

## GARDEN NOTES

### TIMANDRA

Owned by David and Alison Aplin, Timandra is an example of a sustainable garden in every way. Covering more than one acre, the garden is divided into three areas, based on flat areas and a steep middle slope. It is unfortunate that the concrete steps through the middle section go straight down, instead of across the slope, but these were in place when the Aplins purchased the property 13 years ago.

Timandra is a former Ecotourism Accredited garden, so sustainability in Timandra has worked around the existing soil of the site. There have been no earthworks or imported soil brought into the garden, other than sand in the top area, trying to regenerate a lawn that refuses to grow. All of the plants are based on the soil of the site.

The top flat area has a sandy soil with some limestone in it. But the topsoil is neutral to slightly acidic. The many trees in the area, some deciduous, give wonderful shelter through all seasons. It was the trees throughout the property that Alison fell in love with on her first viewing of Timandra. And these trees are home to a breeding colony of koalas. Of course the bird life is absolutely wonderful. Many, many different varieties visit Timandra throughout the year and water is in constant demand, hence the abundance of bird baths.

The middle section remains with the same soil as the top. The lack of water-holding ability is a constant frustration, so to help improve the soil texture, much of the garden waste is cut up and put on top of the soil to break down naturally – but this is a slow process.

The bottom flat area has deep sand on the LHS (north westerly boundary) where all the plantings here have been done over the past 13 years, and on the RHS (north easterly boundary) there is an adjacent wetland that covers the back road in most winters. Alison has requested that this wetland be put on the Ramsar wetland listing for future protection. This side has deep clay, consistent with the proximity to the wetland. So different plants are trialled here. This appears to be the only area of the garden with clay, and then it is pale, mottled and plasticine-like.

When the property was purchased, the bottom area's only vegetation was the large trees on the northern fence line and two fruiting pears in the middle garden area. These large trees are constantly being targeted by Powercor due to their height and the proximity to the main Portland power line. They weren't a wise selection for this position, and the fact that they shroud the garden with shade for most of the year.

An abundance of other plants have been added, by the Aplins, over the years. Extra trees have also been added to the mix, although space for any more is doubtful. It is clearly Alison's obsession – more trees!

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Most of the plants in the middle and bottom area are native. Alison is a garden designer, specialising in sustainable gardens. Plants are the prerequisite of a sustainable garden, not hard landscaping, so prevalent in so many built gardens today. So it's incumbent on Alison to have a vast plant knowledge for the plants that suit different soils.

The policy of reusing is one that is constantly practiced in Timandra. There is always another use for a lot of things that can be used with good effect. This recycling of so-called rubbish helps to give a garden, especially a native garden, that authentic quirky feel. And being a lover of anything quirky or different, this is one of the joys of a native garden in Alison's opinion. But quirky is not kitsch – there is a difference.

Timandra is in a good rainfall area of the state. Last winter was a very bad, rainless season, but it has made up for it with the rain since spring. The last few years have been remarkably dry, and so this extra burst of wet weather has been wonderful for everyone's gardens. One can only hope that it continues throughout the coming winter.

Narrawong is usually relatively mild during summer, with few hot days. And on those hot days, because of the tree cover, the garden of Timandra is a good 5 to 10 degrees cooler. This is why Australia needs more trees. Property ownership should include planting of trees commensurate with the size of the property. The trees were one of the redeeming aspects of purchasing this property. Winter is a very cold season in this region.

David and Alison welcome you to their last garden opening. Due to their age, they've made the decision to not open Timandra to the public again. They sincerely hope that you enjoy their garden and the other community offerings of the weekend.

***Thankyou for visiting!***