Mt Gambier?!)

Anyway here is what I wrote for SAGOL:

Gardens are very often used as memorials—quiet places for remembering loved ones who have died, and with the centenary of the landing at Anzac Cove approaching perhaps it might be an appropriate time for planting a Gallipoli garden. This will not be very difficult for South Australians because our climate and topography are very similar to the west coast of Turkey. With hot, dry summers and cool, wet winters the average annual rainfall is 628mls which is only a little higher than Adelaide. Gallipoli’s latitude of 40°N compares with 35°S for Adelaide and both places have their climate moderated by the sea on the western side.

It will come as no surprise, therefore, that many of the wildflowers of western Turkey are already widely used by gardeners in SA. The annuals that come immediately to mind are Nigella damascena (love-in-the-mist) Centaurea cyanus, (cornflowers) Lobularia maritima ( Alyssum) Helianthus annuus (sunflower) Papaver rhoeas (corn poppies) Geranium sp. (cranesbill) dianthus and viola. Many of the Turkish bulbs such as crocus, colchicum, cyclamen, anemone, alliums, muscari and gladiolus, to name just a few, are widely planted and do very well in our gardens (oxalis does a little too well!). Perennials found near Anzac Cove include anthemis, cerastium, euphorbias, and purple and white iris.

Perhaps the best known plant to have been brought back from Gallipoli is Rosmarinus officinalis. In 1915, a wounded Australian soldier was repatriated to an army hospital in Keswick. He brought with him a small rosemary bush he had dug from Gallipoli and planted it in the hospital grounds. Some years ago, cuttings were taken by David Lawry to grow into a hedge, and plants from that hedge are thriving today at the Waite Arboretum. Rosemary is an ancient symbol of remembrance and is often intertwined with leaves and flowers in wreaths and pinned to lapels on Anzac and Armistice Days.

The Gallipoli Rose, or Cistus salvifolius, is another hardy shrub that blooms in spring across the Gallipoli Peninsula. The official symbol for the Anzac Day commemorations in Turkey is a ‘Gallipoli Rose’ backed by a sprig of rosemary.

The ‘Lone Pine’ of Gallipoli fame is the native Pinus
Silk Floss Tree
Anne Hinkley - Tyler and Ian Tyler
(Mt. Gambier)

Today is Saint Valentine’s Day and I declare I have fallen in love. The love may be unrequited and only time will tell. The new lovers in my life (there are two) I first met on the Mediterranean coast in Turkey and now have them living with me. Their family name is Bombacaceae and we know them as Ceiba speciosa, the silk floss tree.

Ian is quite happy about my new loves and has welcomed them into our garden. One has a room in the north-west, the other a room in the south-east. It took us some time to tempt them here since meeting them last year. We resigned ourselves to embarking upon an 800 kilometre round trip to purchase them but then fortune found its way to us, with a friend travelling back from Geelong and able to bring them to us. It was before Christmas when we first enquired about them from Roraima Nursery and at that time we were told there were plenty in stock, no need to worry about holding them. When we were ready to purchase a month ago Ian called the nursery and was told there were only four left! Roraima Nursery was the only nursery in Australia we found that stocked the plants.

The trees are currently 1.8 metres high and we hope they thrive and grow to their full capacity, which can be from 9 to 18 metres. The autumn display of flowers will be magnificent in years to come but I am more interested in the thorns on the trunks, as they fascinate me and I find them architecturally quite stunning.

Just before the arrival of my new loves Ian and I decided to relax and watch one of Monty Don’s DVDs from his Italian Garden series. He was visiting La Mortella, Ischia and the camera panned up the trunk of a very tall Ceiba speciosa. The interview turned to the story of how the tree came to be there. The owner, Lady Susana Walton, was in Buenos Aires for a concert and saw the tree in flower. She climbed atop a taxi and grabbed the seeds, successfully propagating the tree that is seen in the garden of La Mortella. My motivation for aging now is an image of an older woman, atop whatever she can stand upon to be able to reach the seed or snip a cutting to start growing in her garden. If I can keep doing that into my 60s, 70s, 80s and beyond I will have lived a good life.

Some of our plants in Mount Gambier do not really know what is going on this summer season. We know acers are not really appropriate for a Mediterranean based garden. We planted them before deciding we needed to apply Mediterranean gardening principles and they have done quite well without too much intervention from us. They even survived the drought.
when they were younger plants. This summer though the *Acer palmatum* (Japanese maples) and our *Acer rubrum* ‘October Glory’ think it is autumn, giving the summer garden an unusual display of autumn hues.

The trees are stressed, as leaves are dropping all over the place even though the temperatures have not been high, except for the occasional day or two, but it has been very dry. We still have spring flowering plants such as *Papaver rhoeas* flowers in bloom (red Flanders poppies) closer to the house and yet our agapanthus flowers are looking sad because we don’t water them in the paddock. I noticed today a *Gladiolus* ‘Purple Flora’ has just flowered in our front garden, under the *Robinia* ‘Mop Top’, which also has started dropping her leaves. Plants that have done well this summer include *Eucalyptus ficifolia* (red flowering gums), *Melia azedarach* (white cedar) which line our driveway and flowered for the first time this year, various salvias, fuschias, callistemon, *Acer negundo*, as well as a variety of succulents and wattles. Our *Jacaranda mimosifolia* flowered for the first time this year and interestingly we were told 10 years ago that we could not grow them in Mount Gambier because it was not hot enough.

We have had success with our *Hibiscus* ‘Ian’s Gold’ this summer, which has flowered profusely without much watering. It seems every garden in Mount Gambier has flourishing roses, except our garden. Rosie, the swamp wallaby, has decided to settle in our garden and her favourite treat seems to be the roses, their new shoots and the new shoots of all our other new plantings. I have started wondering what wallaby stew may taste like.

It was whilst watching ABC’s Gardening Australia that a quote changed the way we inspected our garden. Sophie Thompson had visited Anlaby, interviewing the owners. One of the owners, Peter Hayward, said something I thought so important I wrote it down. Now Ian and I always remind each other of Peter’s quote when on our evening garden walks. Peter’s statement was “instead of looking at what you have not done, look at what you have done”. What has changed is we no longer take note of what we need to do but of what we have done and how the garden is progressing. This has released us from the constant list making and thinking we have not achieved much, and allows us to enjoy the slow creation of a garden.

Also on the subject of others’ gardening quotes, Ian and I often think how beautiful our garden will be when we are dead, given we started with a blank paddock only 10 years ago and we are already of a certain age. I came across this old Greek proverb that I think is appropriate, not just for Ian and me but for our world.

“A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in.” (I would insert women too).

**OGA – the last hurrah**

*Kate Chattaway*

As Open Gardens Australia stages its last autumn offerings under its present guise as a national organization, make a diary date to see the beautiful garden of Tipsy Hill in McLaren Vale, the home of MGS stalwart Margaret Burrell.

This garden, which is open on March 14 and 15, sits on a hilltop exposed to the wind from every direction but with stunning views of the Southern Vales. This challenging site has been tamed through a long term collaboration between Margaret and designer Pam Hailstone. Now there are protected lawns, patios and seating areas which allow the garden to be enjoyed whatever the wind direction. Margaret relishes bold colour combinations and has a strong feeling for architectural form. She has terraced the site and has filled it with flowers which provide the setting for her sculpture collection (see also page 5).

Open Gardens Australia winds up in June, to be succeeded here by a new state-based organization currently getting off the ground called Open Gardens...
The bad and the good news

Virginia Sheridan

The bad news was that last year, after originating in South Australia 27 years ago and quickly expanding Australia-wide, Open Gardens Australia shocked us all with the announcement that it was to cease operating on June 30, 2015.

The good news is that Open Gardens SA Inc. (OGSA) has now ‘risen from the ashes’ and will begin opening gardens after July 1 this year!

South Australians have always been keen visitors to open gardens and over the years thanks to the generosity and willingness of owners to share their wonderful gardens, our state has made a hefty contribution to OGA finances. This history and the widespread public disappointment following the closure announcement suggest there will be plenty of support to make our local venture successful.

The set up of the new organisation is different from that of the old one – OGSA has been formed as an incorporated body of members and their subscriptions will help to provide funds for set up costs, although it is hoped that after the first season the organisation will quickly become self sufficient. For the initial season Committee Members and Volunteers will provide what ever it takes to get OGSA up and running and will work together to present a bumper season of wonderful gardens – so any offers of help from MGS members will be greatly appreciated! In future seasons, it is hoped there will be funds available for the employment a part time coordinator who will ensure the smooth running of a good program of gardens and provide support to garden owners.

There are 2 types of membership available:

General Member $30
Benefits will include two ‘members only’ activities each year, the possibility of special prices on gardening related products and a token for one yearly free garden entry with the purchase of a full price ticket. Members will be invited to the AGM to be held in July where they can have an input into the running of the organisation and a vote.

Foundation Member $150 (available until June 30, 2015; includes a donation of $60 to assist in costs).
3 years’ membership with General Member benefits. Foundation Member names will be listed on the OGSA website (with their approval) and it is hoped to arrange at least one visit per year to a ‘special garden’ that will not open to the general public.

