

THE COTTAGE GARDEN

“If you seek happiness for an evening, get drunk; if you seek happiness for a year, get married. If you seek happiness for a lifetime, become a gardener.” (Chinese proverb)

When I first moved here in 1994, there were dead trees, blackberries, large lawn areas and a Hills Hoist at the end of a garden path. All that remains of the original plantings in the back garden are the lemon tree, japonica camellias, rhododendron, hawthorn and a cotoneaster tree. Although considered a “weed”, native birds love its flowers in spring and the red berries in winter.

Original plantings in the front garden include the large callistemon *viminalis* and the flowering prunus on the east side.

I had no particular plan when I started this garden, other than to cram as much as possible into deep beds. I have over 75 different varieties of roses - David Austins, some Delbards in the front, hybrid teas, miniatures and a number of heritage roses. Fruit trees include nectarine, ballerina apple trees, lemon, pomegranate, damson plum, plumcot, blood orange, dwarf peach, ruby grapefruit, feijoa, strawberry guava and a Columbian lime tree.

My garden includes a number of medicinal plants, which not only provide health benefits but also structure to the garden. You will find scattered amongst my plantings such things as ajuga reptans, a bay tree, borage, comfrey, foxgloves, herb Robert, lavender, oregano, rosemary, sage officinalis, self heal, thyme, Vietnamese mint, verbena and yarrow.

I admire the profuse colours and general toughness of salvias. Varieties in my garden include: *Salvia Greggii* ‘Snow White’, *Lara’s Choice*, ‘Sierra Pink’, ‘Raspberry Ripple’; *Salvia microphyllia* ‘Pink Blush’ and ‘Heatwave Glitter’; *Phyllis Fancy*, *Hot Lips*, *Fingrove*, *Buchananii*, *Mexican Sage*, *Bog Sage*, *Guaranitica*, *Murii*, *Timboon*, *Corrugata*, *Karwinskii*, *Orchid Showers*, and *Costa Rica Blue*. In autumn, the combined colours of various plectranthus complement the salvias.

My first water tank of 800 litres (a corrugated one) was installed in about 2004 and was replaced in 2010 with the current 2,000 litre tank. In 2005 I installed a 2,200 litre tank followed in 2007 by the 22,000 litre tank. When the weather is particularly dry, I use grey water from the laundry. The run off from the evaporative cooling also goes into the tank system. I use mains water sparingly, via a drip irrigation system in the front and back garden.

In August, I use old sheep manure, fertilise the roses and spread mulch and home-made compost on all beds.

I am rewarded regularly with visits from praying mantis, dragon and damsel flies, skinks and stick insects, plus considerable bird life. By not using chemical sprays, ladybirds and aphid sucking wasps help keep many unwanted pests under control.

GARDEN NOTES

The blue arbour in the back garden has recently undergone a plant renovation. Two rampant wonga wonga vines were removed and hopefully the arbour will soon be smothered in Chinese star jasmine. I tend to recycle materials in the garden such as the volcanic rocks which edge many of the beds in the front and rear garden. I am also an admirer of hard waste and great finds include the bird bath in the front rose garden and the terracotta urn in the back near the acer palmatum tree.

In 2018 I started some major planting renovations having realised that with the changes to the weather, many plants were struggling to cope with drier conditions. I have included more native plants in the back, to be bird and butterfly attracting, as well as fitting with my idea of a “cottage garden”!

I think my love for gardening has been passed to me by my late grandfather, Maurice. He had a beautiful garden in Surrey, UK, which I remember fondly as a child.

Please take time to look, sit and enjoy my garden.

Terry

The Cottage Garden is located on the lands of the Wurundjeri 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**