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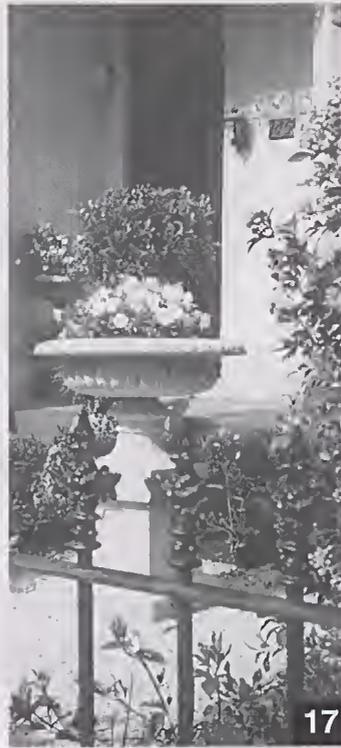
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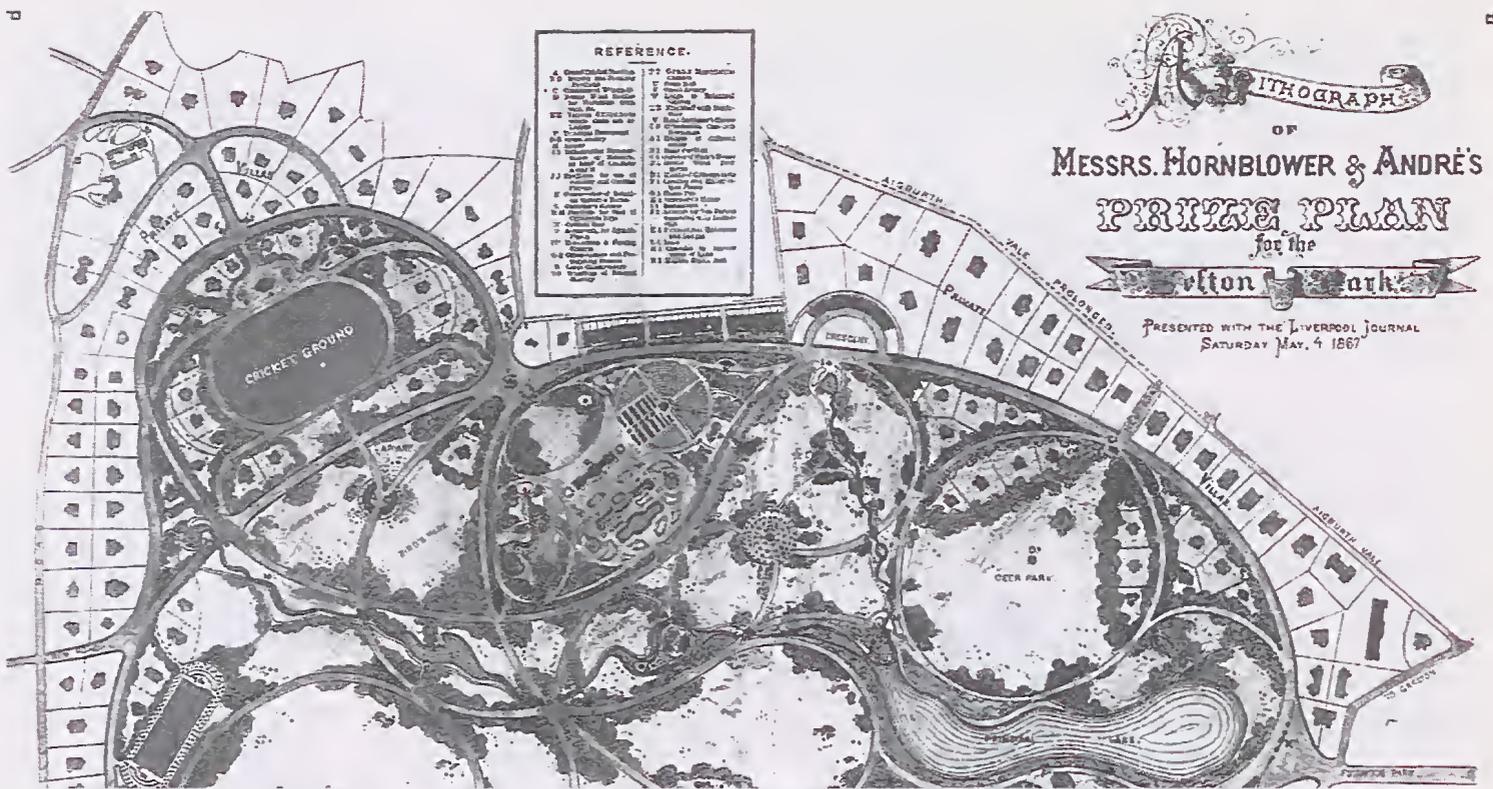
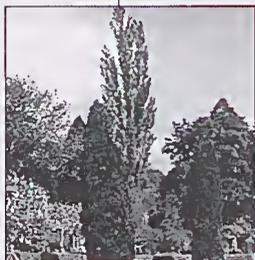


Figure 2

Paris Via Liverpool

The Origins of Joseph Sayce's Design for the Domain, Melbourne



By Anne Neale

Opposite - Figure 1: Plan for Government House and Domain Gardens by Joseph Sayce 1872-3
Map Collection, State Library of Victoria

Top - Figure 2: Design for Sefton Park, Liverpool by Edouard André & Lewis Hornblower, 1867
From *The Garden* Vol. 2, 10th August, 1872 p.125

The extraordinarily elaborate design for the Government House Domain in Melbourne prepared by Joseph Sayce in 1872-3, immediately captured the imagination of the public authorities of the day, who ordered its publication. [Fig. 1 - opposite]. While only partially implemented, Sayce's plan for the Domain is considered by several leading authorities to have exerted considerable influence on W. R. Guilfoyle's subsequent design work, not only in the Domain, but perhaps more significantly within the adjoining Melbourne Botanic Gardens, which under Guilfoyle became famous for their landscaping, and remain so to this day¹. The great mystery attaching to Sayce's plan for the Domain is the question of how an amateur horticulturist, not known as a landscape designer, could produce such a sophisticated design.

Relatively little is known about Joseph Sayce [c.1815-1876]. A banker by profession, in 1860 Sayce joined the Victorian Gardeners' Mutual Improvement Society, an association of 'Practical gardeners and Amateurs of acknowledged ability': Sayce was definitely in the latter group². In 1873 he was said to be 'long and favourably known as an amateur horticulturist possessing both taste and skill in garden ornamentation'³, while in 1876 an obituarist described him as 'one of our most intelligent and enthusiastic amateur gardeners' whose Elsternwick garden was regarded as 'quite a model, both in design and in the choice of the trees and shrubs with which it is planted'⁴.

A competition for the design of the Domain was launched by the Victorian government in August 1872, with the less than satisfactory result that in October three designs were commended and jointly awarded the meagre prize of £50, though none of them was considered adequate for the purpose⁵. At about this time Sayce was consulted 'for some hints as to the laying out of the reserve'⁶. He suggested an 'ornamental park' with the implication of a relatively simple scheme, but by his own account was persuaded to undertake a far more elaborate and costly design by Clement Hodgkinson, the Assistant-Commissioner of Lands and Surveys and Inspector-General of Gardens and Parks, who insisted on the need for 'high class gardening' in the portion of the park to be devoted to the public. A 'highly ornamental design was consequently submitted' which was greeted with acclaim by both the Minister and Hodgkinson, who declared 'it would certainly have had the prize if earlier sent in'. However, Sayce maintained that this had not been his object, 'not wishing to compete with professional men'. This was the scheme that was ordered to be lithographed⁷.

Comparison of this plan for the Melbourne Domain with the winning 1867 design for Sefton Park, Liverpool, designed by Edouard André of Paris, and Liverpool architect Lewis Hornblower [Fig. 2 - above], clearly reveals the source of Sayce's inspiration. Distinctive elements which the designs share include the formal terraces containing a large conservatory, parterres and



fountains; the whiplash lines of paths emanating from *rond-points*, and the fluidly curvaceous path system enclosed by a broad carriage drive.

Admittedly, there are differences: the dense planting proposed around Government House and especially in the 'American Garden' was not from Sefton Park; neither was the 'Tropical Dell' running down into the lake, an interesting precursor to Guilfoyle's famous Fern Gully in the Botanic Gardens. The introduction of formally planted avenues to Government House and into the centre of the Domain had no precedent at Liverpool and the edges of the proposed lakes in the Melbourne scheme are altogether more picturesque [in the rough and irregular sense] than the smooth banks shown in the Liverpool design. However, taken overall, the similarities are more striking than are the differences.

In an article in the *Gardener's Chronicle* in 1867 the Sefton Park design was described as an example of 'the Gallicised version of the *Jardin Anglais*'. This was an apt description: the forms derive directly from the Parisian parks of the late 1850s and 1860s, and indirectly from the influential designs of Parisian designer Gabriel Thouin [1747-1829], who had taken the English landscape garden of the 18th century and transformed it into something distinctly 'continental'⁸. One of the most characteristic elements of this French version of the 'English' garden was the use of asymmetrically disposed curvaceous path layouts, incorporating circular, elliptical, tangential, tear-drop and whiplash forms.

Through Sefton Park, the stylised nineteenth-century French version of the eighteenth-century *jardin anglais*, employed in the parks of Paris, was re-introduced to its native country⁹. The *Gardener's Chronicle* author, 'K', obviously found this a bit hard to swallow:

... we have to recognise the unwonted introduction of foreign blood among the competitors; and having, during the brief reign of the present French Emperor, inoculated our continental cousins with the English style of gardening, are now, in return, to receive from our pupils the Gallicised version of the *Jardin Anglais*, which, as in architecture and costume, we are bound to accept with reverence, and to pronounce the fashion, however much the stomach of a genuine John Bull may revolt against it¹⁰.

