

## SERPENTINE GARDEN

Serpentine is a whimsical suburban garden filled with texture, layers, colour and quirky features created from all kinds of recycled and repurposed objects. The central lawn has hosted backyard cricket, a house concert and a wedding, but wander into the secluded pathways and you will find all sorts of garden treasures. It is a large block at almost half an acre in size.

The name Serpentine is a play on the use of curved edges and paths and my name which is Tine (but pronounced Tina).

When we purchased the property in 1993 the garden was an almost blank slate. There were still cow paddocks surrounding our street, and we could see the mountains from our kitchen window. Now the local area is completely urbanised and sadly the mountains are hidden behind houses.

Over the years we have developed the garden (and our gardening knowledge) in fits and spurts as time, money and inspiration have allowed. There was never any overall plan, except that we needed to have shade for the west facing windows, less grass to mow and a nice view from each window of the house. We are pleased with the result, though it is still constantly changing along with our tastes and interests. I am a member of numerous garden clubs and groups which has been a great source of knowledge, inspiration, and plants.

Initial garden plantings were largely cuttings, gifts, tube stock and "rescued" plants. Memories of many people, places and other gardens are triggered as I go about my gardening tasks.

I still love to propagate things, but it is no longer from necessity, and I now regularly succumb to the guilty pleasure of buying a plant (or two or three).

I have made views from each of the windows so the garden can be enjoyed from inside as well as out. We also have a beautiful, enclosed deck that is a transition area between the house and garden - It is a great place to sit in all weather and suits many plants that would not survive the extremes of the open garden.

As the garden was a blank slate when we started, I can claim full credit for all the "learning" mistakes made along the way, as well as any serendipitous successes. There have been many plant deaths on the learning journey, but my knowledge of what will cope with our garden conditions and the level of care I provide has increased considerably.

I am the gardener and the collector and arranger of assorted recycled items, but Wayne is the enabler - he has done the paved garden edging (much of which has been moved several times when I have wanted a change of garden layout) and he provides the expertise to make my junk dreams come true. I'll come home with a broken candelabra and an idea; Wayne will turn that into the planter stand I imagined. I'll find a mirror on the hard rubbish; Wayne will work out how to attach it to the fence for me. When I suggested the garden have a name, he designed and made my beautiful signs. He prefers a neat garden so has developed his welding skills to make me numerous "plant props" to hold the exuberance of my plantings away from the paths.

NOTE: There will be "Plant Props" for sale at the open garden.

## GARDEN NOTES

Many of the garden beds are edged with now unfashionable volcanic honeycomb rocks which have been acquired for free when others throw them out. Having the rocks allows me to build up the height of the beds with compost, leaves, grass clippings, coffee grounds, animal manure - whatever I can lay my hands on. We are in a low-lying area and have heavy clay soil, so many plants do much better when the soil level is raised a bit. As we are low lying, we also get frosts, although this is less of a problem now that there is an overhead canopy to make pockets of protection.

Most paths are made of sawdust which is topped up every few years. The old composted down sawdust can be flung into the garden beds to add some organic matter.

My main love is anything flowery, but fruit, herbs and indigenous plants have all found a place. Succulents also have a special place in my affection. Bromeliads seem to also be increasing.

There are different planting themes in different areas. The sunny front garden has an area of natives as well as many succulents. The windows facing west are protected by a pergola draped in wisteria and bougainvillea. I have lots of salvias and cottage type plants in the back along with a row of white standard roses. I no longer grow veggies, but do have several fruit trees and lots of herbs.

My recycled garden treasures are also themed - often by colour. The black things together, the blue things together, the rusty things together and so on. This gives some cohesion to different areas. Mirrors, rusty things and birdcages all feature strongly in my treasure troves. The plants and found objects are staged at different heights to draw the eye around the garden.

I favour unfussy plants. Things that do well tend to get divided and spread into new areas of the garden as I develop them. I will readily move plants that are sulking (the lemon tree was moved three times before I found a spot it liked), or I will move them just because I think they would look better somewhere else. When something dies I see it as an opportunity to find and plant something new. When I find new "junk" it often starts a domino effect of changes as I try to find a place to incorporate it.

Wildlife has appreciated the development of our garden. It seemed that sparrows and flies were all we had when we arrived. We now host ringtail possums, bats, lizards, a wide variety of birds and a thriving insect community. Sadly, I have no concrete evidence that frogs have found our pond or other water sources.

It is a very personal garden, and ever changing - we hope you enjoy exploring it and go home with an idea or two.

*Tine & Wayne Grimston*

***Serpentine Garden 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:  
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