

GARDEN NOTES

Uccello Lane

Beginnings

I have always wanted to build a garden and spent many years visiting places - gathering ideas. About 20 years ago I visited Bickleigh Vale for the first time and found the inspiration I needed from Edna Walling and her special wandering gardens with linked pathways leading to "garden rooms".

Almost 10 years ago we bought our house in Sweeneys Lane on an acre and a half of undulating lawn with many magnificent ghost gums, wattles and banksias, with rocks and terracing in place. It was ready for a garden to be made with Edna Walling as our guide.

We were coming into a long hot summer so the first six months were spent clearing - skip after skip, discovering treasures along the way like established camellias and wisterias, but mainly cutting back to get an understanding of the garden and how it flowed. It was hard work but also what we ended up with was far more of a blank canvas than we had hoped for.

Pagola di Rosa

As you enter Uccello Lane today you can go to the left towards the Pagola di Rosa which was built over a cement cricket pitch. There are roses, geraniums, pelargonium and lamb's ears with jasmine on the fence. In spring the perfume is everywhere. It is probably the only sunny spot in the garden so it meant the best (only) place for the roses. This includes the orchard of 10 fruit trees, all handed over to the birds, especially the cherries which they love. This is where your tour should end. There are resting benches on slate paving where Mary Lou Pittard, a local ceramic artist, has designed some "Rose Tiles" and the view is all the way to the Secret Garden and beyond.

Perennial Garden

Going right you follow the meandering path under the oak trees over to the Perennial Garden which is randomly planted in waves of colour including marigolds, lupins, geum, hollyhocks, penstemon, Japanese windflower (anemone), alliums, pink sage, scabiosa and salvias. A large forest pansy (surely one of the best trees to have in your garden) is in front of the mudbrick wall, always showing great form and with special burgundy leaves.

Both areas have resting seats and wonderful views. My advice would be to follow the lane past the Welcome Beds, up Protea Avenue to Edna Walling Walk. This is the best place to start your tour on a path that wanders around the edge of the garden.

Pathway around the Garden

Working with landscaper Adam Taylor, we came up with a plan of what we would like to do first and how to improve the soil and irrigation at the same time. This plan has changed many times, usually because we both have a "better" idea. At this time we had an arborist from Trav's Trees to check all the trees and prune. He has continued to do this every six months, plus clear for specific projects like the Birch Forest. The existing magnificent gums require maintenance and care plus the Louis Van Houtte golden elm has a "beetle" injection every three years to ensure the stunning lime green foliage is at its best.

Birch Forest

It was easy to be overwhelmed but we started with a Birch Forest after clearing the pittosporums, of course following Edna's advice of a bucket of lemons to determine where to plant. I underplanted later with hellebores, clivias, bulbs such as bluebells, daffodils, snowdrops and granny's bonnets (aquilegia). The silver birches are growing tall and always look good, no matter what the season.

Wisteria Colonnade

Wisteria was another of Edna's favourites. On the back fence there was a very old and out of control specimen, perfect for what we had in mind. It was purple and I planted a white and a pink one each side to form a "room" over the colonnade. Mary Lou Pittard made a wisteria tile panel for the floor which is perfect and a real feature. Next to it are 20 westringia balls (native rosemary), red hot poker (kniphofia), smoke bush (cotinus), sedums and



GARDEN NOTES

different elm trees to give the autumn red “impact” colour.

Secret Garden

The idea of a secret garden had been with me forever. I loved the film and I had the spot to do it under the Louis Van Houttee golden elm. It has a crumbling entrance and inside are snapdragons, blue salvias, succulents in pots and cumquats. Over the wall hangs a banksia tree where the yellow-cheeked black cockatoos crunch the nut shells and squark. On the walls and in the paving are more tiles by Mary Lou Pittard featuring birds, like the yellow spiny honeyeater and native plants such as correas and grevilleas from the garden.

Woodland

Once you walk out of the Secret Garden you can go left. It leads you to the woodland, past the fernery, heuchera and salvias of all colours, up to the boardwalk and into the crab apple walk. Edna loved crab apples and I have planted many colours from bright pink to dusty white. They have a short blossom time where they really shine and look perfect with the backdrop of 20 waterhousia “weeping lilly pilly”, straw flowers, succulents, grevillea and native bottle brushes. Here we built a 30 metre dry stone wall along the pathway. It took us a week and was tough work but everyone said it was something they had always wanted to try - so we did it. Edna would have been impressed!

The Bank

This part of the garden is seen from the conservatory and my study so it has to be interesting and colourful. Iris, miniature carnations, campanula, more roses and lots of native plants held together with seaside daisies fill this space. The dazzling feature in early spring is the cherry blossom with the wisteria in the background. It is the subject of many photos. Along the verandah is another well established wisteria which hangs like a curtain with bees and wasps hanging around.

Up the brick steps takes you to the chicken pens and the edible garden with fig, pear and lemon trees. We grow perpetual spinach, coriander, sage, parsley and in summer, as many tomatoes as we can. The chicken flock includes many different varieties but the silkies have to be the favourite. Most of the flock are just for display but there are two Isa Browns whose only job is to lay eggs – which they do !

Kitchen Garden

Standing at the kitchen sink you look into the Kitchen Garden, which has struggled, enclosed in a willow fence. It is very dark but grows celery and cyclamens really well. Mint also does well (very little skill required) as well as parsley and fennel. I have put about 20 hanging pots on the fence behind and fill them with seasonal colour - not strictly “kitchen” but nice to look at! It turns out herbs like a lot of sun.

Visitors

To make sure birds came to Uccello Lane, in many places we placed drinking bowls and bird baths and planted natives throughout the garden including correas and callistemons. We see king parrots, rosellas, gang gangs and of course the relentlessly cheerful kookaburras. Kangaroos rush through the property regularly or laze under the big trees, relaxing. We think we have rabbit proofed the whole fence but daily we realise that is not the case.

So....

There is now a path around the whole garden and along the way we have mulched tons and tons while installing a drip system irrigation throughout to run off the existing irrigation and the four water tanks. There are seats hidden amongst the birdhouses and behind trees as well as a big wooden apple with a cluster of mushrooms to greet you as you arrive. Wrought iron gates, made from old verandah posts and handrails future proof our garden so we can still stroll around for years to come. All the steps have been bricked with pathways and boardwalks built to be safe, seamlessly moving from one level to another. It is a garden of discovery just as Edna would have loved - and you will too!

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Blog at [Http://www.uccellolane.com](http://www.uccellolane.com)



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