

NGAMUDJI

Ngamudji is a suburban native garden. The plants have been chosen for their form and colour, for year round enjoyment and to showcase our Australian flora. Our hope is to give you an idea of what can be achieved in the garden with Australian plants, and to show they have the potential to be used in many situations instead of exotic/introduced plants. Native plants have the added benefits of being less water dependent (in general) than many introduced plants, and being great wildlife attractors/habitat.

The block runs north to south between Arundel Crescent at the top and Delta Street behind, with the rear garden merging with the Delta St road reserve. The generously sized, sloping garden and leafy environs was one of the first things that attracted us.

We moved here in 2001, just before the birth of our first child. In 2018 we demolished our original home, which was literally falling down around us and rebuilt, moving back in March 2020. The new house was designed with many sustainable features and to integrate with the garden. Large north facing windows, and a northeast located alfresco area, allow us to experience the garden from the living areas.

The rebuild meant most of the old garden was removed, but we managed to keep a central copse of *Callistemon* (bottlebrush), a small eucalypt and undergrowth shrubs. The only other original section is at the bottom of the garden along Delta St.

The new garden was designed and built by [Phillip Johnson](#), who specialises in naturalistic Australian landscapes with water features. He used the contours of the block to construct the winding paths, mounded garden beds and creek which flows into the pond and when overflowing, along a usually dry creek bed before disappearing into a hidden pit, giving the impression of continuing under the house.

Phillip usually plants out his gardens for clients, but in this case, David was “given” free rein and has chosen and planted the entire garden. David had been interested in gardening with Australian plants since we rented a small townhouse in Sydney in the early 1990s. His interest in Australian plants in general had been developed as a child through his father, Paddy, a keen environmentalist and Australian plant enthusiast. Plants have been chosen to draw the eye, give year round colour, to integrate with the creek and pond and to give shelter and habitat to wildlife.

There is a mixture of soil types throughout the garden. On the northern and western boundaries there are heavier soils with some clay, particularly close to Delta St. Sandier and better-drained soils are found on the eastern side of the garden. A dripper system to conserve water fed by roof gathered rainwater was installed in 2024. Most areas of the garden have their own separate network and so selective watering is possible.

Touring the garden

Signposting guides visitors in a clockwise tour of the garden. The front fence is constructed of recycled railway sleepers and whilst giving privacy, allows light into the beds behind. Colourful sun loving shrubs including *Conostylis*, *Scaevola*, *Pimelea*, and *Verticordias* welcome you along the western boundary. In front of you is the more mature copse preserved from the old garden. A change in topography with rain run-off from the path has led to huge growth and flowering. The path leads past the main water tank and propagation shade house, where many of the garden's plants were grown. After crossing a small bridge, meandering steps along the side of the creek take you past steep banks, the excellent drainage of which allows "difficult to grow plants" to grow, such as *Conospermum* (smokebush), WA banksias and heathland shrubs. On the far side of the creek, dense plantings of *Grevillea*, *Hakea*, *Acacia*, peas and *Epacris*, give food and shelter to birds and insects, as well as limiting views of the boundary fence. The creek flows over the waterfall and into the pond, where indigenous Southern pygmy perch can be seen if you are patient. In late spring, Eastern Banjo frogs call, and on warm days dragonflies, damselflies and other insects swoop and play over the water. Along the edges, strappy and water loving shrubs have been planted. The path continues to the rear of the property where the garden merges with the neighbours' and flows into the road reserve. A large ancient sugar gum (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*) dominates this area.

Continuing on to the southwestern side a large mound is planted with *Hakea*, *Kunzea*, *Eremophila*, *Westringia*, *Hibbertia* and ground covers that help block the house's utilities. You will then pass up the side of the house where planter boxes contain herbs and vegetables and along the fence, trellised espaliered citrus and a bay tree supply edible fare. Saltbush enjoys the western heat along with some other bush foods here. You will pass beneath a weeping *Eucalyptus caesia* "silver princess" before returning to the top of the garden.

Rooftop garden

One of the unique features of *Ngamudji* is its rooftop garden, situated above the garage and accessible from within the house. The 30 square meter space is home to around 100 species of sun-loving, low-growing shrubs and ground covers. The soil, ranging from 30 to 60 cm in depth, is a special mix of scoria, potting mix, and trace elements topped with a sand and rock mulch.

The planting medium's exceptional drainage has created an ideal environment for some rare and unusual plants - species that often struggle to thrive in Melbourne gardens. Most of the plants are native to southern Australia and are primarily insect-pollinated, attracting a variety of native bees, butterflies, and hoverflies.

The elevated position allows you to feel close to the canopies of nearby trees with views into South Surrey Park. The rooftop garden will be open periodically over the weekend.

Additional Information

You may be wondering about the name *Ngamudji* that we have given the garden. It is a word from the Woiwurrung language spoken by the Wurundjeri people, who are the original custodians of lands of the Yarra River (Birrarung) Valley. It means white man, and also bright colours at sunset. We thought it was appropriate to describe our colourful garden.

After your visit, why not take a walk up Delta Street to visit another wonderful mainly native garden, *Creekside*. And then wander through South Surrey Park (access via Delta St or Essex Rd). The park, which borders Back Creek, has been revegetated with indigenous grasses, shrubs and trees by the [Friends of South Surrey Park](#). There are many great spots for a picnic and across the creek and to the left, there is a playground with picnic tables.

Thank you for visiting our garden! David, Sue, Alex and Gen Lightfoot

Ngamudji 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