Costs of entry to most gardens for 2015/16 season will be: Adults - $8, Concession (Centrelink cardholders) - $6; Children under 18 – free

South Australia (OGSA).

Savour this last season too by visiting two perennial favourites in the Adelaide Hills: Beechwood and Wairoa. These two outstanding gardens are both open on the same weekend – May 9 and 10 when the hills will be alive with rich autumn colours.

Called one of the quintessential heritage gardens of South Australia, Beechwood was the first garden to be put on the State Heritage list. Known for its majestic trees and sweeping lawns, this property has everything from formal rose gardens to an original Victorian rock garden. The present owners have added to the rose collection, which now boasts 300 David Austin roses.

One magnificent feature at Beechwood is the conservatory, one of only two of its kind in South Australia. It was bought from Paisley in Scotland by one time Beechwood owner Thomas Elder and provided exotic fruit and flowers for the household.

The garden at Wairoa is the setting for an imposing Victorian mansion dating from the 1890s. It was once one of the Barr Smith houses and later became Marbury School in the 1970s. It is the last remaining intact Victorian pleasure garden in the Adelaide Hills.

Stone outcrops were carved into sculpture by the first owner of Wairoa, William Horn

In April another historic estate is open at Mylor – just for one day, Sunday, April 19. Rockford has century old European trees as well as Bunya pines, Cedrus deodora and cork oaks set in rolling lawns. There are perennial borders, fruit trees and a vegetable garden to enjoy as well as views of the Onkaparinga River.

For full details, check out the Open Gardens Australia website.

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For full details, check out the Open Gardens Australia website.
owner and OGSA. Insurance, signage and media support will be provided by OGSA.

There are already around 30 garden owners who have indicated willingness to open next season but most of these have opted for springtime. MGS members can help the new scheme by opening their gardens either next summer and autumn as this provides a real opportunity for our members to show to others that it is possible to have good gardens even after a punishing summer.

So if you are thinking you might like to open or know of someone else whose garden is interesting, please let Merilyn or me (Virginia Sheridan) know. The main criteria for opening are that a garden should have at least 30 minutes of interest for a visitor, there should be a good level of maintenance and the garden should not be completely visible from the street. Also gardens that are of historical interest or perhaps have a collection of a particular type of plant can be included.

We would like to know about spring gardens as soon as possible but there is not the same urgency with summer and autumn openings. This means there is a bit of time to persuade yourself what a good idea it would be to experience the rewarding pleasure and fun it is to share your garden and let others enjoy it with you for a weekend!

So you can help get OGSA up and running by becoming a member, offering to volunteer or perhaps opening your garden – or if none of these options are for you, just visit one where someone else has done all the hard work!

Membership forms are available on the website www.opengardensa.org.au or you can contact me ginnysheridan@hotmail.com (phone 83643588) and I will send one to you.

Merilyn’s email: mdkuchel@bigpond.net.au

Left to their own devices

Anne-Marie Holland (Summertown)

I want to write about part of my garden which receives little attention, no supplementary watering and is looking very happy at the moment. It is an area planted with Australian natives.

The area is located between the road, a very large tank and our driveway lined with mature Mediterranean cypress (Cupressus sempervirens), which make the area shady in the morning. I started planting in 2006. I wanted to hide the tank as well as provide a privacy barrier into our property. Didn’t know very much about plants back then but luckily discovered the Coromandel Native Plant Nursery where I bought most of the plants. Most were $2 tube-stock and the price tag was very appealing to me at the time. I was advised that
tube-stock plants quickly caught up to the larger ones, which they did.

I've been going through my records of what was planted and can see that there have been a few losses. These include three *Waratah speciosima*, an *Acacia pycnantha*, *Dodonaea viscosa purpurea*, dryandra and banksia (unrecorded species).

The successes are as follows:
13 *Adenanthos sericeus* planted in 2006/2007 around part of the tank, have all survived although one was blown over by the wind; I have cut it right back and it has re-shot. The other plants which are doing well are *Correa alba*, *Correa pulchella*, *Correa reflexa*, *Correa ‘Dusky Bells’*, *Grevillea ‘Big Red’* (now a really nice shrub), *Hakea ‘Burrendong Beauty’*, *Grevillea olivaceae*, *Grevillea ‘Superb’* (currently looking a bit sad), *Myoporum parvifolium*, *Leptospermum ‘Outrageous’* and two leptospermum (unrecorded species but look like L. *morrisoni* ‘Burgundy’). This plant is beautiful in floral arrangements and the long, slender stems keep very well.

In 2014 I planted three *Hardenbergia violacea* with rustic tripods to support them. Only one is doing very well.

Most of my plants take a while to settle in. I try not to over-water them. Once they have settled in they seem to do very well.

**Salvia corrugata - simply stunning**

*Anne-Marie Holland (Summertown)*

One of my favourite salvias is *Salvia corrugata*. It is a perennial shrub native to Columbia, Peru and Ecuador, growing at altitudes around 2,400m. In its native habitat it reaches nearly three metres but in my garden it grows to about 1.5m. It has electric blue flowers all year round which look lovely mixed with hot pink *Gaura lindheimeri*. The garden bed receives little additional summer watering, however I expect it would require extra watering if planted on the Adelaide Plains to keep it looking its best during summer. The leaves have little corrugated ridges on them, hence the name. Their underside is a downy brown colour which is a nice foliage contrast. When the older stems get thick and woody I cut them out. I find it to be a low maintenance plant.

**Hippeastrum x Sonatina**

*Trevor Nottle (Crafers)*

This hybrid (see photograph on page 28) is one of a series of new dwarf and miniature hippeastrums that have recently made an appearance in Australia through specialist bulb dealers. Developed almost simultaneously in the Netherlands and Japan they are ideal pot plants being easy to grow and very prolific. One of the bulbs planted at ‘Walnut Hill’ produced 5 stems with 8 -10 flowers each. Quite a show for $12.

Colours are typical of hippeastrums generally - white, various pinks and scarlet, some with contrasting stripes or throat markings. Regular feeding while the bulbs are in leaf should ensure satisfying rates of increase and flower production.

**What plant is this?**

*Lynn Elzinga - Henry (Crafers)*

I would have put this Banksia on my February best plant list but I am not sure of it’s identity. I think it might be *Banksia lemanniana*.

**This plant is absolutely stunning but the cones are so well hidden that you need to really look to find them.**

According to Linda Niemann it is *Banksia aculeata* (eds.)
Plants that can run a marathon

Kate Chattaway

What have a sumo wrestler and a 92 year old woman who has just completed a marathon got to do with growing Mediterranean plants you may ask? More than you would think according to our first presenter of the year, WA nurseryman Scott Robinson.

As images of these athletes flashed up on the screen during his talk Scott explained that if you pamper your plants with excessive water and nutrients, they will grow up to be big and butch like sumo wrestlers but they will not have longevity and staying power.

During the long hot summers you want plants that are leaner and fitter like the aged marathon runner – better able to last the distance according to Scott.

He is a great enthusiast for embracing the climate and growing plants that revel in the hot Mediterranean summers we enjoy and are properly adapted to it. He is particularly keen on plants from the Canary Islands, California and the prairies of North America. Scott specializes in uncommon and hard to source plants as well as old favourites from and for Mediterranean climates at his nursery in Perth.

Braving the vagaries of Australia Post, he posted himself a clutch of plants from Western Australia to illustrate his Adelaide talk and they emerged after their four day journey remarkably unscathed. Some plants had even responded well to the humidity in their packaging and put on a few new leaves.

All Scott’s plants are grown in a lean mix of perlite and vermiculite. Perlite gives the roots of the fledgling plants room to grow and vermiculite enables good cation exchange. He uses minimal watering to encourage that marathon runner’s toughness.

“If you want to grow plants that do well in our climate, you have to allow them to enjoy our climate. That means allowing them to rest in the summer. I do as little as possible to my plants, that’s my goal.”

The Canary Islands off the coast of Africa have a very similar climate to Adelaide, if a little more alkaline. One plant well adapted to 40 degree days is Lotus berthelotti, a quick growing nitrogen fixing legume which is a good hardy groundcover. Another is the summer deciduous Euphorbia dendroides, which shows off its bright red stems when it sheds its leaves.

He also favours another Canary Island native, Limonium macrophyllum. This is one of the largest of the sea statices and forms a reasonable sized shrub with broad soft green leaves and big purple rosettes. It is particularly useful for that perennial problem area – dry shade e.g., under eucalypts. Again it performs best not irrigated.

Erysimum scoparium ticks many boxes according to Scott – it grows knee high in the drier regions of the Canary Islands and survives without any irrigation, flowering almost all year round. A useful plant to put below tall growing roses and one which associates well with other Mediterranean plants like cistus, ballota and Euphorbia characias.
Hotter and drier than the Canaries are the Cape Verde islands with a rainfall of just 250mm. Here you can find the *Lotus jacobaeus*, a dramatic black flowered lotus which is tough enough to survive on a freeway median strip. Scott warned that being a legume, it was not fond of being pruned.

