

GARDEN NOTES

TREETOPS

Take one woman with a plan to turn around a dilapidated property, a husband with an earth moving business, add two avid gardeners, then mix in two years of Covid19 lockdowns and you get the Tree Top Garden!

The Hurstbridge property was purchased in 2015 from an owner who had lived overseas for twelve years. In those years of absence, the property had been strangled by black wattles and the soil quality had degraded to a point where little would grow. In 2018 the 22-tonne excavator moved in to build driveways, terraced garden beds and to take care of the black wattles. The garden was planned and pathways and features constructed, but the unforeseen onset of Covid19 was the real kick starter. The owner's parents, with suddenly a lot of spare time on their hands, became two full-time gardeners.

Orientated on a north facing hill, with the house at the top, the garden was designed to connect the separate parts of the property, creating a pleasant walk or tour. Each garden along the tour has evolved in an eclectic manner, with ideas and expertise from all four gardeners. Nature also dictated. Plants were chosen as they had to be hardy enough to survive the environment in Hurstbridge as well as the rabbits and kangaroos. While kangaroos still visit daily, the garden has been rabbit proofed as much as is possible.

Beginning the tour at the rear of the house is the perennial garden, flowing onto the fire pit garden directly in front of the house's deck with *Teddy Bear* magnolias, standard *Iceberg* roses, weeping cherries and yellow clivias, all bordered by nandinas. River stones line the aptly named river garden, left down the driveway before you come to the grevillea garden.

The secret garden, named as it cannot be seen from the house, is a small, gated yard beside the horses' paddock with perennials, roses, and an assortment of October flowering bulbs and daylilies. with the predominant species being viburnum (snowball bush), weeping cherry and camellias. At the centre of the property is a native Australian bush garden with a claw-foot dog bath much loved by the family's labrador and a favourite hangout for visiting kangaroos. Bordering the property are wattles contrasting with red grevilleas and leucadendron *Safari Sunset*.

Lastly is the hidden garden, comprising the famous Wollemia pines, oakleaf hydrangeas, azaleas, camellias and rhododendron, mixed with natives.

The garden is always evolving with inspiration from other gardens, ABC's *Gardening Australia*, and whatever recycled items are unearthed in the natural course of the excavation business. As the soil improves with more years of mulch and drainage improvements, more plants and no doubt other features will be added as the garden becomes more established.

Treetops 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**