

GARDEN NOTES

Eungella

The Eungella Garden is a young garden in development. Flanked by regrowth Mountain Ash on two sides, the National Rhododendron Garden across the road, the garden sits just below the ridgeline sheltering it from the worst of the winter winds.

Eungella, “place in the clouds”, is the home of Professor Jan Coles and Dr Andrew Watkins. Both greenies at heart, the garden development is being guided by the need for it to be sustainable while providing a home for rare and endangered plants as well as the animals who share our garden with us: local native birds including owls and lyrebirds, frogs, native bees, butterflies and wombats. We have made the decision to replant with rare and endangered cool climate and subalpine plants as the garden develops into the future as the Banksia and Eremophila are struggling in the cold and wet winters.

The garden has different areas to explore. The first of these is the largely native garden in front of the house (1). This part of the garden features two types of Xanthorrhoea (grass trees), multiple Banksia spinulosa, Hakeas, Giant Spear Lilies and many other Australian plants (with a few ring ins from South Africa and Japan). The path through the garden starts on your way to the front door, a small stream meanders and gurgles beside the path and leads you out into the main garden. Many of the larger plants in this area are now over 12 years old and planted by the original Eungella gardeners. As you cross the stream, take time to stop at the pond. On a still day the pond reflects the beauty of its surroundings. At night, the frogs (brown tree frogs, eastern froglets, whistling tree frogs, striped marsh frogs and pobblebonk frogs (depending on the season) serenade us from here and the dam. As you cross the second bridge, you come to the “new” garden (now 5 years old) with its snow gum walk, designed by Phillip Johnson and his landscape team. Here you walk through 21 snow gums, these amazing trees are regularly pruned to stop them bolting for the sky. As you descend the path, your eye is drawn to the backdrop of the magnificent Mountain Ash. Just before the third bridge, the path turns right so you can walk the garden surrounding the dam. This garden was planted three years ago, the plants went in the day after the “Big Storm” hit the Yarra Ranges. Make sure you look across the dam, as it’s a great spot to view the rest of the garden.

The Fire pit area and the newest garden are next. Since the last Open Garden this area has been developed and is now home to a number of the rare and endangered plants.

The lower orchard (2) is the next area to explore. There are more than seventy varieties of heritage apples, pears, quinces, peaches and plums grown over the two orchards. In both orchards (2,5) are labelled with copper tags, though there is still some confusion about in row 4 of the lower orchard. Broadly speaking, row 1 of the lower orchard is cherries, rows 2-6 are heritage apples, row 7 is quinces, rows 8-9 struggle in the shade of the Mountain Ash.

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Around the cage are blueberries, red currants, and native pepper bush. The heritage apple trees are a joy to see in flower and it is even better to eat the wonderful and unique fruit in Autumn.

Continue up the hill and in front of the garage, take the path on the right which leads you into the Wisteria and Tea Rambler walk and the memory garden (4). Hedged by pink and red waratahs, the garden is a mix of native and exotic plants. The top corner holds a small collection of heritage roses, many of which were part of the cottage garden at our previous home and are mementos of our gardening past. Note the fire shelter is here, a reminder of the ever-present danger of Australian bushfires.

Head back down the hill to the grassed area (6) with its specimen trees. A tulip tree, maples, Manchurian pear and silver birch are here. This area is sparsely planted and forms the first fire break to protect the house from bushfire. As you look towards the house you will see the garden mulch changes from bush mulch to rocky mulch, another fire protection strategy. The ponds and dam are deliberately situated on the north and north west to provide a further buffer from fire which normally comes from these directions. All path surfaces are non-flammable material as are the verandahs and many of the house materials.

Finally, for the intrepid explorers, head through the gates, making sure you shut them behind you, and explore the wild garden at the bottom of the block (7). Here old camellias, chestnuts and walnuts are left to do their thing before the regrowth forest. Wombats and wallabies are frequently seen here as are boobook and powerful owls. The dam is fenced close to the house but remains open for wildlife to access in the summer. Unfortunately there has been considerable damage to acres of regrowth forest during the big storm, with five Mountain Ash coming down across the block. Feral deer continue to destroy the native regrowth and have turned a beautiful natural Yarra Ranges creek into a mud wallow, destroying many of the small ferns.

The water used in this garden is harvested from the roof of the house, the driveway and as run off ground water. It is collected in the bottom dam and pumped to provide water for the gardens, top orchard, vegetable patch and the ponds and streams of the front garden.

We hope you have a wonderful time visiting our garden and will return as it continues to 'grow up'.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to the previous owners, Steve and Heidi, for their vision for this garden and for the infrastructure they put in place which helps us sustain it. We also would like to thank Phillip Johnson Landscapes for their assistance with the design of the newer gardens. Advice from Lindy Harris and Russell Larke re current and future rare and endangered plantings has been invaluable.

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Finally, a big thank you to Andrew for his labour of love: all those hours of building seats, lifting, digging, and moving mulch! Luke James for his help most Fridays. My family, who come to help with and share the hard work.



Map Legend

1. Main Garden
2. Lower Orchard
3. Vegetable patch
4. Wisteria Walk and Memory Garden
5. Top Orchard
6. Front Fire Break/Lawn
7. Wilder Area

Eungella 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