Among the salvias he recommended was the Californian species *Salvia apiana*, the white sage, which likes it hot, dry and exposed. This plant is very popular with Californians and has foliage which becomes intensely silver in summer. “If you water it, it will die,” warned Scott.

Another favourite salvia is *Salvia candelabra*, a furry salvia from Spain with large showy purple flowers in late spring.

Among the wide range of salvias Scott produces, he particularly likes the small soft blue flowered *Salvia pomifera* hailing from southern Greece, which is ideally suited to the arid climate in South Australia.

Rarely grown outside California but highly recommended by Scott is *Coreopsis gigantea* from coastal California. It is yellow flowered, summer deciduous and forms an elephantine trunk over time.

Everyone went home from the talk with a couple of seed packets of Californian annuals and many were lucky enough to win one of Scott's well travelled plants in the raffle. Scott mails plants across Australia from his nursery called Zephyranthes – see his website for more details on all the plants he grows. http://www.zephs.com.au
Two Botanical Gardens
Graham Butler

On a recent trip to Europe we had the pleasure of visiting 2 quite different botanical gardens- the first in Prague and the second in Croatia, on the Island of Lokrum just across the water from Dubrovnik.

It was September in Prague and one afternoon we had reached saturation point with tourists and all that goes with being a tourist and we needed to see some green and have some peace and quiet which is why we sought sanctuary in the gardens.

The garden was very well maintained and had many different "rooms" and the area being slightly hilly made for some interesting vistas over the city and surrounds as well as the garden itself. There were plenty of seats to rest and take in these views.

One side of the garden overlooked a vineyard which is part of the Castle and garden complex and that in turn overlooked an amazing garden around the castle.

A recently developed Mediterranean garden was struggling but it did appear to be in infancy so it would be worth seeing in a few years.

The unique growing technique is enhanced by a very thoughtful selection of plants drawn from the drier parts of the winter rainfall areas of the world. Sourcing these calls for much homework on Scott's part but has resulted in a fascinating range of products offered through his nursery's on-line catalogue. Nearly all the plants are seed raised or propagated from stock plants Scott has started from seed in the first place. To demonstrate the diversity Scott brought from WA some thirty plants, all different, not seen here before and gave them to members to try in their own gardens. His advice on planting was very specific: no root disturbance, no fertiliser, no mulch, water only once or twice a month until the winter rains arrive. The plants will not grow lush but they will send down strong roots. And they will live for years and years instead of dying after one or two years.

Scott wants to hear from members who acquired plants so that he can add information about how they grew to his knowledge bank. MGS branch members will learn too if that experience is written up for the newsletter. Those who got plants may find that the labels contain only the name of the plant and no information about growth habits or cultivation. This is because Scott doesn't have any personal experience of those things so that planting them in our gardens is an experiment. Be sure to keep a note of the plant name and do report how it fares over the next twelve months.

Additional notes from Trevor on Scott Robinson's presentation

Scott presented the case for growing garden plants hard and described in detail his methods which are very successful in the sandy or heavy clay-pan soils in Perth.

He first showed the unique potting method he has devised to promote deep root growth and tough top growth in all the plants he propagates. This involves a potting mix of 50:50 perlite and vermiculite which is used in conjunction with deep pots which are square in cross section. Absolutely no fertiliser or compost is used. The combination of pot size and shape with the fast draining potting mix together with overhead watering every two days, or less, produces plants with deep root systems, minimal top growth and already hardened-off.

Think how very different this technique is in comparison to the 'hardy' Mediterranean plants produced by mail-order nurseries interstate. Remember all those shallow rooted lush thymes, santolinas, artemisias that died with the first heatwave of summer?

The unique growing technique is enhanced by a very thoughtful selection of plants drawn from the drier parts of the winter rainfall areas of the world. Sourcing these calls for much homework on Scott's part but has resulted in a fascinating range of products offered through his nursery's on-line catalogue. Nearly all the plants are seed raised or propagated from stock plants Scott has started from seed in the first place. To demonstrate the diversity Scott brought from WA some thirty plants, all different, not seen here before and gave them to members to try in their own gardens. His advice on planting was very specific: no root disturbance, no fertiliser, no mulch, water only once or twice a month until the winter rains arrive. The plants will not grow lush but they will send down strong roots. And they will live for years and years instead of dying after one or two years.

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breathtaking – about 10 feet in length with perfect proportions and so whimsical.

Vast areas were lawn while others were heavily planted with trees and the usual floral displays. Another was devoted to Bonsai and to see them displayed in the open without any security surrounding them was wonderful and they were looking exceedingly healthy.

Some weeks later we had a short 2 day visit to Dubrovnik which is where we discovered Lokrum Island. Lokrum inherits it's name from the Latin word acrumen “bitter fruit”, a reference to the orange and lemon trees that have thrived on the island since ancient times.

The ruins of an old monastery are central on the island and in 1960 it was decided to establish a botanical garden here for the purpose of studying how non-native tropical and sub-tropical plants adapt to the region’s typically Mediterranean climate - hot dry summers and mild rainy winters. The average annual temperature is 16°C with a rainfall of 1294mm. The garden suffered massive damage in the 91/92 Croatia War of Independence – so hard to understand why a simple island like this should be bombed apart from sheer malice- but has since undergone a massive restoration.

One major casualty of the war was a large portion of the library’s collection of botanical treasures and research files that were destroyed in a fire started by one of these attacks.

The Garden covers approx. 2 hectares and has many plants of Australian origin, obtained as seeds through an active exchange program with botanical gardens around the world. We felt quite at home amongst so many familiar trees and plants with various cacti and succulents appearing to thrive.

The entire Island can be covered on foot and was just the place we needed to wander around with hardly a person to be seen. When you have finished looking there is a great little bar/coffee area to sit and relax.

Retrofitting a garden for climate change
Lynn Elzinga-Henry

At a recent garden meeting where we were discussing what sort of gardens we find interesting to see, Pam Hailstone suggested that people who have inherited an old garden could very well be keen to learn how to 'retrofit' their garden to adapt to the climate conditions we are facing today. What a brilliant thought!

Designer members of the Mediterranean Garden Society do a lot of work in promoting the type of plants that will do best in our current conditions so it is not the plant choices that are new but rather the holistic concept of transitioning a whole garden.

Many garden owners will have faced the conundrum of whether to completely redo an old garden or just embrace an existing high water use English style garden. Recently a friend of mine purchased just such a property with lots of mature shady trees and typical hills plantings of tired azaleas and camellias. There had been some recent plantings of native grasses and nondescript perennials but frankly they had to be removed because they just looked wrong.

How exciting to go along to see a garden in transition. Not from scratch but highlighting ways to slowly change watering patterns perhaps in some ways following the permaculture pattern of sectioning up the garden as we do when planting similar water use plants together, but also coming up with innovative plant selections that might have high water use up against low water use plants. The idea would be to slowly reduce one and transition to the other whilst maintaining some sort of cohesion in the look of the garden. The health of mature trees could be a real issue if watering patterns were substantially altered but experience can guide us as to which can or cannot adapt. This article is really just random thoughts on the idea but it is a concept that I find incredibly exciting to explore. Let us hope there is some really good retrofitting going on out there and that the garden owners are willing for us all to come and see the process of transition.

No Maintenance Gardens?
Beverley Seaton’s eye was caught by a reference to gardeners in 'The Australian' newspaper: "— a gardener fights a constant war against untrammelled nature, but casual observers see only order and tranquillity--".

In Beverley’s experience, visitors’ comments such as Aren’t you lucky to have such a wonderful garden reflect their ignorance of the toil involved and are often followed by casual requests such as "Could I have a few flowers for my wedding (birthday party)?"

Does this sound familiar?
Mediterranean Garden Society SA Branch

Autumn 2015

BOOK REVIEWS

‘It Began with a Watermelon’
by Julie Catton
Review by Malcolm Faul (Vic.)

Many stories of restoring houses and gardens in foreign climes have been very successful. The stories of Peter Mayle (‘A Year in Provence’), Frances Mayes (‘Under the Tuscan Sun’) and Christopher Stewart (‘Driving over Lemons’) are some of the more successful examples and are eminently readable. Julia Catton’s chronicle of restoring the three-storeyed ancestral home on the island of Lemnos in Greece and establishing an enviable lifestyle is no less readable.

Julia adds new dimensions to a familiar path. With the advantage of Takis being a native Greek speaker, together with Julia establishing local friendships with English-speaking neighbours gives a deeper insight into the character of Lemnians. With Takis taking on much of the renovation himself and working with local contractors, the reader develops a strong appreciation of the strength of character and persistence required for such a project. Julia’s many roles as labourer’s assistant, confidante, support staff, interior design researcher, and garden designer are clearly in evidence. The restoration often takes a back seat as Julia and Takis welcome many guests for extended sojourns. She gives credit to the Mediterranean Garden Society for inspiring her in establishing the garden and writes about the use of the endemic species and the difficulty in sourcing suitable exotic plants. Added to this is the unusual trial of Takis having to negotiate with the other 36 part-owner relatives in order to buy them out. The whole narrative is enhanced by Julia interlacing Greek and Lemnian culture and history into the text.

