

McPherson Garden

The garden began to take shape in early 2018 around a newly completed home which has an E shaped footprint. We envisaged:

- a relaxed, lush garden with a contemporary edge
- small garden courtyards which would create enticing garden vistas from all interior rooms
- a planting scheme which incorporated foliage and flowers for picking and perfume
- a garden with plenty of plant interest in all seasons.

After enjoying a large semi-rural garden for many years we now found ourselves facing the realities of a flat, blank canvas on a standard suburban block with shaded south side, bare fence lines, building debris and the challenge of planting areas under the extensive eaves of the house. Together with our botanist daughter Fiona, who also has a professional background in urban garden design, the new garden began to take shape as a collaborative effort. Geoff undertook all the hard landscaping and worked continuously on cultivating and improving the existing soil with trailer loads of gypsum and cow manure, while coarse washed sand was added to the native garden. Judy sourced plants widely in addition to the truckload of trees, shrubs and cuttings brought from the previous garden.

Front garden

We aimed for a balance between good structure and relaxed plantings appropriate to the scale of the house. Large rocks were brought in to define a change in level and create a rockery. Plantings here are confined to blue, silver, plum and pink tonings and include salvia, agastache, loropetalum, euphorbia, aster, sedum, a red stemmed dogwood, and a weeping mulberry.

The west fence line is screened with *Magnolia* 'Teddy Bear', regularly trimmed to provide foliage for house arrangements, the east fence with *Viburnum* 'Awabuki', and the front fence with *Magnolia* 'White Caviar', while hedged *Michelia figo* (Port Wine Magnolia) frame the entry. The weeping burgundy maple outside the front door was a special house warming present.

Along the drive are three maples, *Acer palmatum* 'Senkaki' with coral red bark in winter, and plum flowering Magnolia 'Genie' and Forest Pansy on the circular lawn. Underplantings include flowering plants - raphiolepis, hebe, erica, gardenia and the blue *Geranium* 'Rozanne'. The wavy grass *Lomandra* 'Little Lime' is used extensively throughout the garden.

Japanese themed courtyard

A rectangular pond set in a walk of sawn slate steppers and mondo grass is the focal point. Plantings reflect a Japanese palette with a row of *Camellia* 'Paradise Blush' along the fence line, a weeping cherry, several maples including *Acer japonicum* 'Aureum' with its lime green foliage, the dark plum of *Acer dissectum* 'Inaba Shidare', and the delicate lacy leaf *Acer dissectum* 'Ellen', rhododendron, pieris, panda grass, hostas and in early autumn, billowing clumps of Japanese windflowers. On the sunny eave line, plantings include several rare dwarf conifers along with hardy nandinas. Moss (*Scleranthus biflorus*) creeps up to rocks.

GARDEN NOTES

Al fresco courtyard

En route are three hedged beech trees, grown from cuttings years ago, underplanted with hellebores. The second courtyard has a teal water urn and plantings here are mainly green, white and blues. The small lawn is bordered by hydrangeas along with fragrant gardenias and daphnes. Camellias surround the urn and two white magnolias now provide shade.

Above, as you wander along the slate stepping stones, is a line of standard maples (*Acer platanoides* 'Globosum') with attractive rounded foliage which turns gold in autumn. They are underplanted with box, 'Diamond Jubilee' roses, grasses and *Pittosporum tobira*. The lilly pilly hedge has quickly screened out the fence line.

The tiny herb garden has a standard bay at its centre, shaped over 20 years from an original cutting.

Native wildflower garden

A meandering gravel path wanders past an extensive array of native plantings which provide colour all year in this quiet and secluded space. Two standard grevilleas and a large slate seat are focal points. There are several WA grafted natives including a darwinia, eremophila, Geraldton wax flowers and a *Corymbia ficifolia* 'Baby Orange'. Ferns, a lemon myrtle and correas were planted under shaded eaves while banksias, croweas, thryptomenes and small wattles favour the sun. Kangaroo paws give showy summer colour, while pink and red heaths flower throughout the winter months. The native violet ground cover blooms cheerfully all year and spreads happily. There is no watering system here although the garden is hand watered regularly as it captures a lot of summer heat.

Allée

A long narrow space on the west side was initially a real Cinderella space which we referred to as the 'tunnel'. Progressively it was transformed into a walk with different vertical planting schemes to create interest and provide a green wall from the inside windows.

Espaliered jasmines, camellias, birches and maples, two yews, a bay tree, gardenia pots and hanging baskets, now enliven this long space; Boston ivy and creeping fig help cover the fence. Many of these plants came from seedlings grown on from our previous garden. To our surprise in May 2022 the allée became a mini autumn glade with golden birches, red leafed maples and creepers and a colourful leaf fall from the adjacent ornamental pear hedge. The little work nook behind the potted cumquat screens compost bins, garden paraphernalia, a few vegies and a potting table.

Please join us for tea or coffee and a sweet treat in the al fresco area.
Our garden is open for the benefit of **OXFAM, Australia**.

Judy & Geoff

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