

GARDEN NOTES

Ridgefield

Welcome to Ridgefield and welcome back to those who have visited us before. The garden was designed by Robert Boyle in 1997 and covers a 3 acre site. There have been significant changes since then. We are so grateful that Rob suggested we enlarge our dam so that it had a two-year capacity, otherwise we would have lost the garden in the drought years!

The garden was developed in several phases. The first was completed in early 1999 and this included the formal garden - originally called 'box hedges and roses'. This phase also included the pergolas, the surrounding lawns and the gardens to the west and east of these lawns. The orchard was also planted at this time.

The next phase consisted of planting all the gardens and lawns to the north of the driveway in late 2001 after the house was built, most of which surround the house. In 2002 we planted the garden and lawns surrounding the pavilion. Then in 2008 we redesigned, with help from Jack Marshall, the area south of the formal garden eliminating lawns and planting a birch walk to lead to the crab apple lawn.

The object of the garden design was to preserve the views as much as possible, yet provide sufficient wind breaks to afford some protection to the garden. The site is very windy, being fully exposed to both north and south winds. In addition to the winds, the eucalypts provide a challenge as they take so much moisture from the surrounding areas. This coupled with many years of less than normal rainfall has constrained plant growth and necessitated replanting. To us the most important qualities of a plant are toughness, beauty and an ability to flower for long periods of time.

The soil is gunshot clay which holds moisture well, ideal for our roses. The idiosyncrasies of the site and climate have been a challenge. The rabbits, bush rats and the frosts have conspired against us. Even when the rains finally came, they killed off many drought resistant plants. You can't win! The roses, of which we have about 450, just sulked in the wet years but come those merciless summer days just smile - sunburnt but happy.

Salvias have been the saviours for our garden, tough but beautiful. Penstemons have played an important role too. The garden is primarily a summer garden as we used to open for the original Open Garden Scheme in late, late summer.

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Our favourite summer flower is the good old-fashioned dahlia, as she has saved us on many occasions, a reliable and beautiful gem. Our hebes, to a large extent, have been replaced by escallonias. What a lovely green toughie.

The recent years have been a year of renewal as some of our much-loved plants have succumbed to old age. Our westringia balls, which gave the garden great structure, have been replaced by new ones. The wattles are coming to the end of their time, but it is a hard decision to remove a plant. They are like old friends.

It was a very sad day when we had to remove the wisteria growing over the pergola at the end of the house. Its trunk had become so large and ugly and there was nothing that we could do to improve it. Our flirtation with succulents was not happy so some have been eliminated. Geraniums, or should we say pelargoniums, have to be treated almost as annuals. They are considered a delicacy by the parrots which leave them looking dreadful.

We hope you enjoy our garden as much as we do, although we confess never to sit and relax as there is always some weed defying the order. Please ask as many questions as you like and we always appreciate advice and suggestions.

Thank you for coming.

These notes can be downloaded from the Open Gardens Victoria website:
www.opengardensvictoria.org.au

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Ridgefield Map

