

GARDEN NOTES

TAMBREET

Tambreet, situated on a bend of the Traralgon Creek, is a five acre triangular shaped garden named after the platypus found there when the garden was started in 2001. It is bordered on the east side by the creek, the west side by Taylors Road and the south side by a steep forested slope, a fenced off part of the block.

The property initially was grassed with extensive blackberries and wattle. There was a small muddy reed-filled hollow on the north side of the block. The creek at that time was lined with basket willows and had deep pools which provided a haven for platypus, trout and Gippsland freshwater crayfish. The willows were later removed by a government willow eradication program.

The garden design was formulated in 2002 and planting was well underway when the Black Saturday bushfire demolished the three border gardens of the triangular shaped property, as well as many internal areas. What then happened was impressive. Whilst commencing replanting of the periphery of the gardens, we noted that the majority of oaks, maples and birches were re-shooting from the ground or from lower burnt trunks. My then wife wrote a book, "Around the Bend", on the basis of that unexpected and extensive recovery. The marks of the fire can be seen in multiple trunks or distorted, fire-scarred trunks still healing.

The garden has been designed around two themes. The first is autumn, which will be on display and includes numerous oaks, maples, ginkgoes, hazels, birches, smoke bushes and dawn redwoods. The second theme is primitive trees. These generally have a fibrous root system (like ferns), e.g. ginkgoes, redwood, wollemi, sequoia sempervirens, sequoiadendron, bunya pine, monkey puzzle, kauri and podocarpus. There are also scattered Australian red cedar and paulownia, particularly in steep areas forested after I tired of whipper-snipping precarious slopes. Additional features include two large clumps of black bamboo contained by lawns and road. This has been used throughout the property for pathways, vegetable gardens, fencing and guard rails for steps. There are also four other types of clumping bamboo in various parts of the garden, including giant bamboo.

The western border (Taylors Road) fence line is crowded with oaks, maples and other assorted trees (ie. Japanese cypress, bunya, birch). This is expanded out into several forested areas on the north and south ends of Taylors Road.

Outstanding trees throughout the garden include a tri-colour beech, copper beech, kapok, dove tree, variegated elm, tortuous hazel and weeping Himalayan cypress.

The garden is divided into a number of areas, "rooms", separated visually by trees with mid storey and ground cover. Whilst the extensive lawns required maintenance regularly, the garden beds have competed successfully with weeds and are now low maintenance, except the odd areas where kikuyu keeps me busy controlling it.

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There is a lake with a tortoise and fish population. The reflective qualities of the location allow for excellent autumn photography. Surrounding, or in the lake, are purple and yellow Japanese water iris, giant rhubarb and blue taro, as well as water lilies. Two swamp cypress set this off particularly in autumn, and with new growth in spring. There is also a frog pond in the centre of the property, which is home to a large number of very noisy frogs.

On the south side there are many fruit trees and olive trees (having survived the fires or replanted), a citrus row with many different citrus, vegetable gardens and extensive dry-stone walling setting off the orchard.

A glass house is attached to the northern end of the house. This is generally used as an aid in propagation but also for an orchid collection and as respite for indoor plants, outside of weather. Many of the plants you see in the garden have, in fact, been propagated here.

There is a collection of grafted Japanese maples in the circular garden (driveway) and added sporadically throughout the lawns.

Tambreet is located on the lands of the Gunaikurnai people. Open Gardens Victoria wish to acknowledge the Traditional custodians 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**