

GARDEN NOTES

HEYWOOD GARDEN

I moved to this property nearly 16 years ago. I loved the view and therefore didn't particularly think about the aspect, however I find facing east and having a little protection from the summer northerlies suits me very well. I think the north wind does as much damage as anything else to my garden.

I moved into a garden that had the remnants of a cared for garden, established roses around the drive and two old camellias to the south, however, there was little else. The vineyard and the lemon grove were well established and much appreciated, but there was little in the few garden beds except diosma.

After pulling out all the diosma I started, one bed at a time. Initially I started working on the eastern side – wanting to soften the view from the house. There were no beds around the concrete deck and it was a very hard, hot space. I have now sworn there will be no more garden beds (on the orders of my family), but I am still making them larger!

I first opened for Open Gardens Australia over 10 years ago when this was quite a young garden. It is now nicely established but I still keep changing things, and as it gets older, I have to thin some of the inevitable over planting that happens in the early years. Several years ago, I fixed up the dam (which involved men and machines) and have been planting around a much improved (hopefully no leaks) and lovely dam.

The first two beds run along the back of the house, and have a very cottage garden feel. I lived in London for 20 years and these beds reflect that. As I have developed as a gardener I have changed, understanding the beauty of natives; learning that heat, not cold, is my primary problem. I've realised that the strength of the sun in Australia makes the light quite different and such things as the English white gardens will tend to disappear and that as Australians, we can use a much stronger palette.

I have been planting more and more things that I struggled with in London because they needed winter protection. I struggle with the same month but for opposite reasons. In London, February was cold and bleak and the garden was at its worst. Here, February is hot and often frightening and the garden is at its worst as I try to keep things alive through successive 40-degree days. I have been planting more and more bulbs that are dormant in summer which gives me a lovely winter garden and the plants sail through summer. I also use southern Australian, Mediterranean and South African plants as they are more adapted to the summer heat. My days of Lily of the Valley, *Kalmia* and *Astilbe* are over. Craig of Gentiana Nursery (one of my favourites) in Olinda grows many things I can't. He is higher, damper, has established trees, and is not on top of a ridge – all factors making my garden quite exposed and hot – though I have trees growing up and providing more protection.

I find that I like to mix natives and exotics together, my soil is a rich clay and I don't fertilise a lot, and like to use sheep and cow poo rather than commercial mixes.

The grevilleas and salvias have brought in the small birds which just weren't here initially, with some of my more exotic exotics (such as *Isoplexis*, *Veltheimia*, *Ixia*, and *Cantua*) also thrilling the honey eaters. Without bushy, thorny shrubs there will not be small birds. As I write I can hear a Bronze Wing Pidgeon, there are Eastern Spinebills, New Hollands, Fairy Wrens as well as many and various parrots and the occasional Wedgetail.

Open Gardens Victoria is a not-for-profit organisation that promotes the benefits of gardens and gardening by assisting garden owners to open their private gardens to the public. Monies raised at the gate are shared between OGV and the garden owner – whose share is often directed to charity.

Surplus OGV funds are allocated to horticultural, educational or community projects.



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The frog pond, ornamental lake and dam in the bottom paddock are all full of tadpoles and I've managed to identify three different frog calls at night. Frogs are always a sign of a healthy environment and it's important to be careful of sprays, as the surfactant (like dish washing liquid) will often kill frogs.

My biggest problem are the rabbits, which ring bark my trees, eat any young plants, and dig up roots of various young things. Consequently, I am always protecting things with chopped up pots and wire, which is rather unattractive.

I hope you enjoy the garden, the wonderful view over the Warburton Ranges and please introduce yourself and ask me anything, I may have an answer.

I am a guide at the Royal Botanic Gardens and invite you to come on one of our free guided tours offered every morning. The beauty of the botanic gardens has been a wonderful inspiration and education for me. I am part of the 3CR Garden Show team and urge you to listen to us on Sunday mornings from 7.30 to 9.15am. You'll find 3CR at 855 on the AM radio dial or DAB on digital radio. The show is also available as a podcast. I am secretary of Plant Trust which is an organisation that tries to conserve garden plants. You will find all three organisations on Facebook and Instagram. All of these are voluntary roles and I am also on Facebook and Instagram @virginiaheywood.

For my open garden I will have Jane Tonkin from Tonkin's Bulbs here selling bulbs, some summer flowering gems in pots, and bagged autumn bulbs to improve your beds for next year. She also is part of the 3CR Garden Show team.

Thank you, *Virginia*