

GARDEN NOTES

'suealoe'

It all began in 2000 when Jim and I (Sue) purchased the bare one-hectare property. Ground was prepared and four rows of natives were planted to begin the windbreak around the perimeter. Three years later we built a shed where we lived for 2 ½ years whilst the house was constructed and front garden beds formed and filled with plants. Once the house was complete, the dirt that was removed from the house excavation was made into garden beds on the north side of the house. Hundreds of plants were slowly added to these beds and over time more beds created around the property with thousands of plants now planted to form what is today seen as our oasis.

A mixture of hundreds of natives around the boundary assists with wind reduction and also attracts local wildlife as do the thousands of plants inside the native windbreak.

As a large block, we needed plants that would require only small amounts of water and ideally little maintenance. This is where natives, cacti and succulents came into the picture.

Over the last 20 years we have only fully replanted one of the beds due to plants requiring different amounts of water. We have learnt from that and make sure that plants with similar water requirements are planted near each other.

My love for Aloes is obvious not only in my garden name, suealoe, but by the number of Aloes planted around the block. Their flowers brighten up the garden, and their architectural foliage comes in many colours, forms and textures as well as attracting the nectar loving birds. Near our Corymbias, near the pond bloom, we see many Rainbow Lorikeets which just love the flowers. Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos visit us each year when the Hakeas are flowering and the New Holland Honeyeaters like the Aloes. When you see these native birds visit your property you realise gardening is well and truly worth every bit of effort.

With the climate changing over the years, we have had to relocate some plants that have been hit by too much sun or the heavier frosts that we have received – for example, *Echeveria imbricata* used to be planted all around the teardrop bed in the front garden, but now are in areas with less sun. Certain Aloes have been relocated as they were hit by frosts and almost died – again, they have been placed in more protected positions.

I have always had a love for gardens. I used to be a florist and loved working with greenery and flowers but regrettably had to give that up as I developed arthritis in the fingers. I later worked at Roraima Nursery, Lara for 10 years extending my knowledge of plants and their requirements. Always being around plants is such a relaxing and fulfilling job.

I believe in recycling and purchase old wheelbarrows in which to plant my Epiphyllums. Not only are they raised large containers but also cheaper than new pots.



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I also weld using mostly recycled metal items. I enjoy making garden ornaments that last for years and years and do not rust away like thin metal ones I have previously purchased. I have turned my love for welding into a part-time job by selling my metalwork at markets where others also appreciate recycled and solid metal garden ornaments.

I hope to be gardening for many more years to come – it certainly keeps you fit!

Enjoy your time at suealoe and if you would like to know more about the plants and the garden, I will be available for a Q & A session each day at 11.30 am and 2.30pm.

Sue Davis

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