The many threads of the narrative are brought together in a very engaging story of fulfilling a dream. The reader is readily absorbed by the story and thereby vicariously enjoys the dream without the attendant trials. This book is a most enjoyable read.

‘The Happy Summer Days’
Review by Trevor Nottle

As summer is meant for relaxation, reading this little book could not be a better excuse for just that. It is the stuff of Mediterranean fantasies; a boyhood spent in a palace in Palermo, Italy, surrounded by odd relatives, amusing servants, eccentric guests, a doting sister and estranged parents. And it is true. The book is a semi-biographical memoir by Fulco della Cerda, Duke of Verdura, about his early years. Schooled at home by
governesses, he had plenty of time to roam his family home, the Villa Niscemi and its park and gardens accompanied by his sister, along with a company of pets including a camel.

While by no means great literature, this book is captivating in its charm and escapism which capture the free spirit of the Golden Era of late 19thC Mediterranean aristocratic society. Black and white photographs add nostalgia to the overall Romantic atmosphere of the book.

There have been several paper-back re-prints since the first edition in hard-back.

Julie Kinney
Margaret River (W.A.)

The final meeting of this Western Australian group for 2014 was held on December 18 at a relatively new commercial garden (Amazen) on the outskirts of Margaret River. The garden has been developed by local couple Cathy and Russell McKnight over the last twenty years. During this time Cathy and Russell were busy with other things but always quietly working towards a plan of opening their garden to the public.

The first meeting of six people to establish the group was held at Amazen two years ago, so it seemed fitting that with the size of our group now we should revisit. It was a joy to be able to explore the property with Russell as our enthusiastic host, who after an introductory talk walked with us to tell the story of its development.

Rocks sourced from throughout the district. Trees gifted to them. Plants being moved more than once to more suitable places. Railway sleepers used originally in arid mining areas, but sourced from the Margaret River region many years earlier, now formed a huge rose pergola. Already it is nearly smothered in Rosa ‘Crepuscule’.

Simple plantings have been used elegantly like the two

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There is a photograph of people standing in front of the garden, indicating a group visit. The atmosphere is relaxed and friendly, with the garden providing a scenic backdrop for the meeting.
flowers are also held on nice thin stems making it a very useful plant. I love the flower colour and shape. We have it planted in two different sorts of conditions and it performs equally well in both. One is to the side of the driveway where the soil is horribly hard sub-grade clay with minimal organic matter and only gets irrigated about 3 or 4 times in the whole year, if it’s a really dry year. Further along in our mockingly named Long Border, it stands in beautiful albeit heavy clay loam soil with very high organic matter content, and is irrigated about every 2 to 3 weeks in the summer.

Lambley Nursery writes:

Whilst this plant grows in moist peaty soil in its native South Africa it has been very happy here in our dry garden for the past decade, the clumps increasing in size and beauty each year. The bright yellow torches held on 120cm tall stems shine during late July, August and early September. In late spring the leaves die down and the plant hibernates for the summer. 120cm by 40cm.

I wonder if perhaps ours is not nutans, or maybe they are shorter here because we aren’t on metres of volcanic soil. I do recommend it though. It is a great performer and an easy bed-fellow in the garden.

See Steve Hailstone’s garden on Gardening Australia at 6.30pm on March 14.

Called Niwajiri, this outstanding garden was a runaway success when it was opened for the first time under Open Gardens Australia a couple of years ago with visitors even flying over from Sydney to see it.

Steve has taken inspiration from Australian, European and Japanese landscapes to put his personal stamp on Niwajiri. The garden includes a Japanese style bathhouse and many other garden structures created from recycled materials. It boasts great autumn colours and a subtle mix of common and rare plants as well as an organic vegetable garden, chooks and a home orchard.
Tipsy Hill is a terraced Mediterranean style house and garden along the crest of a ridge with vineyards falling away on both sides creating glorious long views to the Willunga Hills and valleys. Stunning plant combinations, sculptures and installations. The outside of the house has an interconnected series of vine-shaded eating and living areas, structured by imaginative hedges, arches and stonework into protected areas, courtyards, and open views softened by rolling foliage. In March, salmon colours of flowering gums, grevilleas, sedums, cannas, bougainvilleas, roses, and the red of berries, contrast with the blues of *Duranta repens*, solanums, iochromas, perennials and succulents.

**Planting the garden: an attempt to make the ordinary extraordinary.**

_We live inside nature and we are a part of its cycle... Land and plants occupy the human scale; the sky is the greater part of the composition. Another aspect of this is the balance between fullness and emptiness, shad-ows and light…_

Fernando Caruncho (Spanish landscape architect).

Open Gardens are necessarily in the middle of the day, but my favourite hours are early morning and evening when, in that stillness and these shadows, you can almost hear those pesky rabbits and stay calm. I walk around inspecting the damage inflicted by kangaroos and rabbits, ascertaining where even more chicken wire is needed to protect my plants, but I forget about it and feel at one with the sky, the vineyard, the valleys, the rolling hills and the plants.

Our tank which collected rainwater was hidden away in a bank and covered with a thorny Mermaid rose, solanum and 15 years of growth. It cracked. Disaster. More money, loss; but then, the light dawned, also an opportunity.

Jerry Keyte of Willunga, built my new dream, my favourite place now _The Deck_. It is perched above the valley, so the observation deck directly faces the distant ridge of the Willunga Hills. Comfortable chairs and clear plate glass in front allow one to absorb the view, while the weeping mulberry tree immediately behind the deck gives a sense of groundedness. A perfect summer spot to watch the shadows lengthen across the valley.

I have grown to love this salmon canna (right) and nowhere more than against the peppercorn tree. Such ordinary plants so beautiful together. Beside them is a middle-sized bouganvillea in the same salmon colour and on the other side lots of _Fuchsia koralle_ with their pointy salmon-red flowers dripping down. They flower very well in shade.
I see gardens as sculpture.  
They are made not by individually beautiful plants, but by relationships.

There are many hedges at Tipsy Hill, most are informal except for this privet (top left), which is green to the ground and consistent despite some roots being in sand and others in ironstone. Mixing natives, the standard grevillea, and the native myrtle, Agonis, with exotics works well here on the drive.

Middle-sized bouganvillea (top right) are wonderfully rewarding with their long flowering period, brilliant colour, and resistance to burning during the summer months. Here they are coupled with blue convolvulus in a courtyard-sized garden; small and low maintenance, what more could you want? Tipsy Hill is a series of such small gardens within the greater garden, complimented by the vivid blue of the southern skies and green views of the McLaren Vale vineyards and bushland. Some selected fuchsias thrive at Tipsy Hill in full sun; they have got through 43 degrees and all else that nature has pounded them with over years. I love this fuchsia (left) with this climbing geranium growing along a wall, which took me years to achieve.

Apricot brugmansia, (right) under-planted with the rather despised lantana - maybe ordinary, but to me it is almost good enough to eat, despite the Angels’ Trumpet being famously poisonous. Echevaria succulents (left) will burn in direct sun, but under a paperbark tree they seem more than what they are: in their corner near the Xanthorea, the grasstree, they create a magical feeling in the hottest weather.
A quiet spot for reading (at left), next to the reliable and beautiful *Hibiscus syriacus*, which flowers forever, even here on the windiest of western steps. It is pictured with the pigface groundcover, and the wonderful native adananthus, which has no thorns - good next to a path.

René Hulsegge’s sculpture (below) amongst agaves looking down the south-western valley towards Sellicks. I call it Horace because it reminds me of the Egyptian god.

Come and join us in McLaren Vale when we open for the Australian Open Garden Scheme.

Gate money is to be donated to the newly formed Open Garden SA Inc., which is in dire need of start-up money for the next season.

There will be tea and coffee made by a barista, Christine Butcher, professional plant stalls (Tupelo Grove and Hillside Herbs) and at 10.00 am and 2.00 pm a Walk and Talk with me, Tipsy Hill’s owner, Margaret Burrell or a chat with Christopher about music or whatever.

Saturday and Sunday March 14 and 15 from 10.00 am to 4.30 pm.
At this time of year a summer-dry garden can be rather dull as if it is waiting for rain, as indeed it is. However, it need not be totally without colour and interest. Wild roses, much over-looked and under-rated in my opinion, are heavy with fruit at this time of year.

Brownish red. The impact is amazing and the show goes on for weeks until the heavy, over-ripe hips fall from the twigs that carry them.

Harvested just prior to this time the hips can be made into cordial, syrup, conserves, wines, liqueurs and even eaten raw - just be careful about the light brown hairs that surround the seeds. Avoid them carefully. Several local MGS members recommend this wild bounty. Apparently they were consumed with gusto by ration starved Europeans during and after WW2.

