

TAHREE

Brian and Christine retired to Tahree which is a 5 acre property in Dromana in the Winter of 2018.

A Little of the History

Whilst the property has many wonderful qualities that drew them to it, such as the circular driveway, a big dam, stockyards, a private reserve on one side, a wetland area at the far boundary, as well as many mature trees and a new home, there were also challenges such as 2 large chicken sheds full of asbestos, 4 silos, and many more obstacles needing to be removed.

For the first 8 months under Brian's direction when pipes were removed, trees felled, asbestos to clear and sheds dealt with, they slowly created a blank canvas on which Brian and Chris could begin planning future development.

As there was a healthy population of larger birds, one of Chris's biggest desires was to create lots of native and indigenous gardens to encourage the return of the small bird population.

In May 2019 they removed all the grass that covered the creek area and cleaned out around the dam. That same year Chris received her first grant from Melbourne Water which allowed her to buy plants to put along the newly cleaned up creek. She organized a working bee and 600 indigenous plants were planted along the creek line and around the dam.

Sadly, one week later, Dromana was hit with a storm which came down the creek and filled the dam in one day, washing away nearly every plant that had been lovingly placed along the creek line. This was the first of a number of disasters concerning the creek area.

On the north side of the house, they removed a huge concrete slab from under the Spotted gums, built the area up, levelled it off and made it into a grassed area for entertaining. Next to this Chris created two King Protea gardens and a floral garden bed.

In March 2020 Covid hit. Chris put her energy into building an aptly named 'Covid' garden under the spotted gums to keep herself active, whilst Brian worked on the vegie patch which, after contracting Covid a few months later, helped keep them in food for a week.

In February 2021 after engaging a local landscaper, Aaron Keeler, (alamedalandscape.com) to dig out the creek area, he built up the sides, adding rocks and putting in two clay and rock bridges which had a huge pipe in the middle. Aaron also built a pathway linking both sides of the creek and the pier. In October of that same year there was a 1:100 rain event which washed away one of the bridges and adjoining pathways. Brian has since built two beautiful wooden bridges to take their place.

The Garden

With further grants from Melbourne Water, Chris consulted with Sue Di Iorio (Land Management and Habitat Creation) and her team (thanks Brendon) to help her remove kikuyu grass and plant out the creek and surrounding land with more indigenous plants suitable for the area. Tall Sedge, Dianella, Poa, Carex appressa, Cassinia, Juncus procerus, Lomandra, Chrysocephalum, Wirilda and Swamp paperbarks. Chris also added some Grevilleas and other non-indigenous native plants to bring in more colour.

They planted a Copse of Blackwood's on the far side of the dam and Koala food trees such as Peppermint, Coastal Manna and Swamp gums throughout the area.

At the back of the house there is a citrus orchard and beyond that there are multiple vegetable gardens which are always full of seasonal foods, as well as red and yellow raspberries, rhubarb and herbs.

Beyond the vegetable gardens there is a large chook house, behind which are two hot houses.

The first is a plastic Igloo for growing many different tropical fruiting plants - bananas, a rosella bush, pineapples, mangos, different varieties of guava and tomatoes of course. The other is a Polyhouse used for growing seedlings to be planted out, as well as seasonal basil, capsicum, parsley, onions and more tomatoes.

In January 2022, they engaged Dave Key from (keypermaculture.com.au) to build an amazing 14mtr X 30mtr covered in orchard area. The Orchard is full of apples, cherries, avocados, plums, blueberries, strawberries and of course the odd tomato. Brian has built an espalier system along two boundaries and up through the center to give them more space to place more trees.

Chris and Brian are now seeing different water birds returning to the dam; Cormorants, White faced herons, Pacific herons, Purple Swamphens, Eurasian coots and a variety of ducks. Last year they had a family of Buff-banded rails nesting in the creek area.

To Chris's absolute delight they have also seen a family of Fairy Wrens (near Brians compost area) and Eastern Spinebills flitting in and out of different garden beds.

It is now 2024 and there is still ongoing issues concerning the creek area but Chris and Brian have finally made their property into their own peace of paradise for which they are grateful every day.

Some of the proceeds of this weekend will be donated to Very Special Kids. VSK provides palliative care for children and young people with life-limiting conditions and tailored support for their families – through life, death and bereavement.

Dromana is located on the lands of the Boon Wurrung/Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation. Open Gardens Victoria wish 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

