

COLIBAN SPRINGS

If you are a bird-lover, you'll enjoy this garden. Over 80 species have visited and at the moment we have water birds around the dam that we have never seen before – rails and crakes, for example!

This is a dry garden. We have very hot dry summers and frosty winters. The five acre garden sits in the middle of a 209 acre property populated by sheep. It was a bare paddock to start with, although there were a few enormous river red gums dotted around. The garden is on a hill overlooking the dam, so the slopes have presented their own challenges. We have used rocks and tree branches for edges and terracing. We built the house in 2005 and moved in in 2006 when we planted the garden with birds and dryness in mind. We started off by planting mostly natives and as the years went by, we introduced non-natives that could stand the hot arid summers. It was very much trial and error. A majority of the plants have been grown from cuttings or seeds of plants that have been seen to thrive in this difficult environment.

We had help with the design of the garden immediately around the house in the early days from Phil Stray (Crafted Landscapes) and Kate Herd. After that, the landscape and rocks seemed to dictate how the garden would grow and spread out.

Unlike formal gardens, we have no straight lines, but gravel paths that meander from one room to another where there is usually a place to sit and watch, or a little sculpture to contemplate. There is a definite “dry creek bed” look about it.

In the past we have always been open in the autumn so previous visitors will now see a very different garden in the spring. Children will enjoy looking at the chickens, the fishpond, two play areas and the pet rescued sheep.

The recent rainy years have caused a huge amount of growth, and it has been hard work keeping the trees and bushes (and weeds) under control, but we have all enjoyed the greenery over summer. The heavy rains have also caused havoc on the pathways so that we have had to think of new ways to engineer drainage.

We hope visitors will enjoy the Xanthorrhoea garden which sits amongst the “casuarina forest”. These grass trees were planted from seeds collected in 2006. One of our proudest achievements! There is a kitchen garden, a wedding terrace, a native grass circle garden, two circular lawns, a lake-viewing area, a vine-shaded entertainment area, and a “Dingly Dell” planted amongst great granite boulders.

We are looking forward to your visit.

Rod Gibson and Kathy Hall

GARDEN NOTES

Coliban Springs is located on the lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung People. Open Gardens Victoria wishes to acknowledge the Traditional custodians of this land and we pay respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

These notes can be downloaded from the Open Gardens Victoria website:

www.opengardensvictoria.org.au

