

## Homelea

Homelea is situated in the Maffra Irrigation district a productive farming area. The property once a large farm is now 14 acres bordered to the west by the Serpentine Creek with majestic red gums along the back, one of which shows the scar of a canoe carved from it many years ago. To the north we view farming paddocks and the high-country mountains with the snow in the winter. I first came to the garden in 2000, at the time it had many established roses, and a small cottage garden. There were 2 rows of massive Cyprus pines near to the house and sheds which we have since removed. In 2002 we completely renovated our house then the garden expansion began. At the time life was hectic, full-time work, family commitments and other interests meant I didn't have a lot of time for the garden, but it progressed, and gradually encroached into the farm paddocks. The first was directly out the back door where we planted a row of Silver birches, and built the arbour "Out the back" and planted the Pierre de Ronsard Rose.

At the entrance to the garden, we have a "Frog pond" which is a haven for various frogs and we listen to a euphony of croaks throughout the day and every evening. We have 2 resident wild ducks that call it home each year. In the house gardens we have a variety of natives, ornamentals, standard roses, irises, canna lilies, maples, annuals, winter bulbs – a cottage garden effect. The other areas I'm trying to have natives but mingle ornamentals throughout.

In 2011 Ron excavated another pond out the back that we call – "The Yabby Pond" and we were fortunate to source a wonderful huge weeping cherry so big that it hung over the sides of a semi-trailer. We transplanted it into pride of place by the pond. There were quite a few naysayers who were convinced it would not survive. We left it alone – mind you the soil was rich as it once had cattle grazing on it. So, it survived and thrived. The paddock with this pond continues to change over the years and recently I have planted more natives. We also sourced tree ferns that were to be burnt, once again Ron got out the excavator and we planted them under the trees near the Yabby pond. The same year Ron removed part of the wall of the old water tank near the back entrance to the house, we then had the base laid with old Maffra bricks. This is now a lovely area to sit, where in the summer the old apple tree gives dappled light and in the winter sun creates a warm area.

Over the years we have removed many old trees from the house yard that had become too overpowering. In their place I have planted Claret Ash, Crepe myrtles, Acers, weeping cherry, maples, prunus and Gleditsia etc. In 2014 we removed a huge brick wall that surrounded the pool – it did have 2 beautiful climbing roses but now from our lounge room we can view beyond our pool to the gardens and trees beyond – hello! We have an old Mulberry which gives lovely shade in the summer, this is the first tree in our property to drop its leaves and the last to renew them. Come Christmas the Mulberries are plentiful



## GARDEN NOTES

and make delicious jam. The old fig tree becomes abundant with fruit and the old kiwi fruit over the arbour is usually bountiful. Unfortunately, the Mulberry and Fig trees suffer from the large Flying Foxes that decide to stop by every evening in the summer. These creatures are so heavy they break many smaller branches of the trees – hence these trees have thinned out over the last 10 years or so.

Last year Ron built me 4 wonderful raised garden beds for our vegies - oh heaven – saves my back! I'm a hit and miss gardener, there are always changes happening. I am constantly mulching the gardens and over the last few years the areas near the yabby pond where the soil is now a haven for worms. We have high winds particularly in the spring and early summer which can cause grief with the older larger trees. In winter we can suffer from many heavy frosts. In 2018 the frost caused our 17-year-old Morton Bay fig to lose many branches and all its leaves, we are still losing branches after the damage it caused.

In 2007 Ron removed huge willows that were growing in the Serp. We cleared the banks which were covered in blackberries, then planted a variety of natives. Now we enjoy our little haven by the Serp, where we have a fish, or just sit and enjoy watching the variety of wildlife – wild ducks, pelicans, whistling kites, kookaburras, cranes, water hens, and many varieties of smaller birds flittering by. It is such a pleasure at the end of a busy day to wander the property. We hope you will enjoy it as much as we do.

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