I find my bushes hybridise easily and it has been my practice to allow young spontaneous seedlings to grow on to flowering size. They all seem very attractive shrubs to me. My basic stock came from Deane Ross, of Ross Roses, and I count myself lucky to have Rosa Moyesii ‘Geranium’, R. Moyesii ‘Eos’, R. Moyesii ‘Fred Streeter’, Rosa pendulina, Rosa sweginzowii, Rosa X ‘Highdownensis’ and Rosa wardii ‘Culta’ (white Moyesyii).

The seeds are easy to raise. The little birds love nesting in them. I love them because they need no watering, no spraying, no dead-heading and just basic pruning to remove any dead growth.

**Enjoy wine from your garden**

Lynn Elzinga – Henry (Crafers)

Trevor Nottle’s beautiful rosehip photos started me off on the many delightful edible/drinkable options you have for garden produce. It is still summer but already we are well into what is normally the autumn harvest. This year with the early spring rains many fruit trees looked set to have bumper crops and fortuitously I purchased additional nets, which has meant lots more fruit for us.

Back in the day, aka the 1990’s, I turned nearly everything in my garden into wine. No exaggeration (well very little) except for the deadly poisonous, if it was vaguely edible in it went. This included the expected berries, elderflower, elderberries, crab apple, quince, plum, peach, rose petal, rose hip, strawberry, feijoa, apricot, grape and so on as well as the less well known fruits of the amelanchier, crataegus, sorbus, pyracantha, oak leaves, dandelion, grapevine shoots and a raft of different herbs that were mostly used to provide flavour to the water added in. To be fair they were not all rip roaring successes and just a teensy bit too much of the artemisia that was used in absinthe gave us all a bit of a headspin. But following a certificate course in viticulture from Urrbrae I was producing some pretty fine wine that led to me being awarded the National Amateur Winemaker of the year in 1999 and 2000. The rules have changed now, but then the trophy went to the one that scored highest.
over the categories of red and white grape, red and white fruit and vegetable and sparkling. My grape wines were passable but my real love is fruit wine, because for me it captures the essence of a season.

In conversation with a ‘real’ winemaker I talked about the rush and lightness of a spring plum wine, the slightly longer maturation of a deeply flavoured summer fruit and the long slow mellow autumn quince or rose hip. For a grape wine maker it is all about the conversion of sugars and so it is with wine from your garden. Unlike the grape, known as ‘the perfect package’ because it holds fruit, sugar and water all in one, most other wine making ingredients require at least the addition of water and sugar but the rest of the process is essentially the same.

To make 6 bottles of wine you need a 10 litre white plastic container with a lid, a 5 litre glass demijohn, a cork or rubber bung to fit the opening of the demijohn, some plastic tubing from the hardware shop and an airlock. Ideal but not totally essential is a hydrometer to measure the potential alcohol of a wine. This is useful when you don’t know how much natural sugar there is in the wine. The recipe may say to add 1.2kg of sugar to your fruit and 4.5 litres of water but the hydrometer will let you know that the wine has a potential alcohol of say 10% (if all the sugar is converted) and you may decide to add a bit more sugar to make it higher. So it is useful but you can also just follow the wine recipe and hope for the best.

As a general rule of thumb you will need about 2kg of fruit to make 5 litres of wine and a sachet of wine yeast that you can purchase from your local brew shop. If it is something like berries you can freeze what you pick until you have enough to proceed. Freezing actually breaks down the cell walls of the fruit and helps to extract more fruit essence. If it is hard fruit like quince I grate it through the food processor, if it has a pip you can remove it. If it is soft and squishy just throw it into your thoroughly clean bucket and pour over your 1 to 1.5 kg of sugar. More than 1.5kg and your potential alcohol will be so high your yeast will throw up its hands and refuse to cooperate. Now you can fuss about and get your yeast started in a separate bottle of lukewarm water with a teaspoon of sugar and a plug of cotton wool on top or do it my way. I put about 1.5 litres of my 4.5 litres of water on boiling hot. Once I have given it a good stir and dissolved the sugar I add the rest of the water cold and sprinkle the yeast on top of the now warm water. Put the lid on and put the bucket in a position that stays ideally between 15 and 25 degrees celsius. Stir a couple of times a day for 5 to 7 days until the fruit looks limp and exhausted and the whole concoction is not rising in a frothy mass when you pop the lid. I actually have a very nifty little fruit press but failing that a large jug with a strainer over it will also do the trick. Pour the sieved juice into your sterilized demijohn and make sure the liquid comes up to at least the beginning of the neck of the jar. Fit your bung and airlock and watch the bubbles as the airlock lets the CO2 out and doesn’t let the oxygen in. When the bubbling stops there will be a sediment on the bottom of the jar called ‘the lees’. If the wine sits on the lees too long it can give it an ‘off’ taste so don’t let it sit around for weeks at this stage. Using your newly purchased plastic tubing carefully insert the tube (ideally through the bung hole to hold it firm) all the way down to just above the sediment. Siphon off the liquid into another demijohn if you have it or into a holding container if you don’t. Get rid of the sediment, clean and refill the demijohn. What happens in the process of the sugar converting to alcohol is that there is sort of a little cloud of CO2 holding the oxygen off your wine but once that process is over the wine will oxidize if the liquid is not filling the bottle all the way to the top. Given that you have removed the sediment you probably now have a gap in the bottle. If you think the wine might be crazy alcoholic you can top up with water but generally I just use a bit of wine that is of a similar style. Now put the bottle somewhere cool and wait for the wine to clear. If you get a lot more sediment repeat the racking process. When it is clear you can bottle. Yay! Spring produce will rush itself through in next to no time - sometimes just a matter of weeks. Summer produce takes a little longer and autumn produce like quince for example can take up to 6 months before it starts to clear.

Currently I have 20 litres of sparkling golden crab apple, 20 litres of red crab apple and boysen berry, 15 litres of red crab apple and strawberry, 10 litres of blackberry and satsuma plum and 5 litres of green plum on the go.

One important note is that intensity of flavour is paramount. Pick fruit where it grows best and preferably where it doesn’t get too much irrigation. Although I have plenty of lillypillies in my garden I tend to get them from Adelaide for wine making because they have more flavour where it is hotter. I have made award winning strawberry wine from a variety with great taste but no shelf life. However, when asked by a commercial berry company to try making wine from their fruit it was tasteless, because the constant irrigation produced large fruit without intense flavour.

Once you get the bug you may initially sense a little reluctance from visitors to taste your special bottles. Best to test with like minded wine makers until your confidence is up. If it smells bad throw it out but remember the 3 rules to safe wine: sterilization, acidity and alcohol.
Last but not least is the recipe for rose hip which makes the most superb winter tippie. Fortunately it is the exception to the 2kg rule and you only need 900 grams of rose hips. Mash them with a meat tenderizer and put in your bucket with 1.4 kg of sugar, a teaspoon or so of lemon juice and a tea bag of your favourite black tea (to add a bit of tannin). Proceed as above.

I do hope this inspires people to have a try. Infusions of favourite herbs can add extra flavour and like cooking there are almost limitless combinations of ingredients to be tried.

“Viva Italia”
Mediterranean Garden Society AGM
October 22 to 26, 2015
Pre-conference tour
October 16 to 21, 2015

Italy and the beautiful island of Ischia in the Bay of Naples is the venue for this year’s general meeting of the international MGS which starts on October 22 and runs until October 26.

The conference will be held in the spectacular tropical and Mediterranean garden of La Mortella. This garden, created since the mid 1950s by composer Sir William Walton’s wife Susana Walton, is renowned as one of Italy’s most beautiful gardens. MGS has been very fortunate to be able to secure La Mortella as the setting for this meeting.

The British composer and his Argentinian born wife came to Ischia after the Second World War and bought a plot of land called Le Mortelle, named after the myrtle bushes that grew on the rocky promontory. Lady Walton developed the garden over a 50 year period, initially with the help of designer Russell Page and later following her own inclinations. It is now one of the Grandi Giardini Italiani, an association of major Italian gardens.

A private concert of Sir William Walton’s music in the famous garden is just one of the highlights, not to mention a walk through an ancient oak forest to the crater of a dormant volcano and viewing underwater marine plants and Greek and Roman ruins in Ischia harbour.

The gardens of La Mortella

Sally Beale, branch head for the Balearic Islands, has arranged the main conference schedule together with a packed pre-conference programme which starts on 16th October and takes in both public and private gardens, including that of the Duchess Guevara di Bovino.

Pompeii

The itinerary features: a visit to the 18th century cloister gardens of Santa Chiara famed for its dazzling majolica decorations and a visit to Amalfi’s 13th century cathedral Chiostro del Paradiso where slender Moorish style columns create cloisters around a central garden. And of course no trip to Naples would be complete without an exploration of that blighted city of Pompeii. MGS members will enjoy a private tour, to include some restored Roman courtyard gardens.

Sally has booked out a spectacular hotel converted from a 16th century monastery as the base for the pre-conference tour. Hotel San Francesco al Monte overlooks the old town and has an uninterrupted view of the Bay of Naples and Vesuvius.