In contrast to this, Sayce's design was accorded a generally warm reception in Melbourne: any reservations seem to have been more to do with the complexity and implied cost, rather the style of the design, or any unpatriotic French connections. This was perhaps a result of local taste having become accustomed to such things more than fifteen years in advance of insular English taste, through the designs for Melbourne public parks by Edward La Trobe Bateman [1816-

1897], especially his 1856-7 designs for the Fitzroy and Carlton Gardens¹¹.

How was the André and Hornblower design for Sefton Park known to Sayce? The details of the competition and its results were discussed extensively in the British gardening press¹², but Sayce obviously had access to a copy of the plan. At least four different versions were published: the *Liverpool Journal* published a copy of the plan as a supplement in May 1867¹³, *The Builder* published a bird's-eye view in August 1867¹⁴, the *Gardener's Chronicle* published a plan with key and detailed description in 1872¹⁵, and a further plan, in *The Garden*, is reproduced in Brent Elliot's *Victorian Gardens* [London 1986].

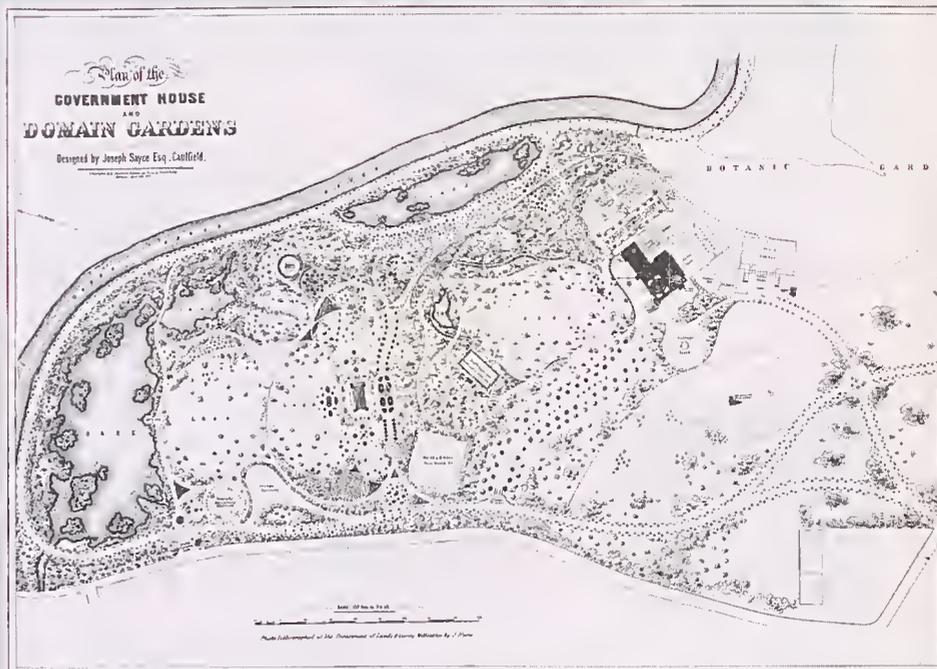


Figure 1

There is indisputable evidence that Sayce closely followed proceedings with regard to Sefton Park. In 1873, rebutting what he considered to be unfair public criticism from Hodgkinson¹⁶, Sayce wrote a long letter to the *Argus*. Lamenting the generally unsatisfactory and parsimonious attitude that had been evident in regard to the Domain development from the start, he declared 'how differently the corporation of Liverpool went to work on the formation of Sefton Park!¹⁷ Sayce was able to quote detailed figures in support of this, noting, among other things, that although the Melbourne and Liverpool schemes were roughly comparable in size, the vast sum of £415,000 had been expended in the purchase and laying out of Sefton Park.¹⁸

In much simplified form, Sayce's plan was eventually laid out under the supervision of William Guilfoyle, who from July 1873 was responsible for the Domain as well as the Botanic Gardens. Sayce's design for the Domain has tended to be overshadowed by the immediately succeeding work in the same area by the much better-known Guilfoyle. However, authors such as Pescott and Aitken¹⁹ have recognised Guilfoyle's debt to Sayce. When Aitken commented on the



English Garden Tour 2002

20th May – 8th June 2002

This tour offers a splendid opportunity to discover a fascinating range of English, Welsh and Scottish gardens in the company of like-minded enthusiasts. It is a special tour visiting a combination of historic and modern gardens, many of which are private gardens not generally open to the public.

Besides old favourites, such as Jekyll's Hestercombe, Margery Fish's East Lambrook Manor, Tintinhull with its memories of Penelope Hobhouse, serene Bodnant and Levenshall with its superlative topiary, lesser known gardens are included. Among these are Plas Brondanwy, Clough Williams-Ellis's garden set against the inspiring backdrop of Snowdonia, Charles Jencks' avant-garde work at Portrack House, the much praised new Welsh National Botanic Gardens, and Wollerton Old Hall.

Nor are castles and cathedrals forgotten. Chirk, Culzean and Drumlanrig are delightful examples of castles, while stops in Wells, Hereford and Shrewsbury will satisfy those interested in church history or Brother Cadfael.

Consideration is also given to urban landscape history. In England the visit to the magnificent 20th century office park designed by Arup and Associates will contrast with New Lanark, the 18th century industrial centre, now a world heritage site, planned by Robert Owen at Clyde Falls south of Glasgow. Plantspeople will enjoy the Scottish botanic gardens of Dawyck and Logan, The latter considered the finest Gulf Stream Botanic Garden in Europe.

Accommodation will be in London, Wells, Hereford, Shrewsbury, Llandudno, Portpatrick, Symington-by-Biggarr and Edinburgh. Marion Waller, Anne Richards, Bill and Connie Pack, from the English Garden History Society, will guide tour members around the gardens they know best. The welcoming dinner in London will be followed by a day at the Chelsea Flower Show as guests of the English GHS. In Edinburgh, the Scottish Group of the Garden History Society will host a concluding dinner.

The tour, already filling fast, is limited to 25 members of the Australian Garden History Society.

Ann Cripps, the tour co-ordinator, is happy to provide the precise itinerary and other details of this tour or to answer any questions about it. (Phone 03 6225.1860 or E-mail anncripps@hotmail.com)



By **Ann Cripps**

Top left - The Pin Mill and Canal Terrace at Bodnant, Wales

Top right - Bodnant looks across the Conwy Valley to the Snowdon Range

Below - Hestercombe, Somerset, the work of Jekyll and Lutyns

Photos: Nina Crone



On Tour Some Sorensen Gardens In The Blue Mountains

Sydney Branch Visit

30th April, 2001

Colin Slade, a Blue Mountains horticulturist and former head gardener at Everglades and Lilianfels, set the scene for the garden visits to follow. In an entertaining talk he described meeting and getting to know Sorensen, then a rather daunting figure at 80 years. Colin and Gary Wheatland, the present head gardener at Everglades, then conducted the group on tours round the garden.

Everglades is perhaps the best known and grandest of Sorensen's gardens. Gary pointed out the many pleasing projects undertaken in recent years by the National Trust to restore elements of the garden's design which had become obscured or damaged through years of neglect. Throughout the lower garden Colin drew attention to native plants such as old man banksias (*Banksia serrata*), Blue Mountains scribbly gum (*Eucalyptus rossii*) and the now regrettably rare mountain devils (*Lambertia formosa*). Sorensen had argued forcibly for the retention of the indigenous species, convincing the then owner Henri Van der Velde that they gave the garden some of its unique character. A garden seminar planned for November 2001 at Everglades aims to raise funds to restore the grotto pool below the lower garden, repair the pump and undertake other necessary work.

Diagonally across the road and behind a line of tall Monterey pines was **Cheppen**, designed in 1931 for Mr Trigg prior to Sorensen's work on Everglades. Considered by some to be his finest garden, Sorensen regularly maintained it from 1930 until the 1970s but it has not been open to the public for many years. A series of photographs of Cheppen featured in *The Home* magazine in the 1930s show a huge red oak, even then of considerable size, moved into the new garden. It now towers over the house. Other features of the garden are a small circular stone viewing area, with a stone 'drum' lookout, overlooking the lower part of the garden (once open, now topped with a box hedge). Some wonderfully bold examples of Sorensen's use of iron stone, brought from the King's Tableland, feature in a series of cascading garden ponds and in a picnic area lower on the slope. Interesting trees include a large Californian redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) and an incense cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*). New owner Chris Wallace is beginning to reverse decades of neglect with his recent plantings, some tree removal and arboreal surgery.

La Vista, at Wentworth Falls is a 1905-6 house with a 2.5 acre garden where Sorensen did some work in the 1930s. While little is known about this

garden it displays garden fashions of the 20th century, including changes by Sorensen and others to an informal Edwardian layout with spacious lawns, a tennis court with a charming viewing pavilion, and densely planted woodland valley below. A huge pair of American tulip trees (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), perhaps the largest specimens I have seen, frame and dominate the lawn below the house. An oval swimming pool is cantilevered from a steeply sloping bank amid the lower woodland, and some unusual trees include the Chilean monkey puzzle tree (*Araucaria araucana*) and kawaka or New Zealand cedar (*Libocedrus plumosus*). The owners, Ron and Anne Farndon, are keen to receive any information on this garden's history.

The last stop was **Trevlyn**, also at Wentworth Falls. Originally created and named Trevlyn by the Mort family at about the turn of the century, the property was sold to the Stedmans (of Minties fame) who named it Sweetacres. The house dates from 1946 and Sorensen's contribution to the garden's design is of similar date. Sloping away from Parkes Street to the west up a densely planted hillside, the garden is a layered picture of trees, a mix of evergreens such as Himalayan and Atlas cedars, spruce, autumnal oaks, planes and a marvellous golden Persian ironwood (*Parrotia persica*). Many maples and rhododendrons fill up the understorey, with Sorensen's carefully built stone retaining walls creating beds, steps, bridges and paths up and across. A small formal kitchen garden is set to one side of the entry by the street, but otherwise the view up the garden, across a sweeping lawn and past a weeping silver birch, is uninterrupted. Owners Dorothy and Lyle Davis are sensitively keeping the spirit of Sorensen's design while introducing new elements such as sculpture to complement the garden's tranquillity.

