

GARDEN NOTES

AMBLESIDE

Coming from the fairly densely populated eastern suburbs it was a joy to find a 'ranch style' house set in 11 acres divided by swathes of trees into garden, paddocks, shedding and chook pens. It was all we needed for a change of lifestyle and only a short drive to the small, idyllic township of Inverloch and the sea. We would make this our family haven – a place to unwind, relax and enjoy nature.

We saw the property as a blank canvas ready for us to make changes to suit our lifestyle. We are fortunate to have water pumped from the dam to taps throughout the more formal garden, which is about two acres; and after 18 years we have a garden that is still changing and we continue to get a lot of pleasure from it and we hope others enjoy its sanctuary. Unless there is an awful weather event the garden has plants flowering in all seasons.

The ambience is largely created by towering, majestic old gum trees which neighbour younger trees, dianellas and ferns and provide sanctuary for echidnas, koalas, kangaroos, wombats and frogs. Fallen trees are left where they fall to enrich this habitat and a creek flows gently after heavy rain. The woods also serve as a shelterbelt protecting the house and garden from the weather, making it very sheltered from most harsh conditions. Mossy paths invite you to watch and listen to the birds – in autumn mass-planting of purple-blue *Plectranthus*, within and around the wood, flower to create a stunning blue haze. A shady walkway bordered by hydrangeas lead to an orchard of fruit trees protected from the north wind by a tall hedge which divides the garden.

Copses of Silver Birch trees create dappled summer shade and give a wonderful golden glow in the autumn sun, while the bulbs pop up beneath them in spring.

Large curved beds are filled with shrubs and small trees including: camelias, proteas, fuschias, abutilons, Canada plums, lilacs, crepe myrtles, robinias, *Brugmansia*, magnolias and *Cercis*, and flowers including lupins, salvias and penstemons. A wisteria covers the pergola, and *Wygellia*, *Stephanotis* and *Campsis* crawl over tree stumps. Mass planting of echiums beneath an old gum tree are opposite the sprawling wattle where loved dogs rest in peace, and *Dierama* (Fairy Fishing Rods) nod gently over the big rocks edging some beds.

The outside beds of the parterre are filled with roses – the middle ones grow asparagus, herbs and vegetables; gravel paths lead through the garden onto the house; and broad steps lead down to the al fresco area. Three raised beds next to this area are filled with vegetables.

Hedging plays a significant role in this garden of about two acres. A tall variegated pittosporum serves to separate the working area where the sheds, chook houses, log and mulch piles are from the prettier part of the garden. Mixed native shrubs are clipped to a hedge and callistemons, grevilleas, Narrow-Leaf Bower Wattle, banksias and a jacaranda tree rise above them. A soft diosma hedge surrounds the Cootamundra Wattle and Native Hibiscus. Lavender plants hedge the water tank and *Convolvulus* and *Nandina* are used to edge some beds. The driveway which meanders through the garden from the entrance to the paddocks is edged with evergreen foliage.

This garden is a haven, a retreat, a place to take time to roam – or just sit and enjoy the tranquil setting.

These notes can be downloaded from the Open Gardens Victoria website
www.opengardensvictoria.org.au