

BUTTENSRAW FARM

Welcome to Buttenshaw Farm, we are a small-scale wholesale micro seed farm where our passion is growing and seed saving unusual varieties to make them available for home gardeners.

We moved here eight years ago after our veggie garden dreams outgrew our last property. After five years of searching for the right block, Nat and Mark fell in love with two quaint old rotten timber curved bridges over the small creek line and decided that this was 'the one'. You will notice these bridges no longer remain, and have been replaced with a large mud-stone feature bridge. The only part of the original garden that remains are the five palm trees off the back decking, which are home to a small family of sugar gliders and usually, a couple of bats over the summer months.

Before we had even moved in, Nat had purchased a second-hand gazebo, which was one of the first things we erected on the property (in the back corner over the creek). Next was the first round of raised veggie beds. Whilst our garden design centres around permaculture principles, we had no way of improving the soil here enough to be able to grow food directly in the ground. The backyard was 'levelled' by the previous owner using old building debris; mostly bricks and broken roofing tiles, which in most places is 50-80cm thick. For this reason, we decided above ground growing was the only way forward and with extensive termite activity in the area, we went for the relatively indestructible metal raised beds.

We started installing the veggie patches in the small area off the house. We then planted a row of columnar apples along the top of the creek line. Next was a large dwarf heirloom apple tree order from Woodbridge Fruit Trees in Tasmania which now line both sides of the driveway. These varieties have been selected so they ripen at varying times with the earliest being ripe in January (White Transparent and Akane) and the latest ready for picking in July (Granny Smith and Democrat Black). The varieties which flower and ripen at the same time are planted opposite each other to assist with cross pollination. The earliest ripening varieties are at the top of the driveway and they run through to the latest maturing varieties closest to the house.

The informal hedge along the front boundary fence are Manzanillo olives. In the front garden is a small citrus orchard which has been added to over the years so the trees in this patch range from eight years old through to some newly planted varieties this year. They include lemon, mandarin, orange, lime, chinotto, tangelo, blood orange, grapefruit and limequat. This is a dense planting which is pruned to keep the trees a compact, manageable size.

GARDEN NOTES

In this area there are also a few veggie crate beds allowing us to grow some sun-loving vegetables in the front garden. This year these crates have plantings of Oaxacan Green Corn, Cekirdegi Oyali Watermelon and Kajari Melons. Eventually these crates will deteriorate, by which stage the smaller citrus trees will have grown and this area will become just the citrus orchard.

There are large plantings of cottage style gardens lining the driveway and the front of the house to encourage pollinators and beneficial insects.

As you wander down to the back garden you will pass a large frame of kiwiberry, followed by hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, Jerusalem artichokes and avocado trees. In the area closest to the house is our original greenhouse and, this year, a small plantation of striped japonica corn, some yellow eye beans, Aji white fantasy chillies, various varieties of basil and a couple of tomatoes.

The fence line facing the grass has two young espalier apricot trees and a bunch of flowers for pollinators. In the garden beds under the palm trees is a productive cool climate banana palm, a range of Canna lilies, Brugmasia, ornamental ginger, monstera, cardamom and two water lily ponds.

As you wander further down the garden you will reach the larger veggie patch area which is mostly planted this year with Peruvian Morado Maiz Corn, Kamo Kamo squash and an entire bed of Chinese Pink Celery. The bottom long terraced bed is planted with currants (red, black & white), the next fenced terrace contains four different types of raspberries. The back greenhouse is filled with Buena Mulata Chillies which love the heat and humidity of this greenhouse year round.

There are arbours in this section which feature Rocoto Chilli trees and the top terrace is lined with a Chilean Guava (*Ugni Molinae*) hedge. The chickens live in this back corner of our garden surrounded by three native finger limes, a giant *Gunnera Manicata* (which loves the damp) and an Elderflower tree. Our chickens are the centre of our garden system, eating weeds, producing manure (and eggs) and acting as perimeter patrol for slugs, snails and weeds along their run which extends along the back fence line.

As you make your way around the fire pit, you will see a Belgian fence espalier of plum trees. Growing over the arbour entrance to the fire pit is a Chocolate Vine (*Akebia quinata*) and within the fire pit are a couple of rare citrus; Lemon Pinky and Variegated Calamondin.

Making your way back up through the herb-lined boardwalk you will notice beans, a groundcover of pineberries, some blueberry bushes, a couple of small pear trees, some more apples, an inground 'subpod' worm composting system and a few more tomato varieties.

GARDEN NOTES

At the top of this area is a small edible Australian 'Bush Tucker' garden which features a fence of Atherton raspberries and a small rustic-themed garden filled with saltbush, midyim berry, cinnamon myrtle, lemon myrtle, strawberry gum, native oregano, native mint, native basil and warrigal greens.

We run a 'spray free' garden that supports the diversity and microclimate of our area, so in late summer there will be clouds of whitefly, lots of ladybugs, butterflies, bees, birds, frogs and if you're lucky you might even spot our local echidna.

Thanks for visiting our garden!!

Buttenshaw Farm is located on the lands of the Wurundjeri 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