These most enjoyable visits were ably organised by Silas Clifford-Smith supported by other AGHS members, Diana Nelson and the 'Friends of Everglades'. Hearty thanks to all concerned.

Stuart Read is a landscape architect and horticulturist with the NSW Heritage Office. **Silas Clifford-Smith** manages the garden at the Norman Lindsay house and gallery at Faulconbridge, and edits the Sydney and Northern NSW Branch newsletter. Both are also members of the NSW National Trust Parks and Gardens Classification Committee.



By **Stuart Read & Silas Clifford-Smith**

The huge red oak at Cheppen
Photo: Stuart Reid





The Museum and its contents aim to 'anchor a society on the move, expressing Australia's cultural diversity reflecting realistically a society continually questioning, exploring and re-inventing itself. . . .'



'The garden should help to ask the question who we are, and what is the place we are inhabiting? And what is the meaning of ownership and possession?'

Vladimir Sitta, co-designer of 'The Garden of Australian Dreams.'

Viewpoint

By **Gabrielle Tryon**

The Garden of Australian Dreams at the new National Museum of Australia in Canberra is as complex and controversial as the buildings of the museum themselves. The soccer-field shaped space in a central courtyard, overlooked from the main entrance court, fascinates and seeks to engage visitors before they even enter the museum.

At one end of the courtyard the north of Australia is laid out, treeless and harshly reminiscent of the interior of the continent. From the central mound this part of the garden is a crisscross and overlay of road maps, exploration routes, rivers, place names, cattle stations, and the dingo fence. The whole is overlaid with a map of Aboriginal language boundaries all etched in coloured rubber inlay.

For me, the Aboriginal names evoke images of life during fieldwork in the exposed environment of the Daly River. The vast Aboriginal language map covered one wall in our living area and the many syllabled names gradually became more familiar. There are other images too: never-ending roads, ration day, stunted eucalypts, Sunday fishing trips with 25 stockmen in, on, and hanging out of the Land Rover and the indelible image of racing the bushfires - once with the tyres smouldering, and burning trees falling in our path.

But what of the people who have no experience or knowledge of the north of Australia? Can they interpret the meaning of the tangled layers, or do they find them overly sophisticated and complex?

At the other end of the garden the Australian ideal is played out. Suburbia with green lawn, swimming pool and palm tree. *Blue Poles* is half-hidden behind the dream house. There are

references to politicians and the aboriginal vote, and 'home' is spelt out in the many languages of Australia's post-war migrants.

This is a provocative garden for adults and children who seek the meaning of the many and intricate layers of the northern maps and of suburban dreams and ideals. Will they wonder also about the angle of the European alders? Or will they even notice them? And how long will the angle last as the trees grow?

For some the visit will all be exciting and stimulating. For others it will be confusing and meaningless - too subtle and obscure. Whatever else, it will always be a pleasant and fun courtyard in which to sip coffee, eat sushi and ponder the complexities of the Garden of Australian Dreams.

Gabrielle Tryon is a state representative on the National Management Committee of AGHS. She also leads garden tours in and around Canberra. The daughter and grand-daughter of passionate gardeners, her own love of garden history was born in a water-mill in the Loire Valley of France.



Above - Suburban dream and ideals.

Photos: George Serras © National Museum of Australia, 2001
Courtesy National Museum of Australia



For Love Of A Wide Brown Land

the work of Marion Blackwell

Marion's involvement in botany, environmental science and conservation has shaped her design philosophy profoundly. This insight must be grasped if her landscapes are to be fully understood.

Marion Blackwell is an environmental scientist and landscape architect who has been working in Western Australia since 1958. She has lectured in the Department of Botany and the School of Architecture at the University of Western Australia and has been widely involved in landscape consultancy, planning and design, the sustainable use of natural resources, environmental management and biological surveys. She is the founding Director of Blackwell and Associates Pty. Ltd, an active landscape architectural practice in Perth.

Born in 1928 Marion grew up on a station in the New England area of New South Wales. Upon graduating in Science from the University of Sydney in 1952 she was appointed Lecturer in Mycology at the University of New South Wales, a position she held until moving to Western Australia with her husband and young family.¹

The Child – 'the beauty of local indigenous species excited her unconditioned eye'

Marion Blackwell has a childhood memory of Edna Walling, an acquaintance of her mother, visiting the family home, Middleton, a sheep and cattle property. Down the years she has retained the image of Walling stomping up the front garden path in her tweed suit and felt hat, sternly admonishing her mother not to plant agapanthus under the roses.

Another visitor was Constance Spry, the famous cook and arbiter of style for a generation of English floral designers. Marion recalls Spry's interest in the flamboyant flowers of *Plumbago auriculata*, thriving heartily in the Australian climate that resembled its South African habitat, in contrast with the cossetting it needed in an English greenhouse to produce just a few cherished blooms.²

Marion's enthusiasm for plants developed during her childhood, fuelled as much by the surrounding countryside as the predictably eclectic family garden. Geographical isolation had its advantages. Her life on the station while she underwent her primary education with the School of the Air left her space to develop her own interests and the beauty of local indigenous species excited her unconditioned eye.



By **Elizabeth Hof**

Top left - Landscape with tall mulla mulla (*Ptilotus exaltatus*), on Burrup Peninsula WA

Top right - Rock at West Beach, south-west WA

Above - 'The Forgotten City' at Benders Bluff, north of the Roper River, NT

Photos: Marion Blackwell





At five years of age, she had already collected seeds and cuttings of various *Pandorea* spp. which she grew on trellises around the homestead. This impressed Arthur Yates during a visit. He collected their seeds and on returning to Sydney put them into production. Thus *Pandorea pandorana*, the Wonga Wonga vine, *P. jasminoides*, the white pandorea now known as 'Lady Di', and *P. jasminoides* 'Amabilis', as the pink form was then known, became famous all over Australia.³

The Botanist – 'an intrepid plant warrior of Amazonian stamina'

Marion's early appreciation of and delight in indigenous species remain undiminished and their introduction into cultivation has been a lifelong interest. After she moved to Western Australia Marion worked with nurseries to produce and promote indigenous stock. To her credit are five forms of *Hemiandra pungens* (white, pink, and violet flowering forms with green and purple foliage), a new ground cover, *Veronica plebia*, four forms of *Grevillea crythmifolia*, and *Anigozanthus* hybrids to name but a few.

In the 1950s Marion discovered a small group of spectacular dwarf *Eucalyptus* plants growing hundreds of kilometres away from their closest relative.⁴ She believes they are the antecedents of *Eucalyptus ficifolia*. Several colour forms have now been successfully grafted onto different stock for landscape use under a variety of conditions.

Colleagues describe Marion's botanical skills and knowledge of Western Australian botanical regions as outstanding. She has contributed thousands of vouchered collections, including declared rare flora and priority taxa, to the Western Australian Herbarium.⁵ Dr Ray Steedman, chairman of the Environmental Protection Authority in Western Australia during the mid-1990s, considers Marion's botanical knowledge 'encyclopaedic'. He recalls flying with her over the Scott River plain south of Perth to consider a development proposal. She looked down and pointed out two faint yellow lines which he could not see at first, and identified them as *Dryandra squarrosa* subsp. *Argillacea*, growing on restricted outcrops of bog ironstone indicating restricted ecosystems in need of protection.

When he speaks of her intimate knowledge of Western Australian flora, he means it. She once

took him ten miles along a dirt track in the Kimberley to see one special tree. In the Great Victoria Desert Marion led a group up the side of an isolated rock outcrop to look for an unusual *Melaleuca* she had seen some twenty years before. It was still there. She walked towards the bush with authority, and remarked on how well it had grown under such hostile conditions.⁶

Described as 'an intrepid plant warrior of Amazonian stamina',⁷ Marion was chairperson of the advisory committee for the Australian National Botanic Gardens, which necessitated flying to Canberra regularly for years. She would often travel to remote and arid regions of Western Australia, start botanical survey work at dawn, continue through the heat of the day, fly home to Perth at 6 p.m., cook dinner for her family and then work on her collected specimens into the night.⁸

The Environmentalist – 'fearless in the defence of bio-diversity'

In the 1960s and 1970s it was not customary to integrate rehabilitation into initial planning for mines but Marion strongly advocated this when mining companies began to seek her advice. 'She advised on methods for rehabilitating waste dumps, on the suppression of dust for reasons of health and economy, and on the stabilisation of slopes to control erosion by wind and water run-off.

She developed appropriate plant palettes and techniques for seeding arid and other ecological areas of the state, proffering the possibility of rehabilitation within the economic framework of a viable mine. Thus she contributed to the dramatic change of philosophy which resulted in acceptance of environmental responsibility from the cradle to the grave of a mine.¹⁰

As a consultant reporting on the proposed uranium mine at Yeelirrie in the Murchison, Marion perceived a threat to the survival of a new species of *Eucalyptus* (there were only 5 plants), and to an unnamed *Melaleuca* hosting a new species of mistletoe. It was due to the lowering of the water table as a result of dewatering for the proposed open cut mine.¹¹

She also carried out the vegetation survey, compiled the report on regeneration potential, and did the impact assessment of the Burrup



Top left - Swimming pool area at Argyle Village, WA July 1987
Photo: Courtesy of Argyle Diamonds

Top centre - Flowerbuds *Banksia baxteri*
Photo: Marion Blackwell

Top right - Landscape with *Kingia australis*, WA
Photo: Marion Blackwell

Above - Marion Blackwell, 2001
Photo: Elizabeth Hof





Top left - Murdoch University, WA – Moongate and view to Chinese Courtyard
Photo: Elizabeth Hof

Top centre - Murdoch University, WA – Sitting stones in interior courtyard
Photo: Elizabeth Hof

Top right - Marion Blackwell working on rehabilitation survey, Burrup Peninsula, 1990
Photo: Courtesy Marion Blackwell

Centre left - The spiral rose garden, Voyager Estate Winery, Margaret River, WA
Photo: Marion Blackwell

Centre right - Harold Boas Gardens, Perth, WA – waterfall and *Coccoloba uvifera* (sea grape)
Photo: Elizabeth Hof

Above - Harold Boas Gardens, Perth, WA
Photo: Marion Blackwell

Peninsula for Woodside Offshore Petroleum's North West Shelf gas project. Then she designed and monitored the rehabilitation program.¹²

While a board member of the Environmental Protection Authority Marion was always prepared to listen to proposals, but she has been fearless in the defence of bio-diversity in the face of development. She drew attention to the small invertebrate subterranean Gondwana relic fauna present in cavernous lime-stone that was proposed for mining near Exmouth Gulf.¹³

In the 60s and 70s Marion recognised the loss of remnant vegetation in the wheat-belt caused by developing salinity.¹⁴ Believing that burning destroys litter, the food source of trees, she opposes regular controlled burning, particularly in the eastern margins of the south-western forests of Western Australia where conditions are becoming drier.