Appropriately the tour starts at the Naples Botanic
Gardens, a 15 hectare haven of tranquility from the hustle and bustle of the city, which was created as a scientific and educational institution under French Bourbon rule in the early nineteenth century. The mission of the botanic gardens is to actively preserve endangered species.

The Italian connection with the French kings of Naples is further explored with a visit to the Royal Palace of Caserta. This former royal residence was the largest palace and one of the largest buildings erected in Europe during the eighteenth century with spectacular formal gardens on a scale comparable to Versailles. The Palace is a UNESCO World Heritage Site described as "the swan song of the spectacular art of the Baroque". And in 1945, it was the site for the signing of the terms for the unconditional surrender of German forces in Italy.

Day three centres on the island of Capri where Swedish physician and author Axel Munthe built Villa San Michele above the little town of Anacapri. This great Italian garden has panoramic views of Capri and its harbour, the Sorrentine Peninsula and Mount Vesuvius. Munthe, who was physician to the Swedish Royal family, filled the gardens with relics from antiquity. Villa San Michele is one of the Grandi Giardini Italiani.

The main conference opens with an evening reception overlooking the sea at Ischia Ponte. Members have all day on Friday to enjoy La Mortella with guides to explore this unique creation. The general meeting will be held on Sunday, October 25 in the Concert Hall at La Mortella.

It is expected the MGS members will fly in to Rome and travel down to Naples by train, picking up the jet foil to reach Ischia. The post conference tour has been organized by Italy's branch head Angela Durnford, who writes as follows:

**Romantic Gardens of Lazio, October 26 to 29**

After departing from Ischia by water, just a short coach trip north from Naples will take us to the delightful town of Frascati, one of several attractive historic hill towns to the south-east of Rome known collectively as the Castelli Romani. Since ancient times Romans have built their villas – and gardens – here to escape from the hustle and bustle of the great city. Just 20kms outside the capital, even today Romans come to Frascati looking for a change of pace, delightful surroundings, clean air, good food and wine.

The gardens of Villa d’Este

This will be our base to visit some of the most beautiful and historic gardens in Italy: Hadrian's Villa, the most complete garden to have survived the fall of the Roman Empire; Villa d'Este, the most important example of a Mannerist garden in Italy with its stupendous water features. Then a delicious trio of romantic gardens: La Landriana, Torrecchia and the world-famous Ninfa will complete this short guided tour. An ideal interlude if you are thinking of going on to explore more of Italy privately.

For information contact: angela.durnford@mgsitaly.org

**St. Catherine's Lace.**

**Trevor Nottle (Crafers)**

_Eriogonum giganteum_, or St. Catherine's Lace is a very tough low shrub from the dry landscapes of southern California where it grows in well-drained exposed locations along with other natives such as *Yucca rostrata* and *Salvia apiana*. A common complaint, even in California, is that it can be very hard to please and that frequently plants die. Luck may have something to do with it, but given no water other than rainfall and a fully exposed position in competition with vigorous wild roses, it seems quite happy. After taking some years to settle in and grow slowly it has flowered abundantly this summer. St. Catherine's Lace produces an open shrub distinguished by brown flaking bark and rounded silvery green leaves. Large flat-headed corymbs of white flowers show some resemblance to the more widely known Queen Anne's Lace (*Ammi majus*). As summer passes into autumn the flower heads turn a pleasant shade of light brown and persist for months until cut down by a gardener or blown down by winter winds.

This plant must have good drainage and fairly hard, exposed positions to thrive.
Spinebills in the garden
Lydia Paton (Waterfall Gully)

I was thrilled a few days ago to notice an Eastern Spinebill sitting amongst the shrubbery in the garden by my back door. I hear the spinebills calling frequently in our Waterfall Gully garden but they always keep a very low profile as they are chased by the aggressive Noisy Miners that patrol the garden. The spinebills tend to spend more time in the neighbour’s garden which has even denser plantings than ours. I have been adding plants attractive to spinebills for the last three years in the hope of tempting them over the fence. While I watched the Spinebill it visited a couple of different Salvias. One grows quite well amongst the silver spur flower (*Plectranthus argentatus*) and sword fern in a partially shaded position but has an unusual habit of spreading underground and then sending up shoots. The large furry pink flowers are held on the end of these shoots; the plant doesn’t tend to form a shrub in our garden but has gradually spread via these stand-alone suckers over the past two years. *Salvia oxyphora* hails from Bolivia and prefers a partially shaded position (ideal in a garden like ours which has many large trees). Information on the web suggests that it grows 1.2-1.5m high (but ours rarely gets to 1.0m) and that it can be overly vigorous but in our place it has never been a problem plant (but it does have some serious root competition). It flowers in summer and autumn a time when the Eastern Spinebills often utilise gardens on the Adelaide Plains before returning to their preferred winter/spring habitat in the Adelaide Hills.

Next the spinebill moved on to a small, sun-loving salvia *Salvia* ‘Raspberry Ripple’ which has only been in the ground a few months. It was a mail order plant from Lambley’s Nursery. It hovered like a hummingbird in front of each flower. Unfortunately this movement drew unwanted attention and a Noisy Miner swooped in and chased it away. Still I am glad that finally the spinebill has found some of the flowers and I will continue to add plants they like to the garden.

Courtyard Garden - Red and Green Garden

We have a small courtyard on the northern side of our house - which also has a large masonry wall to the north. Fortunately most of the wall is covered with Virginia creeper which provides the garden with a lovely green backdrop in spring and summer. The garden isn’t very wide, barely 1.5m. I had only just finished planting it when a bough from our large sugar gum fell on it last spring and many of the plants and part of the wall were crushed. I replanted things that were damaged and once the wall was mended painted the damaged section a bright warm pinky-red. Most of the wall is a dark grey but I chose to add the bright red to provide a strong contrast for the green foliage and to complement the red flower scheme. The highlight colours in the garden are limey greens and bright reds.

Some of the strong performers are:

**Red Flowers:**

*Salvia* ‘Royal Bumble’ - This is a Lambley Nursery import from France and it is a spectacular plant, which has been producing masses of bright red velvety flowers for months. It grows to a little...
over 0.5m high and wide and, where the branches touch the ground, it re-roots, making it easy to divide and multiply.

Canna lillies - I included the dark burgundy red and striped foliage forms to provide a foliage contrast at one end of the garden. They perform much more vigorously where they get more sunlight.

Zauschneria cana ‘Catalina’ - Catalina humming bird trumpet - The masses of small bright orange-red trumpet flowers, produced from mid-summer to late autumn, are complemented by hardy silvery foliage. At 0.5m high and spreading to 1.0m across, this plant looks fabulous at the front edge of a rockery or raised garden as it trails over the edge. A lover of the sun, it produces running stems below the ground which root quickly and can be used to propagate new plants.

Hummingbird plant (Dicliptera suberecta) – A fantastic little plant, yet surprisingly rarely seen in nurseries. It performs well in reasonably heavy shade but can also take some sun exposure as well. Dicliptera has rounded felty silver-grey foliage which contrasts with the orange-red tubular flowers in summer. It will reach about 0.3m high and spreads to about 0.6m. Easily propagated from cuttings.

**Lime-green foliage and flowers:**

Robinia psuedoacacia “Frisia’ - a controversial plant - due to it being grafted on the root stock of the true species Robinia psuedoacacia which can produce nasty spiny suckers when roots are disturbed. Treat the root system with care (avoid use near lawns where mowing can hit surface roots, or near pathways/ street verges etc. where replacement paving or earthworks may disturb roots). I love the effect of dappled light beneath these trees and have always coveted the specimens in other people’s gardens. The translucent yellow-green leaves are luminous and transform and lift any space that is shaded by these trees. In my small courtyard the foliage is electric against the pink-red of the garden wall.

Euphorbia lambii - This tree euphorbia provides brilliant lime-green flowers in winter when the Robinias drop their leaves.

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**Bomarea**

Trevor Nottle (Crafers)

Bomarea are a genus of tuberous rooted plants allied to alstroemeria. Coming also from Chile and Peru they are denizens of the margins of cloud forests that grow in areas where regular heavy coastal fogs bring moisture to otherwise desert regions. They prefer a growing environment where water flows but does not stay, so the brittle and succulent tubers and underground stems receive sufficient moisture but the plants are never water-logged. Bomareas are, as a general rule evergreen but the twining stems die after flowering, just like alstroemeras.

I grew my plant successfully by accident. Purchased at a garden festival it was intended for a position which most closely simulated the above environmental conditions but for the heavy coastal fogs and regular water supply. Never planted in the garden it stayed pot bound, standing on a ‘dead marine’ - a pot filled with soil but in which the original plant had died. With a wandering root system the bomarea soon enough found its way into the potting soil beneath, and began twining through an adjacent standard rose bush ‘Cara Bella’. With pots and roots heavily shaded by surrounding plants and an overhanging Mauretanian convolvulus it somehow found conditions to its liking and flowered three times around Christmas. It seems set to flower several more times before winter comes on.

