

GARDEN NOTES

Heartland

Welcome to my home garden. In opening the gates and sharing it with you, I hope you take home some of my love for these plants and the tender practice of gardening. It is called 'Heartland' as an extension of my love for it specifically and the loving connections to Australian landscapes, home and a rural family history cultivated by generations of plants women. It is an imperfectly personal garden, which is a garden 'in progress' at this point in time. As a plant professional, I am very much testing and trialling different ideas, some with more success than others. There is fun and play in this dynamic; it is not a static garden. Also, it took a recent beating from a massive storm on the peninsula, but that is how it rolls. I hope one day you might come back and see the chart of time from this point into the future as plants grow, and I too grow in my ideas and practice. This garden is where I spend so much time pondering and pottering. It is my exploration of beauty in an Australian context.

In sharing it through Open Gardens Victoria, I hope it inspires what can be achievable with the use of 'maximum' plants in a couple of years on a suburban block for anyone. On moving into our first 'owned' garden about three and a half years ago, all the hard structures (paving, fences and even the pizza oven) were in place, with a front yard of lawn, hedges and the Magnolias and a backyard of concrete and lawn. So close to a 'blank slate' waiting for hands like mine to grow in it. This year it is taking an abundant shape.

Creating a plant-filled garden is a great passion, but also it has been a frugal decision with so many grown from seed, division and cuttings. I have a broad encompassing love of all different kinds of plants; as you will see from Australian wildflowers through to woodland specimens, my favourite 'granny plants' to cut flowers. The plants I grow also seem to mark and catalogue beautiful relationships in the plant community with the plants swapped and gifted from others' gardens and plant missions far and wide with friends. I will continue to tweak and develop it over time, getting the succession of flowers and foliage just right through all the glorious Australian seasons.

Cultivating this garden has created a sense of place with hands in the soil and plants nurtured. May it continue to grow and thrive, always on the side of being just a bit wild.

The Rain-fed Verge

After packing the front and back yards with plants, it was just too tempting to not expand to the nature strip. Also, to find a position to experiment with Australian wildflowers with perennials originating from Mediterranean climates and elsewhere in different compliments. I finished the planting only last month, so it will continue to fill. The selection after this first year will be tested by only being a 'rain fed' garden. As a uni student, I was fortunate to work under native expert Marilyn Sprague at Goldfields Revegetation. This early experience and a career in outdoor education have fuelled a love of our wildflowers, grasses and curiosity about different applications. It is also a tribute to my neighbours and the local community walking past and chatting to me about the garden.

Key Plants: *Wahlenbergia stricta*, *Austrostipa mollis*, *Bulbine bulbosa*, *Ptilotis nobilis*, *Sedum sieboldii*, *Erigeron 'Quakeress'*, *Rhodanthemum gayanum*, *Panicum 'Heavy Metal'*, *Pycnosorus globosus*, *Dianthus cruentus*, *Salvia 'Marine Blue'*, *Salvia 'Blue Note'*.

GARDEN NOTES

The Front Yard

The front yard is very much an experimental garden. Herbaceous perennials are such an inspiring group of plants. The growth rate is such an exponential surge from Spring to Summer. It is so endearing how they seem to expand daily. Still, in the Southern Hemisphere I want a 'four seasons' garden with something happening all year round and a smattering of flowers like subtle fireworks rather than the 'bloom and bust' of a typical perennial border. There are layers of plants - small shrubs, perennials, annuals and bulbs and shade lovers you can't now see which are exposed during the winter months. I am now at a point of 'editing' the garden rather than cultivating it with a great collection of annual self-seeders, which now are 'doing their thing' complimenting the other plant forms. The colour palette expresses times in our Australian landscapes - silver, yellow, lime green, brown, burgundy, purple, sky blue, mauve.

Key Plants: *Macleaya cordata*, *Rudbeckia lacinantata*, *Cardoon*, *Sedum 'Matrona'*, *Salvia 'Cardonna'*, *Pelargonium 'Choc Mint'*, *Helleborus argutifolius*, *Rudbeckia maxima*, *Iris siberica*, *Salvia azurea*, *Achillea 'Mondpagode'*, *Magnolia grandiflora*, *Bupleurum griffithii*, *Purple Orach*, *Carex Testacea*, *Ajuga reptans*, *Euphorbia wulfenii*, *Eryngium 'Silver Salentino'*, *Anthemanthele lessoniana*, *Cotinus 'Grace'*, *Echinops 'Star Frost'*, *Salvia discolor*, *Haloragis erecta*, *Crococsmia 'Solfatare'*, *Sunflower 'Prado Red'*, *Eucalyptus pressing*, *Red Shiso*, *Viola odorata*.

Courtyard

Also, a newly planted section of the garden, edibles are ornamental with young Persimmons, Olives and Grapevines. As a typical keen plant lover, the vines happened before a bit of pergola could. Gaps at the top of the brick wall were the perfect place to squeeze a succulent like *Crassula*. The plants are resilient to getting baked through summer. Next, an outdoor bath was an ideal solution rather than a bathroom renovation to add a bath. This potting shed is a gem of a place. The paint and sweet pea wallpaper lavished on in through the fifth and sixth Melbourne lockdown - a perfect sanctuary for nights without daylight savings for propagation and seed saving.

Key Plants: *Agave americana 'Blue Jeans'*, *Ficus pumila*, *Kniphofia 'Lime Glow'*, *Ligularia reniformis*, *Persimmon 'Fuyu'*, *Salvia apiana*, *Gladiolus cardinalis*, *Grape 'Concord'*.

The Backyard

You will find a series of garden pockets in the backyard - cut flowers, perennial vegetables, herbs, a veggie patch and a chook yard with fruit trees are all cultivated in the space. I love flowers so much, and having many cut flowers to enjoy is a priority that is unapologetically taking over the veggie patch. Big grow bags are perfect temporary containers for annual cut flowers on our back driveway. A small perennial border of blues, magenta and purple heads to the shed.

GARDEN NOTES

Key Plants: *Salvia 'Rubin'*, *Delphinium 'Blue Sensation'*, *Rose 'Munstead Wood'*, *Salvia 'African Sky'*, *Echinacea pallida*, *Aunt Willow's Canna*, *Rose 'Nancy Hayward'*, *Echinops 'Veitch's Blue'*, *Salvia 'Cardonna'*, *Julie's Bearded Iris*, *Aquilegia 'Black Barlow'*, *Cercis canadensis 'Forest Pansy'*.

Secret Green Wall

It seems such a cliché to admit this, but as a child, 'The Secret Garden' really was my favourite book. Did it further fuel a life with plants? This small courtyard tucked off our bedroom creates a secret pocket in the garden and to wake up and be greeted by green is a perfect luxury. It has created an opportunity to experiment with a range of plants in a green wall - a work in progress.

The Future

The only big plan I hold for the garden (apart from the pergola and perhaps a farm to extend the gardening - ha!) is to build a slim lean-to greenhouse on the side of the potting shed to move my heat mats and propagation trays out of the spare bedroom. As a gardener, I am sure you'll agree, who doesn't need a greenhouse of one's own? The proceeds from the open garden and plant sale are all going to fund it. Thank you so much for sharing my home garden, and all the best heartfelt wishes in your gardening.

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