The Designer – 'celebrating an Australian idiom'

Marion's design work is diverse. It ranges from city arcades and parks through small gardens on suburban blocks to large commercial spaces and conservation reserves. Although most of it has challenged Euro-centric values and celebrated an Australian idiom, there have been departures, notably at the Voyager Estate Winery, near Margaret River in the south-west of Western Australia.

Here, Marion addressed the client's brief for the development of a Cape Dutch style to complement the proposed architecture. The gardens are formally structured and she has used roses extensively with spreading lawns, and a walled parterre filled with her typically interesting and original mix of plants. The sense of place is still visible in the avenues of native trees and the huge, old *Agonis flexuosa* which she insisted on retaining beside the Cellar Sales Building. The nautilus design in a moulding on this building has been used in various areas throughout the garden, most noticeably in the shape of a spiralling, walled rose bed.

Most of Marion's other major projects have been based on ecological design and they incorporate appropriate low-maintenance plants. Near Perth she has designed for exposed coastal sites at Rottnest Island, Woodman Point and the Garden Island Naval Base as well as pioneering low water-use Australian landscapes for large suburban shopping centres during the 60s and 70s. Not a purist, Marion skilfully combines Australian plants with exotics. She believes that a wide palette can accommodate the precise needs of any situation.

Her designs for the Harold Boas Gardens in Perth, and for the courtyards of Murdoch University, successfully combine indigenous species with exotics such as *Tipuana tipu* which Marion had seen in South America and introduced to Western Australian gardens. She considers the loose, spreading shape and the dull, apple-green foliage





apt in blending the grey-greens of many Australian plants with the brighter greens of some exotics.

Although she makes use of them, Marion does not focus on flowering plants. More often she exploits the effect of green upon green, as in the Harold Boas Gardens. In 1973 this area was an evenly sloping paddock leading down to a trough where 19th century Afghan cameleers had watered their teams.¹⁵ Marion surveyed and retained all but one of the existing trees in her projected plans. New contours developed by cutting and filling soil on the site were planted to create separate, secluded spaces, seemingly enlarging the whole area that contains two lakes connected with a waterfall, a cascade and streams.

Marion has filled the gardens with swathes of green, with subtle colour variation and with perfume, as always mixing the common with the unexpected. It is a rich tapestry - *Ficus benjamina*, with its red fruit studding the canopy; the pale gold samaras hanging on the *Tipuana tipu* after their dropping summer flowers have turned the lake to gold, cascades of bright, orange fruit through the lustrous foliage of *Pittosporum rhombifolium*, the light-filled branches of *Hymenosporum flavum*, the lacy texture of *Jacaranda mimosifolia*, the dense, sombre dark green backdrop of the 120 million-year-old Australian gymnosperm *Podocarpus elatus*, a favourite of Marion's brought to Perth for use in her early gardens, the sea grape, *Coccoloba uvifera*, with its leather-like peltate leaves, fragrant flowers and red-purple fruit, *Pittosporum tobira* of the perfumed creamy-white flowers, *Carissa grandiflora*, the Natal plum, for its perfume, the South African wisteria tree, *Bolusanthus speciosus*, and several *Brachychiton* spp., including the hybrid of *B. populneus* and *B. discolor*, with its big, fussy-pinkish bells, and 98 of the coral-pink form of *B. hybrida*.¹⁶

The lush quality of these gardens contrasts starkly with Marion's work in arid regions such as the nickel mining town of Leinster, in the western arm of the Great Victoria Desert, and the isolated Jigalong Community, of over 600 people, situated at the junction of the Great Sandy Desert, the Little Sandy Desert and the Gibson Desert.

At Leinster, Marion challenged prevailing attitudes¹⁷ by designing specifically for the area's arid climate.

The client, Agnew Mining Company, had envisaged conventional suburban landscaping until she reminded them of the cost of water and other resources required to maintain such a regime. She undertook an ecological survey and assessment of the Carnegie Salient, including the Perseverance Well area, immediately surrounding the proposed township site. From this an illustrated catalogue of plant species appropriate for use at the site was developed. Marion gave advice on the location and orientation of the town-site, completed a landform analysis, site plan, and detailed planting design, including a proposal for the town centre and the entire residential component including streets, individual house lots, and the single men's quarters. In addition she developed a gardening manual for new residents.

Her work here shaped a quality landscape for people living and working in extreme conditions while retaining a sense of place.¹⁸ Similarly, Marion's 1984 design for the arid-tropical Argyle Diamond village and mine sites in the Kimberley enhanced a harsh mining environment. She took discreet advantage of superb landforms, an incredible vista and the local vegetation, including the iconic boab trees, to create the natural, and unmanipulated style she so often achieves.¹⁹

The Aboriginal Housing Board commissioned Blackwell and Associates in 1991 as the coordinating consultants for a multi-disciplinary team engaged on a feasibility study to provide solutions to community health problems at Jigalong. Marion was painstaking in her accommodation of the indigenous lifestyle and in her efforts to see the landscape in a different way, to look at how the residents perceived their environment and to listen with care.²⁰

Her work included going out with small groups and relating effectively with women in the community. Various studies included an exploration of community functions and their relationship with vegetation and causes of soil degradation. Appropriate species for ethnic usages, amenity purposes, food, shade, shelter, fuel wood, drought and salt tolerance were researched. The development of a landscape design master plan followed, with detailed



Top left - *Macrozamia reidleyi*
Photo: Marion Blackwell

Top right - Dappled shade in the Harold Boas Gardens, Perth, WA
Photo: Elizabeth Hof

Above - Voyager Estate Winery, Margaret River, WA - walled rose garden with rotunda
Photo: Marion Blackwell





designs for rehabilitation and amenity procedures, and the provision of appropriate resources and skills to enable residents to participate in the rehabilitation and stabilisation program.

At the Western Australian Herbarium, as a partner in Blackwell and Cala, Marion produced a detailed landscape design to display not only the attributes of specific plants but also their taxonomic linkages and habitat associations. These groupings included a Banksia display area (which has since perished from the ravages of *Phytophthora cinnamomi*) in which she incorporated all the then known species of this genus including ground covers through to trees; an acacia area; a poisons garden containing indigenous and introduced species; an area planted with representatives of the northern sand plains, the southern sand plain, and areas planted with representative species from the Murchison, Gascoyne, the Ashburton, the Pilbara and the Kimberley. The planting design set out designated locations for 1,147 different taxa of Western Australian plants, more than an eighth of the then known flora of the state.

In all things - 'a commitment to the Australian landscape'

Marion's involvement in the initiation and development of *The Western Australian Flora: a descriptive catalogue*, in the creation of a Landscape Management degree at the University of Western Australia,²¹ in her mentoring of young botanists, her honorary fellowship of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, her two decades of work on the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority, her 33 years on the Management Committee of the Wildflower Society of Western Australia, her presidency of the Society, her two terms as a member of the Western Australian Environmental Protection Authority, and her continuing membership of the Advisory Council to the same authority must be part of another story.

The last words for now are those of her colleagues. They speak of 'commitment to the Australian landscape',²² of 'the passion of a twenty-year-old which has never dimmed',²³ and of 'a living national treasure'.²⁴

Elizabeth Hof works for Museums Australia and is a committee member of the Western Australian Branch of the Australian Garden History Society. She is a student at the Research Institute for Cultural Heritage, Curtin University of Technology, Western Australia and a free-lance contributor to *The West Australian*.

- 1 Blackwell and Associates, 2000, *Marion Blackwell, Biographical Notes*
- 2 Personal recollection, 2001, Marion Blackwell to the writer
- 3 As above
- 4 Oral communication, 2001, Dr Kingsley Dixon, Director of Science, Botanic Gardens & Parks Authority, WA, with the writer
- 5 Personal recollection, 2001, Bernard Bowen, Chair, Environmental Protection Authority, WA, 1997 to the present, with the writer
- 6 Personal recollection, 2001, Dr Ray Steedman, Chair Environmental Protection Authority, WA, 1994-1997, to the writer
- 7 Oral communication, 2001, Dr Kingsley Dixon, with the writer
- 8 Personal recollection, 2001, Clare Welsh, formerly TAFE horticulture, WA, to the writer
- 9 Personal recollection, 2001, Bernard Bowen to the writer
- 10 Personal recollection, 2001, Dr Ray Steedman to the writer
- 11 Personal recollection, 2001, Geoff Fernie, a former Director of Maunsells, engineers, to the writer.
- 12 Blackwell and Associates, 2000, *Marion Blackwell, Biographical Notes*
- 13 Personal recollection, 2001, Bernard Bowen to the writer
- 14 Personal recollection, 2001, Dr Ray Steedman to the writer
- 15 Oral communication, 2001, Marion Blackwell with the writer
- 16 As above
- 17 Personal recollection, 2001, Dr Ray Steedman to the writer
- 18 Personal recollection, 2001, Bernard Bowen to the writer
- 19 Oral communication, 2001, Dr Libby Matiske, Board member, Environmental Protection Authority, WA to writer
- 20 As above
- 21 Oral communication, 2001, Wayne Schmidt, Department of Conservation & Land Management, WA, with the writer
- 22 Oral communication, 2001, Dr Stephen Hopper, CEO, Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, WA, with the writer
- 23 Oral communication, 2001, Dr Kingsley Dixon with the writer
- 24 Oral communication, 2001, Bernard Bowen with the writer

I am indebted to Marion Blackwell's colleagues, past and present, to Tessa Watson, Chairperson of AGHS (WA Branch), to Amanda Spooner at the WA Herbarium and to Marion herself for assistance in research for this article.