So what does this lovely plant tell me? It tells me it is remarkably resilient and is capable of successfully colonising even under quite unlikely conditions. It is also speaking volumes about leaving well enough alone so I won't be tempted to plant it out, or move it into a bigger pot. With notoriously brittle roots and tubers it is too risky to try to improve upon success, even if it is accidental.

Heaven knows what it would do if it was ever fertilised.

Pot plants are under-utilised by too many gardeners, but I can recommend bomareas as having potential.
"Doing whatever the hell I want"
Virginia Kennett (Wayville)

I have been absent from these pages for the past few issues because I have been busy elsewhere. A lot has happened: we bought a new house and sold the house and garden in Mount Osmond. We have moved down to the plains, to Wayville and a village life and a house with a much smaller garden.

The house (a 1915 sandstone and redbrick villa on an east-west axis) is on a (roughly) triangular block which originally would have been very deep: however part of the rear section was sold leaving the current back garden as little more than a courtyard which faces north and west. Effectively there are 4 different garden spaces: the rear courtyard, the side garden to the north, a level triangular space on the south east and the sloping front garden.

(The block slopes up from the road to the house with a level change of approximately 2 metres over a distance of about 18 - 20 metres).

One of the selling points of the house was that it had an edible garden. In winter when we bought the house its most obvious feature was a knee-high jungle of parsley and nasturtiums. In the front garden were the following trees: fig, lemon, apricot, lime (with a standard bay immediately in front of it) and a carpet of bay suckers. Both of these are planted beneath the constantly expanding canopy of a sparsely fruiting mulberry. But wait, there’s more: a strawberry guava, two pomegranates (one of which appears to be ornamental), a peach and 2 totem apples which were planted immediately in front of the verandah and front window.

Remember, this is not a large front garden. Now, in the middle of summer with the parsley but a distant memory, the mulberry is the most dominant feature in the garden. I swear you can see it growing. Despite (or perhaps because of its vigour), it proved to be a poor fruiter; individual mulberries appearing at 20 - 30 cm intervals.

This I can forgive because it hangs over the path to the front door and fewer fruits equals less mess, the fruit isn’t especially flavoursome and it provides shade and screening.

The big down side is that previous pruning has been so bad that in its skeletal winter form it is very, very ugly and very, very obvious. All the trees have been similarly pruned (as have any shrubs that might have been useful).

All of this provides me with interesting challenges. If the block had been bare, would I have planted these trees and would I have planted them where they are? I might have considered a fig, a strawberry guava, one pomegranate and some citrus but with regard to the others, the answer is an unequivocal "no".

When I first saw it, the mulberry was SOOO ugly I was adamant that it had to go but there were higher priorities and spring and summer came and clothed it in very healthy happy greenery that cools the house and screens the garden from the adjacent tramline. I am feeling a reprieve coming on although there will have to be some creative sculpting of the ugly dead stumps.

As for the other trees; while I might not have planted and/or positioned them where they are, I can’t bring myself to remove anything that is healthy or bearing good fruit. (I must be getting old........wait, I AM getting old). While we have been busy doing other things, the apricot and peach have saved their lives with offerings of perfect warm-from-the-tree fruit, the figs are ripening in an orderly fashion and the apples seem to have pre-occupied the lorikeets (which have followed us from Mt Osmond).

The dreaded birds didn’t do much damage to the peaches; just a peck or two which knocked the ripe fruit to the ground for me. But then the windfall peaches started disappearing before I could collect them. Careful observation revealed that the culprit was the hitherto undiscovered dog breed - the peach-eating dachshund.

This garden is so different to my Mt Osmond garden that I am finding it a real challenge.

For a start it is so much smaller, but more confronting to my eye is that it is much more green and soft. I am missing the grey and hardness of the Mt Osmond garden. I need the foliage contrast of bayonet shaped leaves and solid structures. At the moment it is just fluff with no structure to ground it. How do I retain all that is here and plant what I like?

"I will age ungracefully until I become an old woman in a small garden. Doing whatever the hell I want". Robin Chotzinoff.

This wonderful quote appeared one day on a gardener’s calendar I was given and most apt it is too...
a sign, you might say....because I had decided that in order to organise my thoughts about the garden, I needed a theme and the theme I chose for myself was "Mad granny's garden". I'm not a granny but I could be and both my grandmothers were dedicated gardeners who planted whatever they wanted, could pilfer or liberate with little attention paid to eventual size, colour theming, climate compatibility or whatever fashion trends drove plant selection and garden design a century ago. They both stuck the plants or cuttings in and hoped for the best, no soil improvement, no mulch, no fertilising, no automatic irrigation systems. Just that precious commodity, water; collected, saved and distributed sparingly.

So, here's my plan (and it won't be on paper) plant whatever I want, wherever I can find a spot to put it. Who cares what others think. Disregard the fact that I earn my living as a garden designer. Don't look for cutting edge design (or any design) here.

A minor hiccup has appeared in the form of my dearly beloved's opinion (which I elicited by giving him a pile of gardening books and asking him which gardens he preferred). What he would like is something resembling the carefully considered and sculpted gardens of Nicole de Vesian, whose work was the ultimate in horticultural sophistication and restraint. I too admire and respect the gardens of N de V but I'm afraid I don't have her elegance or self discipline and besides there are already too many different plant varieties in the garden to meet her minimalist standards.

Faced with this seemingly irreconcilable style divide, we have made only one decision quickly and with certainty - to terrace the garden, dividing it into an upper lawn level and a lower gravel garden. As a sloping garden it was unusable .......terracing means that we can use both levels. We managed to build a wall 900mm in height with generous steps and back fill without sacrificing any trees, although the soil levels go up and down to accommodate them.

Further discussions and long sessions on the front verandah with our close friends, the martinis, have clarified further areas of agreement. We both want more foliage contrast and more grey. I want gravel, he wants some lawn. (I was forced to point out that to the best of my knowledge, there was no lawn in Nicole's garden.)

And here we have stalled, waiting for the rendering of the walls, the slate treads, the tradesmen.

I have plenty of things to think about while I wait;
how to incorporate the large pieces of bluestone we found in the garden, some of them 2.5 metres long (old gutter edging we think),
how to deal with all those issues of suburban living - reflected heat from walls and fences, the curse of the colorbond fence,
how to screen out the adjacent 2 storey house which somehow I failed to notice when we bought the house.

In the meantime plants relocated from Mt Osmond or bought on impulse wait in pots in the shade of the mulberry or are bedded in temporary positions. I discovered that I have actual soil, deep soil. I can dig to a full spade’s depth and still find soil. This led to a flurry of optimistic plant buying. What I have waiting in the wings now is what is euphemistically called ‘an eclectic mix’, which will present a real challenge to someone looking for a coherent theme.

I pore through books and magazines, but I'm out on my own here. So, I look to my gardener's calendar for more helpful advice......and of course...how appropriate......

"There's a fine line between gardening and madness “– Cliff Cavin in Cheers.

Haemanthus carneus

Trevor Nottle (Crafers)

This bulb has flowered for the first time this year. Seed grown, from Silverhill Seeds in South Africa, it has taken 5 years from sowing. And it was worth the wait!

Descriptions say that it can be very pale, almost white, to deep pink. My particular specimen seems to be a very pleasing shade of rosy pink. In most respects the habit of the bulb is similar to the more familiar ox-tongue lily, paint-brush lily or blood lily, Haemanthus coccineus which is often found in old or derelict gardens in southern Australia. A large, round succulent bulb with few, thick scales and thick, succulent seasonal roots from which appear a pair of large elongated leaves with bluntly rounded tips is the commonality that suggests a botanical relationship. Thus far the leaves of H. carneus appear to be more rounded and less elongated than in H. coccineus. Flowers appear singly in autumn, one per bulb. It is then that the two species can be plainly differentiated. H. carneus bears no resemblance to a paint-brush. It has no waxy guard petals as does H. coccineus nor a dense boss of scarlet stamens tipped with gold pollen but instead bears a hundred or so small waxy flowers...
with rounded petals carried on short pink pedicels. The flower stems are red as are the narrow bracts which enclose the flower in bud. I find it utterly charming - and not because it is, as yet, not widely grown. It is just very pretty.

All haemanthus bear large succulent seeds that appear to have sprouted before they fall off the drying stem. This feature is known as recalcitrancy. When received through the post each seed will already show a seed root developing, and may also show a developing pair of seed leaves. This is normal. Don't delay planting the seed in sandy mix being very careful not to break the tiny root or leaves. A pencil poked into the seed mix allows each seed to be planted individually and safely. Seeds may seem costly at $1 each but really they are a bargain when they produce such a gem. And 5 years is not such a long time to wait is it? Impatient folks who may prefer to buy the bulbs should expect to pay $25 each and wait 2-3 years for them to attain flowering size. Bigger bulbs are rarely available and cost around $50 each.

Rabbits at Myponga Beach
Jim and Liz Runciman

We began establishing a garden at our holiday house at Myponga Beach 7 years ago. The block is sloping, and consists of limestone with sparse poor topsoil. It is about 30m above sea level and is exposed to extreme gully or sea winds. It lies in a rain shadow and receives less rain than Adelaide. We rely on rainwater as there is no mains supply.

