

## GARDEN NOTES

### ARNOTT STREET GARDEN

At Arnott Street in Sorrento, Fiona Brockhoff has created a garden that 'fits' and is totally appropriate for its context and setting. Located close to the sea, the garden suits the area perfectly through a considered use of materials and skilled selection of plants.

Fiona was fortunate to be designing a garden on a large block of land, providing an opportunity to consider different areas including a swimming pool and tennis court while incorporating a number of canopy trees. However, the size of the property created some challenges such as including three separate homes for different generations with different needs.

The three houses have been designed to sensitively sit within the setting. The contemporary versions of 1950s beach shacks settle kindly in their landscape which is enhanced by the use of 'local' minerals, materials, colours and plants in the garden – with the added benefit of maintenance demands being greatly reduced. In this garden blue and grey foliage are dominant, being year-round colours with modest change from summer to winter. They underline the coastal character and have outstanding tolerance of coastal salt and winds. Around the world, grey foliage is extensively used for seaside planting, and as such, this garden doesn't solely use native plants – though they do form the basis of the planting scheme.

There are clipped White Correa (*Correa alba*), Coastal Rosemary (*Westringia fruticosa*) and Sea Box (*Alyxia buxifolia*) – good Australian native plants used as a setting for Pig's Ear (*Cotyledon orbiculata*) from South Africa and the Canary Island native Sea Lavender (*Limonium perezii*). Clipping the native shrubs into tight topiary balls helps to control their growth and secure longer life. It also provides a more formal landscape close to the house and allows freer growth towards bushland areas where informality is dominant. Importantly, there is recognition of the different levels of vegetation, the clipped plants allowing the viewer's eye to explore deep into the garden and to the open doorway in the distance.

The planting schemes combine great foliage textures, with subtle colour from both flower and foliage – with the clipped plants adding a further dimension. There are also occasional surprises that add character and draw one's eye. At this garden it is New Zealand Flax (*Phormium tenax* cvs) which erupts with flower spikes above the dramatic foliage. Other striking trees throughout the garden include Cut-leaf Banksia (*Banksia praemorsa*), Coast Banksia (*Banksia integrifolia*) and Burgundy Willow Myrtle (*Agonis flexuosa* 'Burgundy').

Sculptures throughout the garden are another feature, including the huge bird sculptures of Maidenhair Vine (*Muehlenbeckia complexa*) which rise above the front garden.

**These notes can be downloaded from the Open Gardens Victoria website**  
[www.opengardensvictoria.org.au](http://www.opengardensvictoria.org.au)



The vegetable garden is another area designed with great skill. Set within local gravel paving, a feature repeated throughout the site (being durable, low cost and attractive while also acting as both a path surface and a mulch) the vegetable beds are located in concrete water troughs. They are put together to create an attractive and dynamic low-maintenance garden.

Plants grown in containers are one of the major features in this garden. By careful selection of plants with low water demands, the maintenance requirements of planters are kept under control. Succulents, notable for their low water demands are evident, particularly forms of *Aeonium* which are especially well-suited to the mid-twentieth century planters. These planters have been collected by the owners over many years and suit the house with its modernist character.

This garden also incorporates ingenious recycling of materials including old pier timbers as retaining walls and informal steps that tempt one to wander through the garden. Such recycled materials not only serve to reinforce the local character but are environmentally sound, re-using materials and creating a low environmental demand.