Top left - City of Bayswater Administration Centre, Bayswater WA - a stone wall and undulating hedge underpin an avenue of *Fraxinus* 'Raywood'

Top right - City of Bayswater Administration Centre - the Council Building is cantilevered over the sculpture and reflection pool with mixed plantings behind

Above - City of Bayswater Administration Centre - entry to main building

Photos: Marion Blackwell



The Bookshelf

Marrickville Backyards, Jane Gleeson, Mary Ann Hamilton, George Morgan, Megan Wynne Jones. Photography by Roslyn Sharp. The Marrickville Community Group and Blooming Books, Melbourne, 2001. rrp. \$27

Reviewed by Trevor Nottle

Whether you like the term 'multi-cultural society' or prefer 'a culturally diverse society', the impact of migrants is undeniable in every aspect of our lives. For some gardeners this may mean a quick brush over of a distressed garden wall with some Provencal Blue wash and the placing of a terracotta pot or two. But, there is more to the Mediterranean than a stylist's fashion statement.

Marrickville Backyards illustrates the breadth and depth of change that has happened and continues to happen as a result of migration, not only from the Mediterranean but also from Asia and the Pacific.

As social and cultural history the book is very rewarding. The text records in a diversity of languages, from Arabic to Tongan, the feelings of the contributors for their gardens and backyards. It is clear these are powerful supports to the maintenance of family life and of the traditions of cuisine and domestic culture.

Each language is given priority in the format and a translation to English follows. On reading this the abundance that migration has brought to our tables comes through in words we would not have had or understood 30 years ago. Couscous, pomelo, taro, lemongrass, sapote, kaffir lime, orta, garbanzos, purslane and a host of other words for the herbs and leaf vegetables that are increasingly evident in farmers' markets, in café menus and in our recipe books.

Marrickville Backyards is a significant record of our developing gardening history, not only as a visual record of what is happening in our gardens but also as a record of the changing attitudes towards gardens and the meaning they have for our lives. These gardens are not simply gardens of cultural survival for migrants, they signpost a wealth of ideas from which future developments will be drawn.

Next Issue

The Artist and The Garden
Roy Strong
&
Making Nature
Peter Timms

The Ingenious Mr Fairchild, Michael Leapman, Headline, London 2000. rrp. \$32.83

Reviewed by Nina Crone

Thomas Fairchild created a new plant by transferring the pollen from a sweet william flower onto the pistil of a carnation and thereafter suffered life-long guilt that he had dared 'to play God'. He attempted to assuage this feeling of sinfulness by 'good works' such as bequeathing money for the charity children in his parish and by endowing an annual sermon in perpetuity on the subject of "The Wonderful World of God in Creation".

Michael Leapman gives us far more than a portrait of a notable nurseryman. We participate in a meeting of the Royal Society, we come to know the physical appearance of 18th century London, we relish the barbs of the satirists, we follow evolving scientific ideas, and we appreciate the common sense of Fairchild's own book.

The journalist in Michael Leapman holds a mirror up to our own times by alluding to current debate on the ethics of cloning and genetic modification. It would all sound familiar to Thomas Fairchild.

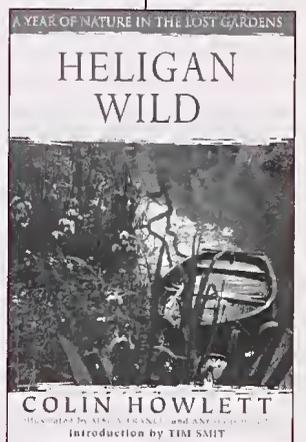
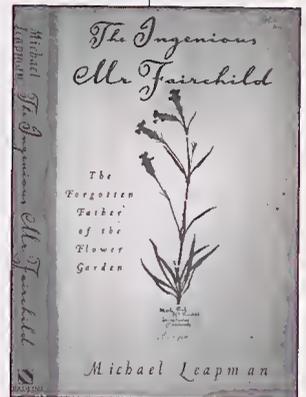
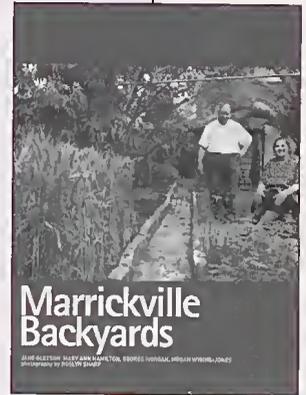
Heligan Wild, Colin Howlett, illustrated by Mally Francis and Angus Hudson, Orion, London, 2001, rrp. \$22.95

Reviewed by Nina Crone

Like many of the tiny woodland wildflowers exquisitely depicted in it, *Heligan Wild* is a small gem. Offering a new perspective to the Lost Gardens of Heligan it centres on Colin Howlett's daily walk to and from the Weather Station. He records more than the weather carefully observing plants, wild-life, birds and butterflies throughout 1995.

There is a sensual quality in his description of the increasing crescendo of bird-calls, the burgeoning flowers, the frenetic insect activity of high summer, and the dank rich decay of autumn incandescent with fungi before the icicles of winter. The illustrations by Mally Francis and Angus Hudson enhance the symmetry of the year. Together with Colin Howlett they worked in the Heligan Gardens.

The last chapter outlines the process of preparing and maintaining 'The Jungle' and 'The Lost Valley' as conservation areas in the Heligan Gardens. Conservationists, artists, those who know Heligan and Anglophiles will undoubtedly enjoy *Heligan Wild*.





Celebrating Pelargoniums

The Geelong Botanic Garden, celebrating its 150th anniversary this year, holds the Ornamental Plant Conservation Collection of Pelargoniums. A close association with this collection inspired botanical artist, Enid Mayfield, to develop a fine watercolour exhibited in the Botanical Illustrators Exhibition at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne in October last year. Enid Mayfield speaks of her feelings towards the work.

Pelargoniums are always flowering somewhere; they are part of Australian childhood. My mum grew red ones along the side of the garage and we used to crush the petals for lipstick. I'm sure everyone has a memory of these bright and cheerful flowers.

It was an interesting journey putting such an artwork together. Doing the painting was an indulgence in the colour and loveliness of the Geraniceae we have in the Geelong Botanic Gardens. Don Francis was the curator of the collection when I came to the Gardens and it was the best fun working with him and learning from him, and many others, about this beautiful family of plants.

I decided to put together the story of the Zonal Pelargonium (*Pelargonium x hortorum*) and show the cultivars that have been derived since the 19th century from the two species parents, *Pelargonium zonale* which gives the characteristic zone of the leaf, and *Pelargonium inquinans* which is the flower parent.

Most of the plants were in the Collection at Geelong Botanic Gardens but at one stage we

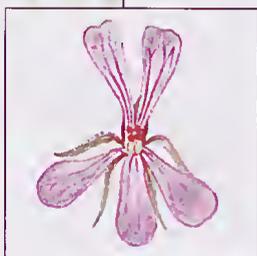
were looking everywhere in Australia for the missing species parent *Pelargonium inquinans*. I had just e-mailed South Africa when we found out that a local enthusiast had some seeds. They were 8 years old, well past their use-by date.

Don planted them. Nothing happened. He went away for a holiday and when he came back one tiny seedling greeted him. He grew it on and now there it is in the top left hand quarter of the painting.

The painting is a strictly botanical work. There are 18 taxa in it and without any one of them the story would have remained untold. It took two years to do . . . finding the missing links and waiting for the flowering. It is also a historical work: a record of the cultivars in this group that, like the species, are prone to loss. Thus it is a record of part of the collection we have at the Geelong Botanic Gardens.

But for me it is mainly a celebration of the plants themselves and the wonderful people who worked to develop those colourful flowers and leaves.

The 'Friends of Geelong Botanic Gardens' purchased the painting from which a limited edition of 300 copies has been printed on conservation quality paper. Each print is numbered and signed by the artist. It features species parents, flower and foliage cultivars and the pelargonium flower anatomy and sells for \$40. Readers interested in purchasing a print should contact the Friends of the Geelong Botanic Gardens. Phone: (03) 5222 6053.



By Enid Mayfield

Artwork: Enid Mayfield
Courtesy Geelong Botanic Gardens



Undesigned Gardens

the 'mediterranean' front-yards in North Carlton

In the continual search for an Australian cultural identity there has been a shift from outback to the suburban backyard. No longer characteristically opposed to the place they find themselves in. Australians are keen to foster a spiritual affinity with their immediate landscape.¹ Bringing the bush to the garden is one facet of this quest, but the 'bush or native garden' cannot always provide the social or cultural requirements of people living in the smaller 19th century inner urban allotments of Australia's cities.²

It is in the backyard that Australian culture is now seen to be determining a new common ground. The seeds of old are used to grow roots in the earth of the new. While the front-yard has often been perceived as a landscape of display, the production associated with the backyard now sometimes occurs in the front-yard when space is limited. It is in these front-yard gardens that an important aspect of Australian culture is finding expression.

Recent interest in the contribution of post-Second World War migrants to suburban Australia has helped focus on the culinary contribution gardens have to offer us, rather than just the aesthetic qualities that plants were considered to bestow on our homes.³ Immigrants from different cultures have contributed an array of fruit, vegetables and herbs to entice existing palates to enjoy a new commonwealth of culinary delights. It seems that the way to a nation's heart or soul is through its mouth.

