



## GARDEN NOTES

### ANNIE'S GARDEN

We love our garden! It is a joy to sit on the deck/seats in the garden or wander around with a coffee or some gorgeous wine. Great for the soul and blood pressure. During Autumn we have eight weeks of changing colours throughout the garden; it is a very special time.

The house was built 33 years ago on one acre and I was told I would need a pickaxe to plant a petunia; how true that was. Gardening in Research is not for the feint-hearted as there is no top soil and very little clay. It would take years to build a garden bed using compost, grass clippings, etc. Over the years it has changed immensely from plantings that took a lot of water in the days when water was plentiful and cheap. Apart from some rocks being placed and beds formed by machine we have done the remainder ourselves. Our bodies have survived.

When the garden has her Spring and Autumn kaleidoscope of colour she is fantastic, yet in Winter when she has her cooler clothes on she brightens up our world with colour. *Magnolia denudata* is really, really stunning in August as she heralds the Spring blossoms, and yellow, red and orange clivias glow in the winter sun, while different varieties of hellebores and bulbs as well as the japonicas are just delightful. In Summer crepe myrtles, salvias, hydrangeas, and the different shades of green/shapes/textures do their thing; the dear little prostrate cyclamen dotted through the plants pops up to tell us Autumn is on the way. The plan has been for this to be a garden of all seasons. Spring is exciting as we watch all the leaves beginning to appear in their various forms on the deciduous plants. How fortuitous it was to have been informed to plant deciduous around the house as it lowered the fire risk of the house. We are in a fire risk area and fire came up Brenda Road in 1969.

Today the garden is very different with an emphasis on hardy plants for us being responsible water users. A considerable part of the garden now receives no added water and irrigation is via brown pipe and we have 45,000 litre tank capacity. Plus we mulch, mulch, mulch. All kitchen vegetable and fruit waste, plus egg cartons and white paper soaked in water, go straight into the garden in holes or trenches. Also all grass cuttings go straight on to the garden with cow manure, blood and bone and fertiliser scattered throughout to help it break down. The block has been 'sculpted' to catch water run-off. While it sounds like a lot of hard work, it is better than going to the gym! Passive solar principles have been used with the north-facing pergola across the front of the house covered in creepers and the west end of the house has climbing roses and walls covered with silver vein creeper. All bricks inside and out are recycled.

Now for the fun part: we love playing in the garden. We have made rusty flowers, mosaics and a variety of garden structures ourselves. There are many pots of different shapes, colours and sizes that regularly move around the garden as well as re-purposed iron gates, security window bars and good 'finds' from the side of the road.



Now for the plants: they have to be tough to be given a place here and we have learned the hard way with many, many plants not making it. We think we have it nailed now. Mmmmm. Yet we have some unusual trees – the gorgeous *Magnolia denudata*, with origins on the mountain slopes of the Himalayas and is the parent for the *soulangiana* hybrids. A Chinese Tallow Wood, Gingko (oldest known tree in the world), *Cornus kousa ssp. Chinensis*. and the absolutely spectacular forest pansy. We also have a special white wisteria with 45cm racemes.

While the plants have to be hardy, the garden has a European feel to it with crepe myrtles, crab apples, wisterias, ornamental pears (four varieties), smoke bushes, cherries, maples, parrotias, spireas, roses, salvias, ground cover plumbagos, *Hydrangea quercifolia* and sedums. Virginia creeper, silver vein creeper and ornamental grape are being trained across a lengthy pergola; I have wanted an Italian 'loggia' for some time. You may like to ask us about possum-proofing the roof and pergola. We think we have finally outwitted them. Mmmmm again. There are many virginian creeper used to grow across the ground and up trees.

Even some varieties of succulents have not survived and what remains are good doers. Crassulas (jade plant) have been an amazing find, and I have noticed them being used a lot lately in the glossy magazines. We have several different ones and they are used both in pots and as bushes.

Also scattered through the garden native plants and grasses, euphorbias, agaves, aeoniums, again in the garden and in pots.

We have had to net the veggie garden and fruit trees to save produce from the pesky possums and marauding parrots. We do love our black mulberry, black Genoan fig, apricots, blood plums, pomegranates and so on. Thank goodness they do not like blood oranges, limes, cumquats and Valencia and Washington oranges, although they do like a lemon occasionally.

There will be products made from crops in the garden, a sausage sizzle between 11.00am and 1.00pm, tea/coffee with home-made shortbread, plants propagated from the garden and garden ornamentation.

We really will enjoy sharing our garden with you.

*Anne Burke*