

GARDEN NOTES

Candlebark

Beginnings

The property that was to become 'Candlebark' was purchased in 1985 as a single 12-hectare paddock. The 'paddock' was quite unique with the permanent Limestone Creek on its western boundary, an almost permanently flowing streamlet on its south side and a small gully in the northeast corner. A steep bank drops down into the streamlet, part of which has been incorporated into the garden.

In 1986 extensive earthworks were carried out creating the house and shed sites and a large dam of 0.6 of a hectare. We lived in the shed for three years, while the house was under construction and moved in 1992.

The garden around the house began its life in 1992 although the trees along the driveway, dam and fence lines were planted in 1986. The Candlebarks, Buxton gums, Red Ironbarks and Red Gums along the driveway are all thirty-year-old trees. The Candlebarks in particular are special as they were grown from seeds collected from a giant Candlebark that grew at the side of our driveway. The property was named after this tree, which, unfortunately had to be removed due to road works in 1986; its decaying trunk lies in the paddock near the road.

Establishing

The main garden at the front of the house was initially conceived as a cottage style garden with weeping cherries, mulberries, silver ash and elm and wisteria trees along with cottage garden annuals and perennials in beds. A native garden was planted on the north side of the house with blocks of natives including callistemons, banksias, grevilleas and wattles, while an orchard was planted on the western side and a kitchen garden to the northeast.

The 2007 drought made us rethink our garden strategy. Only the natives seemed to survive and even thrive with the limited water we could provide, as the dam did not fill. Since 2007 we have only planted natives with prostrate wattles being a focus; those on the south side of the house are nearly 20 years old.

Extending

In 2008 the garden was extended to the south with the berry patch, olives and natives sitting above the first pond and we removed a fence and began mowing down to the dam both for fire prevention and aesthetic reasons. 2012 saw major expansion with the circular driveway and associated native plantings to the east, the three ponds being constructed below the main dam and a walkway across the dam to an arboretum. Finally, a rose garden, trellis structure for espaliered trees and rock wall pond, were built to the southeast in August this year.

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In 2018 we wrote:

'We think the garden has reached our limits and we now intend to focus on espaliering fruit trees and extending the natives in low maintenance plantings. The rock wall pond will be planted with various water loving species and we will gently manage the main dam and ponds below in a semi natural manner with plants indigenous to the area being the focus.'

However, the garden continues to expand. Three new native garden beds have been established down towards the main dam, one with melaleucas, one with prostrate correas and wattles and the other with grevilleas. The main expansion has been to the north of the driveway wherein October 2020 the paddock was planted out in twenty-eight circles, each with eight long lived native trees. These include Bunya pines, Kurrajongs, White Cedars, Bottle trees and many other varieties.

A further expansion is below the main dam where an area is being prepared for a micro trufflery with the area being rotary hoed and limed to bring it to the right pH for the truffle Oaks. In addition, the area above the main dam is being planted with understory species such as prickly current bushes, ti-tree and tree ferns and there is a three hundred metre walk through the bush area that has re-established since being locked up thirty years ago.

The COVID lockdown gave us time to start these projects and should be a positive outcome from this difficult period. Welcome to our garden.

Vicki and Steven

Candlebark is located on the lands of the Taungurung people. Open Gardens Victoria wish to acknowledge the Traditional custodians and we pay respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

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