However, while landscape designers are becoming less concerned with the coercion of outdoor space in deference to the surrounding architecture in cases where garden space is limited, minimalism is an easy option.⁴ The backyard especially becomes an extension of the house and plants such as agaves, snake plants, yuccas and cycads are chosen for their 'architectural' qualities in the belief that they better define the façade of the building by their juxtaposition to its form and colour. Thus outdoor space is made responsible for enlarging the indoor living area at the expense of its organic content. The use of a limited number of plant species often coupled with a formal water feature are the only natural or 'soft' elements in a landscape dominated by hard surfaces.⁵

In contrast, traditional herb gardens or potagers offer a multitude of plants that combine productivity with beauty. These types of gardens are predominantly associated with the kitchen found traditionally at the rear of the house. However, as Eddy Butler-Bowden and others have noted, post-Second World War migrants from continental Europe saw the potential of the front garden for food production.⁶

The contrast between the two approaches to the use of a small front garden may not be more apparent than among the Victorian terraces of North Carlton where many Italian and Greek migrants settled after the Second World War.

As North Carlton undergoes gentrification these migrant gardens planted in the 1960s and 1970s can be viewed side by side with gardens that pay homage to the more traditional and formal aesthetic of the late 19th century when many of the terraces were built. However, such gardens are recent re-creations, Victoriana in style rather than Victorian, seeking to emulate the era with reproduction urns, edging tiles, box hedges and recent rose cultivars.⁷ Where most migrant gardens differ is in their emphasis on production instead of providing the pretty effect derived from a cottage-garden bedding scheme.

It would, however, be wrong to assume that these are two opposing and distinct styles as the majority of gardens in North Carlton are an admixture of styles and uses. Not all the migrant front gardens are confined to the production of food – many have flowers, and flowering shrubs and, sometimes, also lawn. These landscapes belong to what Helen Armstrong refers to as hybrid and unselfconscious vernacular designs typical of Australia's emerging cultural pluralism.⁸

Space as much as culture determines what front gardens in North Carlton are used for. As would be expected with narrow, elongated terrace blocks, front gardens of more than a dozen square metres are a rarity, with those that are, being almost always confined to the larger, detached Edwardian residences. The opportunity for trees is negligible, while the sound of a lawn-mower, and the smell of cut grass on a Saturday afternoon is uncommon. Driveways in the front-yard are rarer



By Julian Bull

Above - Rich bare earth – the antithesis of a front lawn

Below right - An orchard of assorted stone fruit-trees in Rathdowne Street, North Carlton, Victoria

Photos: Julian Bull





still. With little ground to cultivate, migrants have been particularly adept at using all available space for garden produce.

The antithesis of the front-garden lawn is exposed during seasonal crop rotations when migrant gardens are tilled and the yard hoed to rich, bare earth. The gardens are often fenced off with chicken wire to provide a deterrent to animals and pilferers, while nets are placed over ripening fruit to protect them from birds or as shade for developing flowers in summer. Spinach, tomatoes, lettuces, different chillies and herbs – particularly basil, oregano, parsley and thyme – are seen growing side by side with carnations, roses, hydrangeas or sunflowers. Herbs and vegetables are also grown in pots particularly when verandas about the street.

In these gardens there is not delineation between front and backyard – every outdoor area is used to its productive potential. These garden plots connect 'out back' with 'out front', and circumvent the notion of interiors and exteriors and their veranda interface so eloquently described by Phillip Drew.⁹ The dwelling becomes the shed in the middle of the garden.

Fruit trees are common, particularly those more suited to small areas and to Melbourne's climate. The ubiquitous lemon-tree is almost *de rigueur*. While the First Fleet endeavoured to introduce many English fruits and vegetables into the Australian Colony, today North Carlton enjoys the persimmon, olive, fig, vine, bay and nectarine through the plantings by migrants who settled in the suburb in the 1960s and 1970s.

At 955 Rathdowne Street, a larger than average front garden, there is an orchard of assorted stone fruits over pots that boast pansies and lilies. Decorations along the flower-lined path go beyond mere gnomes to include a guitar, a swan and hanging pottery. Bundles of stakes are piled up against the wall in readiness for the next crop. It is a garden indicating the realisation of the opportunities that Australian society has provided to all its citizens.

In a way there is great similarity between Australia's immigrants over the last two centuries.

All have introduced plants from fondly remembered homelands. The produce from these plants has provided useful and interesting flavours in Australia's cultural melting pot. By cultivating plants previously associated with the backyard, in the front-yards of towns and cities, the 'mediterranean' gardeners have also introduced and fostered an openness and diversity that characterises an Australian identity.

Julian Bull, a post-graduate student in Landscape Architecture at Melbourne University, is a resident of North Carlton. He is particularly interested in the vernacular garden as an element of cultural expression.

- 1 The recent work of David Tacey is devoted to examining emerging trends in Australian spirituality. He cites the experience of nature and landscape, environmental problems and the re-enchantment of gardens and herbs among many areas that are giving rise to personal and cultural renewal in Australia. See his *Edge of the Sacred: Transformation in Australia* Harper Collins (1995) and *Re-enchantment: the new Australian Spirituality* Harper Collins (2000)
- 2 Proponents of natural Australian style gardens tend to reinforce the dichotomy between introduced and native plants, arguing for the latter largely on aesthetic and environmental grounds. More attention is paid to providing bird-attracting plants than in designing functional "bush tucker" gardens akin to European kitchen gardens. See Gordon Ford *The Natural Australian Garden*, Bloomings Books (1999).
- 3 Perhaps this is no better portrayed than in *Marrickville Backyards*, Bloomings Books (2001) published for the Marrickville Community History Group.
- 4 Compare the contemporary designs of Paul Bangay and Jack Merlo (whose promotional material states "Each landscape must give reference to the architecture of the structural edifice it adorns. The architectural design provides the internal framework for my landscape designs.") with the 'natural' structures around which Ellis Stones and Gordon Ford based their landscapes.
- 5 This type of backyard is akin to what George Seddon refers to as 'display space (entertainment) [where] the backyard has added a public function to its private one, and thus acquired a characteristic of the front garden' See George Seddon 'The Australian Backyard' *Australian Garden History* Vol. 3 No. 2, 1994, p.7. Interestingly the opposite has occurred in the 'mediterranean' front-yards' of Carlton.
- 6 See Suzanne Hunt, 'With Seeds In Their Pockets', *Australian Garden History*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 2000, p. 20
- 7 Proponents of unifying 'the character' of the planted streetscape need to explore carefully the meaning of authenticity and its relationship to harmony and appropriateness. See Warwick Mayne-Wilson 'Good Neighbours to the Street' in P. Timms (ed.) *The Nature of Gardens*, Allen & Unwin, (Sydney) 1999 p. 193
- 8 Helen Armstrong, 'Migrant Cultural Landscapes: Collisions of Culture in Australia's Pluralist Cities', *Landscape Australia* 23 (1), 2001, p. 60
- 9 Phillip Drew, *Veranda: embracing place*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1992, pp. 120-21



Top left - Herbs and vegetables are grown in pots

Top right - Victoriana in style rather than Victorian

Above - Garden at 955 Rathdowne Street

Photos: Julian Bull



Chinese Market Gardening

A Western Australian Postscript

Walkers, joggers, cyclists and picknickers now enliven the landscape where once the industrious Chinese men laboured in their gardens.

The South Perth foreshore was home to Chinese market gardeners for some 80 years from the 1880s until 1968 when the frail 85 year old Wong Chew (Wong Chu, Huang Choo), the last of the hard working gardeners, returned to his home in Hong Kong. The market gardens extended several kilometres along the fertile riverbank, a short ferry ride across Perth Water from the capital city Perth.

West Australian writer Tom Hungerford described the gardens in his short story *Wong Chu and the Queen's Letter Box*, a memoir of a sun-blessed childhood in South Perth.

The gardens . . . were as much our playground as the river or our own backyards. Then, of course, we didn't know how beautiful they were, with their patchwork of dark green carrot tops and pale green lettuce and milky green cauliflower in season, the blood-red of beetroot and the purple of eggplant, and the gold-flecked lakes of melons and pumpkin at the damper, lower end of the garden. Armoured gilgies' dozed beside their holes in the square wells scattered among the beds for watering and dipping the vegetables . . .²

An aerial photograph of South Perth, taken in 1930, shows in remarkable detail the complex pattern of market garden beds. In many shapes and sizes they extend along the foreshore, the deep drainage ditches running at right angles to the river, and the myriad of square and rectangular-shaped wells dotted among the vegetable plots.³

Sir James Mitchell Park, a large regional public park, today occupies the South Perth foreshore. Walkers, joggers, cyclists and picnickers now enliven the landscape where once the industrious Chinese men laboured in their gardens. Indeed many of Perth's other public parks and recreation grounds – Robertson Park, Hamilton Park and Birdwood Square, in North Perth, and part of Perth Oval in East Perth – were former market gardens. They were developed first by colonial settlers in the mid-19th century and from the

1880s onwards by Chinese immigrants attracted to Western Australia during the prosperous years of the gold discoveries.

By the first decades of the 20th century Chinese gardeners had come to dominate the market garden industry in Perth and they retained this prominence into the 1920s. Many of the gardens were located on the outskirts of the city, along the Swan River foreshores below King's Park, in South Perth, in Victoria Park, and on the margins of the lakes and swamps that were a feature of the metropolitan landscape at the time of European settlement in 1829.