Our aim was therefore to have a garden that would not be dependent on irrigation after establishment. Despite research, this has been very much a case of trial and error, as we initially underestimated the severity of the climatic conditions. The plants are a mix of native and Mediterranean climate plants. Olivier Filippi's drought resistance coding in his book 'The dry gardening handbook' has more recently been very useful in deciding whether particular plants would be suitable. However one of the greatest challenges has been the rabbit plague! They even began ring-barking some of the olive trees. We planted enthusiastically, installed drip irrigation to get the plants established, then would arrive for the weekend to face disappointment and disillusionment on finding our new plantings either eaten, or, if unpalatable, dug up, despite protective barriers used when they were young. Initially we used perforated plastic guards supported by bamboo sticks. These were not satisfactory as the rabbits dug under them, and they tended to blow away. We later made our own using chicken wire variants. These don't blow away and allow air circulation.

So it has been a battle to find appropriate plants that are rabbit proof, and will withstand the local environment. Even if they don't like the foliage they destroy them by digging them up and exposing the roots. We have found any new plant must be securely protected with a surrounding rabbit guard. We change the size of the guards on a number of plants as they grow as we found many will only survive once they are very well established and of a good size, eg lavender. Only a significantly sized bush of lavender can be left unguarded as the rabbits will only eat the lower outer parts. More recently we have resorted to completely fencing off larger areas to protect new growth (exclusion fencing). We used star droppers for the corners and wooden stakes on the straights, securing the chicken wire to these with cable ties. To prevent the rabbits digging under this fence, a shallow trench (10-15cm deep) was dug along the outer boundary of the fence and the chicken wire was reflected outwards 15cm before securing the fence and covering the trench wire back over with earth. This has successfully foiled rabbit attempts to dig under the fence as they encounter the wire. The residual fence height is about 70cm so one can step over it. We hope to remove in this in 2 years or so, once the plants are strongly established and can withstand the rabbits.

The following plants appear not to be attractive to rabbits once they are established:

- Iris
- Leucophyta brownii
- Westringia (various)
- Banksia integrifolia
- B. praemorsa, B. blechnifolia
- Ballota pseudodictamnus
- Rhagodia spinescens
- Carissa macrocarpa
- Teucrium marum
- Aloe plicatilis
- Teucrium fruticans
- Adenanthis sericeus

However, rabbits are unpredictable in their tastes, so one can't take anything for granted! We have two separate areas covered with Eremophila glabra, one of these we have had to cover completely with chicken wire, while they don't touch the other! Contrary to what I have been told by a commercial caper grower, my capers are irresistible to rabbits, and have to be protected.

Unfortunately, to contain the rabbit plague one needs a multi-pronged community program. We are informed that two rabbits can breed to 180 rabbits in 18 months. Most of our rabbit visitors are from warrens on adjoining properties. Our local council is trying to coordinate a program, including warren destruction and baiting. This requires the cooperation of all property owners.
Few of us could manage the hardline ‘water once and that’s it’ approach but his talk was very pertinent to the climate compatible philosophy of our club. Whilst we don’t have, at the moment, the water restrictions of some years ago, we should not become complacent with regard to the role we all have to help all South Australian gardeners to be able to produce and manage beautiful gardens within the constraints of sustainable use of our resources.

A very important part of this is managing expectations. As Scott reiterated, summer is a dormant phase for many of our plants and striving to achieve year round glowing green is not only unrealistic but will drain your resources, your money and potentially limit the life expectancy of your plants. Understandably, public gardens and nurseries would find this unacceptable but for private garden owners it is more about education.

Much more contentious was the suggestion that the increasing problem of water repellent soil, may be caused by the use of soil improvers and mulch. Almost a blasphemy! However, I would be very interested to see the science behind the thinking and would not be at all surprised if the argument had merit.

From a personal perspective I was so pleased to hear a speaker talking, at great length, about the range of plants that really prefer not to be watered and fertilized. For me it was a real wake up call to return to the gardening philosophy that I have, until recently, consistently and strongly espoused. Whilst I am prepared to water a plant until it has ‘settled in’, the majority of the garden has been designed and planted with no permanent watering system. Initially there was no mains water and the tanks are a very long walk away but more simply, I have tried to maintain a garden that would not turn up its toes and disappear if I wasn’t around. For the same reasons I am not an advocate for widespread use of fertilizers. The majority of plants, excepting of course the very water hungry, will adapt to far less nutrient and water than is generally advocated and yes some even flourish and go on for many more years than their well fed counterparts.

Now for the confession: preparation for the wedding we held in our garden last year did indeed lead me astray as I plumped and preened the garden to bring out the very best. Now with the summer heat finally biting, I am a victim of my own folly as I nursemaid all the new plants that were planted in spring rather than autumn. I am chastened. I will do better. The message is reinforced as we bring in a massive harvest of crab apples, apples, plums and berries from trees that have never had any fertilizer or additional water, although they do occasionally have some home made compost to which some manure has been added if available.
South Australian Branch of the Mediterranean Garden Society
Your Garden in Summer 2014/15

For a number of years SAMGS has collected information about plants that have or have not been successful in members’ gardens. The Committee has decided to re-activate the scheme and is asking all members to participate. Each season members will be emailed a survey form that can be simply completed; selected responses will be published in the newsletter. Your responses will be useful as we work to create a new chapter (Colour all the year round) for the reprint of our Branch Resource Book.

Several members have responded to our first survey and I thank them for that. Space does not allow me to reproduce all their responses, however I have included below some of the information provided.  

David Parker

Paliuris spina-christi - Christ’s Thorn
Trevor Nottle (Crafers)

This is an unusual plant and is not the only contender for the title of Christ's Thorn. It is a wiry, thorny shrub endemic to some parts of southern Europe and the Levant, so it could have been the real thing. One would be hard pressed to say that this distinction aside it has anything to recommend it. Yet I am really pleased to have it.

I raised my two small shrublets from seed that I gathered on a roadside between Porto Ercole in the Maremma of Italy and Pogio Podere Grammatico in Tuscania. Now, this is a very tiny village of no particular note except that my friend Joan Tesei had a small farmhouse there and I was blessed to be her guest for a week after speaking at Primavera a la Landriana for Marquessa Lavinia Tavera Galaratti Scotti.

The plant is regarded as an endangered species, though I do not know why. It is a most unprepossessing bush, related to the box-thorn, which as you know is a declared weed in South Australia. The bush grows in the margins of traditional fields so it may be endangered by changing agricultural techniques, or it may have been so relentlessly harvested over the centuries for religious purposes that it has simply been hunted to extinction.

Apart from being armed with light spines along its supple branches the sole distinguishing feature appears to be the very unusual seed pod. The pods are acid green and resemble a China-man's hat in shape. I'm certain there must be a suitably non-racist Latin term to describe this unique feature of the plant but I can't think what it is. It is, however, quite attractive - in a quiet kind of way.

I could not in all honesty recommend it to any but the most curious gardeners but being one of these, I am glad enough my car stopped on a country lane in central Italy one sunny day and I had the opportunity to gather a few seeds as a memento of a lovely day by the sea.

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<tr>
<th>Best performing</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tree</td>
<td>Corymbia ficifolia, red</td>
<td>Gingko biloba</td>
<td>Eucalyptus sideroxylon</td>
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<td></td>
<td>flowering gum</td>
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<tr>
<td>annual</td>
<td>Nigella damascena - love-in-the-mist</td>
<td>Ocimum basilicum</td>
<td>Lobularia maritima - sweet alyssum</td>
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<tr>
<td>perennial</td>
<td>nemesia</td>
<td>Salvia semiatrata</td>
<td>Sedum spectabile - ‘Autumn Joy’</td>
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<td>bulb</td>
<td>Sprkelia formosissima - Jacobean lily</td>
<td>Liliu x speciosum</td>
<td>Amaryllis belladonna  ‘Hathor’</td>
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<tr>
<td>ground cover</td>
<td>Cotyledon orbiculata</td>
<td>Origanum laevigatum - ‘Hopley’s’</td>
<td>Lantana montevidensis (trailing sterile form)</td>
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<tr>
<td>shrub</td>
<td>Buddleia davidii - ‘Black Knight’</td>
<td>Murraya paniculata - ‘orange jessamine’</td>
<td>Tagetes lemmonii</td>
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<tr>
<td>climber</td>
<td>Trachelospermum jasminoide - Chinese star jasmine</td>
<td>Hibbertia scandens</td>
<td>Sollya heterophylla ‘Edna Walling’, bluebell creeper</td>
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Marquessa Lavinia Tavera Galaratti Scotti.
As always our thanks to those who have contributed so generously, but we need more of our members to ‘put pen to paper’ and an eye behind the lens of a camera or smartphone. How about an article (even just a few lines) for the next newsletter. Items will be due in mid May. Please email Word documents and attach pictures as attachments. eds