

## TREASURED PERENNIALS AT THE FARM

This is the garden of Treasured Perennials Nursery owners, Ben and Kerrie Brooker. Whilst Ben has studied horticulture and is a professional landscaper, Kerrie has studied art and design. Together they are creating an eclectic garden, full of their favourite unusual native and exotic perennials, shrubs and bulbs, in colour themed beds. They write:

Called 'The Farm' by many previous owners, we were instantly drawn to our 6-acre property despite its 100-year-old cottage needing a desperate renovation, paddocks full of blackberries and the orchard and what little garden there was, in desperate need of some T.L.C.

After a major renovation of the house, keeping only the two original cottage rooms and the veranda, the additional two lean-tos were rebuilt to achieve the beautiful cottage we live in today.

Our first major job, apart from eliminating the blackberries from the paddocks and garden beds, was to remove a row of five mature pines, near the chook house. Along with the challenges of the hydrophobic soil beneath our eucalyptus and pine trees, we were left with a significant site of lifeless soil, thus began our regenerative horticulture journey.

To link the area between our house, chicken coup and hayshed, we relocated a 5-meter Gleditsia next to the hayshed, leaving a mature 'October Glory' Maple as a centre piece in the lawn, which we enclosed in a circular garden bed. The garden bed was created around a pre-existing lemon tree, with underplanting in shades of lemon and yellow, blending to orange, red, purple and pink, as the garden bed travels around the lawned maple.

This set a precedent for our colour co-ordinated garden beds. While rebuilding the vegetable garden area, pruning the overgrown orchard and rejuvenating the existing hedges and David Austin roses, we have begun establishing a number of new garden beds on about 1 acre around the house.

Whilst all beds have a colour theme, they are also experimental beds, where we plant the plants we propagate from imported seed, often planting them in less favourable conditions to what they are accustomed. This is done to see if they are hardy enough and viable to be added to our range and offered for sale through our business, Treasured Perennials Nursery. The garden beds then become production zones, where we collect seed, which produces a plant hardier to our climatic zone.

We are also very interested in plants not commonly seen in Australian gardens or those that are endangered, both native and exotic. With a view of putting these rare and more unusual plants into our range, our aim is to have every plant we propagate in our garden. This is why our garden is always developing, with areas still to be constructed, especially into the front paddock and a woodland garden under our impressive oak, where we have a dining area.

## GARDEN NOTES

Along with our interest in endangered plants, we have a great respect for the environment and also happily see our property as a haven for the significant number of native birds and marsupials it supports. The recent loss of our, beyond repair, 50,000 litre concrete tank, left us with quite the dilemma of what to do with so much concrete. Cutting away part of the tank, which we used as a base for our parking area, our new poly tank was inserted into the old existing tank, with the area in-between converted into a garden bed, integrating the tanks into our garden.

But, by far, our biggest challenge has been our soil, both the clay beds where a septic system was laid, and as we call them, our apocalyptic beds, which were devoid of any living microorganism.

Ben, and maybe Kerrie, will be taking guided tours at 11.30 and 2pm, both days. They will not only talk about the design of the garden, its history (yes it was featured on Gardening Australia with its winter flowering daffodils in the front paddock), the extensive plantings, but Ben will finish the tour under the pine trees. Here we have regenerated the soil, and a successful garden is now growing. He will also share a couple of his most used recipes, which help replace the microbial biome into the soil.

There will be a large range of plants for sale on the day, fantastic coffee, with sweet and savory treats by Aurelio Dessert Bar, as well as a sausage sizzle by a local charity. Visitors are invited to enjoy their lunch in the front paddock, either in the sun or shade, either side of our avenue of cherry trees.

***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](http://www.opengardensvictoria.org.au)