These wetlands had previously been favoured gathering places and a source of food for the aboriginal population. With an ample water supply, high water table and more fertile peaty soils they also provided the favourable conditions for market gardening in the otherwise dry, sandy coastal environment. Chinese market gardens were also established in the outer suburbs in Leederville, Maylands, Bayswater, Osborne Park, North Fremantle, Jandakot and in country districts.⁴

Much of the detail in this article comes from historian Anne Atkinson's comprehensive paper *Chinese Market Gardening in the Perth Metropolitan Region, 1900-1920*. The traditional methods of cultivation, the frugal, communal lifestyle, and the repetitive, labour intensive methods of the Chinese in Perth appear to have been similar to those of their countrymen in Sydney and Melbourne as described by Colleen Morris and Sandi Pullman.⁵



By Oline Richards

A Chinese market gardener's cart in Perth
Photo: Batty Library, Perth





Chinese market gardens
in South Perth
Photo: Historical Records,
City of South Perth

In Perth the gardeners worked in teams of two to ten men averaging six men to a six acre (2.4ha) lot. The land was mostly leased, with gardens ranging in size from two acres close to the city, between 10 and 40 acres further afield, and up to 100 acres in the outer metropolitan area. The leases were worked throughout the year with the busy growing season beginning in spring and extending over the summer months in Perth, while in the country districts winter was the main growing season. During these periods of increased activity additional gardeners were employed from a pool of local Chinese labour. These men moved between the metropolitan area and country districts to work in the gardens on a seasonal basis. This urban/rural rotation was further enhanced by the local practice of exchanging vegetable seeds grown in different locations in the belief that seed strains were improved by a change in soil and climate.

The twice-daily watering of the vegetable crops placed considerable emphasis on an adequate water supply. In Perth the traditional square Chinese wells were a prominent feature of the gardens. One garden in North Perth had over thirty shallow wells in an area of two acres. The wells were usually ten feet square (3m x 3m). Planks were placed across the centre to enable the buckets, carried on each end of a shoulder pole, to be filled with the least amount of physical effort . . . a backbreaking task nevertheless. For working, the gardeners in South Perth wore a combination of traditional Chinese clothes and a local variant of a labourer's outfit.

*. . . a rough working shirt and dark blue cotton trousers which folded over at the waist like a sarong; never boots or shoes in the garden, and only, in the worst of weather, the big 'umbrella' hats of their homeland. They seemed to prefer the Australian-style tucked-in comsack in which, bobbing about in their gardens with another sack tied apron-wise around the waist, they looked like an industrious company of monks . . .*⁶



During the first decades of the 20th century Perth householders came to rely increasingly on the produce of the Chinese market gardens, whereas during the 19th century domestic home production of fruit and vegetables had been a widespread local practice. The Chinese gardeners sold their vegetables direct to suburban housewives going from door-to-door with their horse-drawn carts – 'a stereotyped image' of the Chinese market gardener in Perth. Anne Atkinson made the point that it was not the Chinese who introduced this marketing initiative but their colonial predecessors in the 1870s in an era before the central produce markets were established in the city.



The Chinese in Western Australia were recognised as law-abiding and conscientious workers, and their services were valued. Nevertheless, attitudes in the wider community towards the Chinese were ambivalent and at an official level were translated into anti-Chinese policies. In the late 1890s Chinese growers were not permitted to sell vegetables at the new city markets in Wellington Street, a restriction that was subsequently rescinded once the Chinese came to dominate the industry. However, it was the new fresh-produce markets opened in 1908, just north of the railway line in James Street, which became their main wholesale outlet.

Trading at the markets was an important avenue for social as well as commercial activity, enabling growers to maintain contacts within the Chinese community, to patronise nearby Chinese businesses – seed suppliers, herbalists, and restaurants – and to call in at the Chung Wah Association rooms and elsewhere to indulge their liking for gambling and smoking opium.

Government agencies were prevented from purchasing vegetables from Chinese growers, a directive that was impracticable and unenforceable in some country areas where the Chinese were the only ones supplying fresh produce. In Perth the Australian Natives' Association was successful in lobbying the Perth City Council to close down the Chinese market gardens in the rapidly developing inner city areas. In the period immediately prior to the Great War the council purchased numerous blocks being cultivated by Chinese growers and these were subsequently developed for parks and recreation grounds, or for extending the city road system.⁷

Recent heritage studies associated with Robertson Park in North Perth have provided fresh documentary and archaeological evidence about the Chinese experience in Western Australia.⁸ Robertson Park has had a history of diverse land use since European settlement, making it a most interesting site for archaeological investigation and interpretation, embracing aboriginal, colonial and 20th century social, cultural and industrial heritage.

The land now occupied by the park was formerly a freshwater lake, known as Lake Henderson during the colonial period. The lake had been a focus of aboriginal activity from pre-settlement times until around 1870 when the area was drained to allow for development. The lake area, which occupied a large city block, was subdivided into a number of smaller lots, and was used mainly for market gardens from the 1870s, first by colonial settlers of British stock and from the late 1890s by Chinese gardeners, among them Sam Wah and Lee Hop.

Houses and other structures were built along the street frontages of the lots in the 1880s and early 1900s. One was a substantial residence later used as school premises by the Presbyterian Ladies' College and another, still standing, was occupied

by Lee Hop. A livery stables, and the Perth and Fremantle Bottle Exchange Company also operated from the site. Market gardening ceased in the 1920s and tennis courts and a children's playground were built by the Perth City Council which gradually acquired all the freehold properties, converting the land to recreational use.

Exploratory archaeological excavations have uncovered ancient aboriginal stone tools from the original lake bed as well as the contours of furrows associated with colonial and Chinese market gardens. Differences in the profiles of the furrows and their orientation in relation to the lake have led to interesting speculation about the different crops grown, the methods of cultivation and indeed attitudes to the land.⁹ Interest also surrounds Lee Hop's cottage and the adjoining outside areas which have remained relatively intact to the present day. The cottage and the contents of the large timber open drain built across the area in 1872 (now covered by metres of fill) hold the promise of more discoveries about the life and work of the Chinese gardeners who once occupied the site.

The period of Chinese dominance in the market garden industry was an important phase in the history of market gardening in Western Australia and in the sequence of land-use of Perth's metropolitan wetlands. Originally important to the aboriginal community, the wetlands were progressively drained and utilised for market gardens by colonial settlers in the second half of the 19th century, and from the late 1890s until the interwar years predominantly by Chinese growers.

Under pressure from increasing urban development and an element of anti-Chinese sentiment, many of these gardens were converted to public parks and recreation grounds and they now form part of Perth's network of city and inner metropolitan open space reserves.

Oline Richards is a retired landscape architect and professional historian with an interest in West Australian landscape history and heritage conservation. She is the author of *Designed Landscapes in Western Australia*.



Above and opposite (below): Sir James Mitchell Park, South Perth, established on the site of former Chinese market gardens
Photo: Oline Richards

- 1 West Australian term for yabbies
- 2 T.A.G. Hungerford, *Wong Chu and the Queen's Letter Box*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle 1977, p. 3
- 3 South Perth Heritage House Aerial Photograph Collection
- 4 Anne Atkinson, 'Chinese Market Gardening in the Perth Metropolitan Region, 1900-1920', *Western Geographer*, vol. 8, 1984, pp. 38-52; K. Aris, Conservation Plan Perth Oval, East Perth. Prepared for the Town of Vincent, 1999; Cecil Florey, *Peninsular City: A Social History of the City of South Perth*, City of South Perth, W.A., 1995, pp 67-8, 244-50, 320-9
- 5 Colleen Morris, 'Chinese Market Gardens in Sydney', *Australian Garden History*, vol. 12, no. 5, March/April, 2001, pp. 5-8; Sandi Pullman, 'Along Melbourne's Creeks and Rivers', *Australian Garden History*, vol. 12, no. 5, March/April, 2001, pp. 9-10
- 6 T.A.G. Hungerford, op.cit. p. 3
- 7 City of Perth, *Mayor's Report, 1909-10; 1913-14*
- 8 G. Nayton, 'Lee Hop's Market Garden', *Archaeological Investigations*, June 2000; K. Przywolnik & R. Harrison, Report of an Archaeological Survey of Robertson Park, November, 2000. Since the breaking up of the City of Perth, Robertson Park now comes within the boundaries of the Town of Vincent, and these and ongoing studies have been undertaken by the municipality.
- 9 G. Nayton, op. cit. pp.25-26



Items Of Interest

Introducing the Editorial Advisory Panel

Australian Garden History is fortunate in the range of talent and experience it on its Editorial Advisory Panel. The members are;

Anne Latreille, convener of the Panel, is a Melbourne journalist with a longstanding interest in gardens, both contemporary and historic. She is known for her books *Kindred Spirits*, an account of the gardening correspondence between Joan Law-Smith and Jean Galbraith, and *The Natural Garden: the Life and Work of Ellis Stones*.

Richard Aitken, an architect and historian based in Melbourne, runs a consultancy that undertakes conservation plans for culturally significant sites including gardens. Currently co-editor of the forthcoming *Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens* Richard co-edited *Australian Garden History* from 1989 to 1992.

Max Bourke was the founding CEO of the Australian Heritage Commission and later CEO of the Australia Council. He has a background in agricultural science and conservation management with a strong interest in botanical history. In the early 1980s Max was the Australasian Editor of the *International Journal of Garden History*. He is presently Chairman of the ACT, Riverina and Monaro Branch of the Australian History Society.

Paul Fox from Melbourne is a landscape and garden historian whose book *Clearings* will be published shortly by Melbourne University Press. He is well-known as a speaker on Australian botanical history and has presented papers at several Annual Conferences of AGHS.

David Jones is Head of the Landscape Architecture program at the University of Adelaide. He undertakes conservation work as well as research into South Australian gardens and landscapes. He has been co-editor of *Landmark*, the internal publication of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects.

Megan Martin is the Librarian at the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, responsible for developing a specialist research collection devoted to the history of houses, their interiors and gardens, especially in relation to NSW. She has written and published local and heritage history, with a particular interest in biographical research. She is a Council member of the History Council of NSW.

Prue Slatyer is qualified in architecture and landscape architecture and has worked on a wide range of projects in Hong Kong, Sydney and Hobart. Currently she practises in Hobart and also lectures part-time in the School of Architecture at the University of Tasmania. One of her current interests is the creative interpretation of heritage sites.

Christopher Vernon, a Senior Lecturer in Landscape Architecture at the University of Western Australia, has an interest in the history and theory of designed landscapes. He recently edited a two-part Australian issue of the international journal *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* and also contributed to *City of Dreams: the collaboration of Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin*.



