

GARDEN NOTES

CASSINGTON WOOD

The love and peace of a family garden can be found in this hidden “secret garden and habitat” in Eltham. The house was designed to capture garden views from each window. The only rooms that do not have a garden view are the master bedroom and ensuite for which we built the flood lit fernery behind the wall near the carport.

Cassington Wood is a “gardener’s garden”. A garden where you will find plants from cuttings and seeds collected over the years. Some 42 years ago, along with our two young children, Sue and Christopher, we set about to build a home and create a garden. Sue and Christopher enjoyed working alongside us, and now our grandchildren enjoy doing this as well.

There are approximately seven acres of ground which can be recognised in three parts. There is what we call our Multi Cultural Garden, the formal areas around the drive and house. Then there is our Bush Garden which compliments and supports a vibrant habitat link. The third area is the Gully where two dams accommodate the many water birds and native animals who make it their home. The two dams feed automatically to our extensive garden irrigation system.

Formal Garden

The formal garden was all developed by hand with shovel, picks and wheelbarrows as a family. There were no landscapers or mechanical help. The main driveway follows all the way to the gully which was an old road dating back to the early 1900’s. A wonderful man called Frank Stokes told us of how, in those early days, the horse and carriages would come down our drive/road and turn right at the big tree to attend Church in a timber building.

The English Box hedges were developed from just two small plants from which we took our cuttings. The curves and corners help to give definition and a compelling invitation to investigate what is around the corner.

The vegetable garden has served us well over the years, however as the need and demand has diminished, we find Chris growing her peonies, dahlias and gladioli there for picking as cut flowers in the house.

Gardeners enjoy our potting shed and shade houses where all our propagation and seed raising takes place. Our tuberous begonias rest there over the winter, waiting to display their magnificent flowers in the ferneries in summer.

Some areas in the garden are in the process of being replanted as shrubs meet their use by date. Keep your eyes looking for our resident echidna who loves to keep the ants at bay. Also the smaller birds such as honeyeaters, wrens and spotted pardalotes, thrive in among the shrubbery. Take time to sit and linger on our many garden seats and enjoy the miracles that grow out of a lump of soil.

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Bush Reserve

Our family has always seen our property as a vital habitat link for our native flora and fauna. This bush area is reserved solely for local plants and trees. Below the tennis court there is a pathway to what we see as a bird-call point. A place where we listen to the birds in the quietness of the bush, while watching the beautiful blue wrens dance around our feet. The campfire spot is wonderful in all seasons, but especially when the grandchildren arrive with their catch of yabbies from the dams, ready to cook.

We have our family of kangaroos and a small group of black wallabies who have made their home here. Unfortunately, we have a large influx of deer, who plunder our new tree plantings and trample the wildflowers and bush orchids into the ground. Enjoy the kookaburras, magpies and a flock of white winged choughs who all nest here, parading their young each year.

We have been community tree planters most of our lives, and one of the sheds is dedicated to the use of Eltham Rotary who store their materials ready for the many planting initiatives they undertake.

Watery Gully

The water gully consists of two dams and grassed areas. This has a dual purpose. Firstly to provide water for our Formal Garden and secondly as a haven and habitat for water birds. Cormorants, white herons and blue cranes, along with black and wood ducks find refuge within the waters and grasses in the springtime. The large dead tree near the bottom gate, with its many openings, is a much sought after location for parrots and cockatoos to nest each year. A pair of wedge tail eagles have made their home in the gully and this year we were thrilled to see two offspring learning to fly. There are fish in the dams that have found their way up from the Yarra River in flood times.

Explore and enjoy the peace and beauty of our garden. Funds raised will go to The Eltham Rural Group, who have been helping community groups within the Shire of Nillumbik for 65 years.

A warm welcome to you. *Chris and Alan Field*

Cassington Wood is located on the lands of the Wurundjeri People. Open Gardens Victoria wishes to acknowledge the Traditional custodians of this land 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

