

GARDEN NOTES

Emu Park

The Emu Park garden, comprising approximately 2 hectares, is situated in an agricultural setting (merino sheep & Angus cattle farm) and has evolved over 28 years. When we moved from a neighbouring farm it was pleasing to find that the new garden had “good bones”, in that it was set in park-like grounds with numerous apple box eucalypts, spotted gums and red gums which are indigenous to the area. There was an expansive lawn area and agapanthus hedges lining the driveway, but little in the way of garden beds. It took some time to decide what plantings we wanted as, with a relatively young family, we did not have the time, nor wish to become “slaves” to the garden.

We began by planting a large number of deciduous trees (Chinese elms, silver birches, ashes, crab apples, Chinese liquidambar and English elm) in order to have shade closer to the house in the warm summer months, as well as planting some garden beds. These garden beds expanded over time, as family commitments lessened and the garden then became a real passion on retirement.

Unfortunately many of the original plants and shrubs had died as a result of the number of severe droughts experienced. What exists today in the garden is testament to its hardiness. Further choice of plants was dictated by similar varieties of original plants that had survived. More effort was also put into mulching as well as improving the soil. A benefit of living on a farm was the ready access to manure and hay which did wonders for the soil.

The garden currently is a combination of both traditional and modern design with many garden beds to wander through, comprising roses, cottage style plants, nandinas, succulents, grasses (including lomandra and dianella varieties), kangaroo paw, mediterranean plants and native shrubs in the drier areas. There is also a maple walk which was incorporated into the garden approximately four years ago and provides a focal point looking from the house, and when entering the house, via the driveway. A number of arbours, sculptures, pots filled with different plants and seating areas can be found along the wanderer’s journey.

One of the aims of the garden is a place of relaxation, the seats provided to just sit and be “in the moment”. As a retired psychologist, it was important to find areas that offered a sense of retreat. It is also a garden with secret corners and paths where the gardener loves to share her time and garden with her grandchildren, who enjoy playing hide and seek, hiding behind trees and large shrubs. There is a sense of whimsy too, old garden tools and small steel statues in certain places which attract the attention of visitors

At the rear of the house, productive fruit trees and vegetable plots have been planted which keep the gardener busy throughout the year with bottling, preserving and cooking (another favourite pastime.)

All in all, the garden involves much hard labour, patience and persistence, but the reward is what makes it so addictive.

These notes can be downloaded from the Open Gardens Victoria website:

www.opengardensvictoria.org.au