Prue Slatyer, Tasmanian member of the Editorial Advisory Panel
Photo: Courtesy Prue Slatyer

Christopher Vernon, Western Australian member of the Editorial Advisory Panel
Photo: Courtesy Christopher Vernon

National Management Committee Elections

At the 21st Annual General Meeting of the Australian Garden History Society, to be held in Melbourne at 8.30 a.m. on Saturday, 27th October this year, there will be five vacancies on the National Management Committee.

Virginia Berger, Nicky Downer, and Jan Gluskie, having served the maximum term of six years, must retire from the committee. Richard Heathcote and Katie Holmes, who have served one term of three years, need to stand down but may choose to renominate.

Nominations open on 5th August and close on 14th September. To obtain a nomination form, contact Jackie Courmadias on (03) 9650 5043 or Toll Free 1800 678 446.

The Story of Gum Leaf Painting

This is a delightful monograph by Dr Sophie Ducker, a much respected member of AGHS. With an introduction by Professor Pauline Ladiges, from the School of Botany at the University of Melbourne, the booklet traces the development of a vernacular art that has been revived recently and now includes work by well-known contemporary artists.

Thanks

Thanks to Beryl Black, Betsy Bryce, Di Ellerton, John and Beverley Joyce, Cate McKern, Sandi Pullman, Mike and Kaye Stokes, Monika Wells and Elizabeth Wright for packing the last issue of the journal.



Awards to AGHS members

Members of the Society were delighted to read the names **Gwen Elliot** and **Rodger Elliot** in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. In separate citations their appointment in the General Division of the Order of Australia (A.M.) reads "for service to the horticulture of native plants particularly through the Society for Growing Australian Plants". All associated with AGHS offer warm congratulations on this deserved recognition of Gwen's and Rodger's contributions to horticulture.

Change of Postal Address

Please note that the postal address of the Australian Garden History Society is now
Gate Lodge,
100 Birdwood Avenue,
MELBOURNE
Victoria 3004

This address is the location of the AGHS Office. The Society's telephone numbers and E-mail address remain the same.

The Queensland Branch also has a new postal address. It is: P.O. Box 5472
WEST END
Queensland 4101

Action

An Elm Register in the Southern Highlands

Charlotte Webb reports that following a talk by Jo Grigg, President of 'Friends of the Elms', the Southern Highlands Branch has established an Elm Register for their region.

Reprints of *Measuring Historic Gardens*

Max Bourke advises that additional copies of this very useful booklet by Victor Crittenden, are now being published to keep up with demand.

Heritage Issues in Canberra

The ACT, Monaro and Riverina Branch is closely monitoring, and participating where necessary, in the issue of sub-division into smaller blocks of the old inner city areas of Canberra. AGHS has an interest in seeing that those elements that give Canberra its distinctive character are preserved. As Max Bourke explains 'The inner suburbs of Canberra are probably the best historical representation of the garden city movement in Australia, and now that the original plantings have reached maturity their contemporary management becomes an issue.'

Mailbox

St Helena Island in Moreton Bay

Glenn Cooke wrote of the Queensland Branch visit to the site of the penal colony on this island. Most of the buildings were constructed of shell conglomerate, a crude sandstone, mined on the island. The government salvaged building material when the prison closed in 1933 and the remaining stone has suffered serious weathering since.

Apart from the mangroves, nothing of the original vegetation survives. Apparently the island was heavily forested and was home to a flying fox colony. Today, except for a few fountains, nothing remains of the famed Commandant's Gardens. White alyssum now grows everywhere and there is an exotic tree called 'Belle Ombre' in many locations. The oldest surviving olive grove in Queensland still produces crops but the National Park Service discourages harvesting.

Chinese Tiles

The story of the Chinese tiles at 'Heronswood', Dromana, Victoria, currently Clive Blazey's Headquarters for Diggers' Seeds was considered for Vol. 12, No.4, March/April 2001 of the journal,

but oral accounts gave conflicting stories. Now **Timothy Hubbard** reports finding a reference to the tiles in Edward La Trobe Bateman's correspondence. Timothy noted the particular letter, to Georgiana McCrae, as "very depressed and depressing". Here is the reference:

"The Hermitage, Bute Sunday February 2nd 1879

I wonder if anything has been done with a lot of Chinese tiles, which I once bought and sent to Cape Schanck, intending to use them. They were not used when I left. They are perforated and about fourteen inches square – the same kind as those I used in Dr Hearn's Railings at Dromana. There were two kinds the white and the green ones. It is the green ones that I want to use in my rustic cottage, and if they are still in existence and not used, I wish you would enquire about them and see whether they could not be sent to use here."

Timothy added that there is no further mention of them in subsequent letters, such as an acknowledgment that the tiles have arrived or been used.

Diary Dates

JULY

18 Wed.

Victoria, Melbourne **Working Bee - Bishops Court**. Helen Page (03) 9397 2260

26 Thurs.

South Australia, Adelaide Mediterranean Garden Society, 7.30 p.m. at Urrbrae House, Waite Campus, **Forum on Waterwise Gardening**. A panel of experts will cover the issues of Design, Plant Selection, Mulch and Irrigation.

28 Sat.

Queensland, Gold Coast **An Garden Afternoon on the Gold Coast** - a picnic at Rossiter Park, future site of the Gold Coast Botanic Gardens, followed by visits to the resort gardens of Marina Mirage and Palazzo Versace with commentary by Kate Green. Contact: Wendy Lees AH (07) 3289 0280

29 Sun.

Victoria, Castlemaine **Working Bee - Buda**. Helen Page (03) 9397 2260

29 Sun.

Western Australia, Araluen **AGM** at Aspro House, Araluen. Guest speaker: **Noelene Drage**. Contact: Linda Green (08) 9335 5906

31 Tues.

Sydney & Northern NSW, Sydney 6.00 for 6.45 p.m. at History House, 133 Macquarie Street **AGM** - Guest Speaker: **Howard Tanner 'Cazneau's 1920s to 1930s records of Sydney - Places, Houses and Garden'**. Bookings: Malcolm Wilson (02) 9810 7803

AUGUST

2 Thurs.

ACT, Monaro and Riverina, Canberra **AGM** - Guest Speaker: author and distinguished architect **Roger Pegrum 'Burley Griffin and Gardens'**. This talk will provide an introduction to Griffin's garden design intentions for Canberra, Griffith and Leeton. It will also generate interest in to Branch visit the Griffith for that city's garden festival later in the year. Further information: Max Bourke (02) 6247 4630

2 Thurs.

South Australia, Waterfall Gully, **AGM, Dinner and Speaker**. 7.00 p.m. at Waterfall Gully Restaurant, Waterfall Gully Road. Guest Speaker: **Jane Jose**, Chair of the South Australian Centenary of Federation Committee. Tickets \$35. Contact Miriam Hansman (08) 8333 0043

5 Sun.

Tasmania, Ross, 11 for 11.30 a.m. at 'Summercotes' **AGM** and Guest Speaker: **Howard Hansen 'The Apple Industry in Tasmania - Past and Present'**. Tickets for Morning Tea and Lunch \$16 Contact: Deidre Pearson (03) 6225 3084

6 Mon.

Victoria, Melbourne 7.30 p.m. at Mueller Hall, Birdwood Avenue, South Yarra **AGM** followed at 8 p.m. by **Winter Lecture 3 - Elizabeth Jacka 'Recollections and Reflections: Boddy's Eastern Park, Geelong'**. Cost - \$12 (members), \$15 (non-members). Further information: Helen Page (03) 9397 2260

14 Tues.

Queensland, Brisbane at Mount Coot-ha Botanic Gardens **Tuesday Evening Talk: Maurice Wilson - 'Student Projects at the Groveley TAFE'** Glenn Cooke (07) 3846 1050

25 Sat.

Victoria, Birregurra **Working Bee - Turkeith**. Helen Page (03) 9397 2260

26 Sun.

Victoria, Birregurra **Working Bee - Mooleric**. Helen Page (03) 9397 2260

SEPTEMBER

9 Sun.

Victoria, Melbourne **Significant Tree Tour**. Booking form now available from Helen Page (03) 9397 2260

27 Thurs.

South Australia, Adelaide Mediterranean Garden Society, 7.30 p.m. at Urrbrae House, Waite Campus. **AGM** including **Plant Swap and Book Display**

29 Sun.

Victoria, Bulla **Working Bee - Glenara**. Helen Page (03) 9397 2260

ADVANCE NOTICES 2001

13 - 14 October in MELBOURNE **Spring Plant Sale** The Growing Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne. Enter by E gate from Birdwood Avenue.

Sat 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.
Sun 10.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m.

25 October in MELBOURNE **Open Garden Day** National Gallery Women's Association - six private gardens in the Toorak area will be open to the public. Entry: \$20

Enquiries: (03) 9822 8995 or (03) 9822 1909.

26 - 28 October in MELBOURNE **22nd Annual National Conference**

'2001: a Federation Odyssey - Australian Gardens and Landscapes 1890 - 1910' For further information contact Jackie Courmadias at the AGHS Office: Ph: (03) 9650 5043 Fax: (03) 9650 8470 or E-mail: aghs@vicnet.net.au

28 November - 2 December in ADELAIDE

Australia ICOMOS National Conference '20th Century Heritage: Our Recent Cultural Legacy' Further information available from All Occasion Management Ph: (08) 8354 1465 or E-mail: occasion@camtech.net.au

9 -10 December, 2001 in ALBANY, Western Australia

'Investigator 200 Symposium' celebrates the bicentenary of the voyage of **Matthew Flinders** and the botanical work of **Robert Brown, Ferdinand Bauer, Peter Good**, and the landscape art of **William Westall**. Organised jointly by the Australian Systematic Botany Society, the Western Australian Herbarium, CALM and the Wildflower Society of Western Australia. For more details visit: www.florabase.calm.wa.gov.au/events/investigator200/

ADVANCE NOTICES 2002

20 May - 8 June **Tour of England, Wales and Scotland with the English Garden History Society.**

4-6 October in Hobart **AGHS - 23rd Annual National Conference**