

GARDEN NOTES

Graham Garden

Rick and I moved into 22 Rose Street Bentleigh in 1978.

Beechworth was built in 1926 and we bought the house from the estate of the original owner. I loved the fact that we were only the second owners of this 'renovator's delight' Californian bungalow.

I have had 43 years of fun playing in the garden here. Firstly as a new gardener learning how to grow plants, killing the odd one or three as all gardeners do, then continually experimenting with new combinations and introducing new areas as we gained confidence and experience. Working with plants is the best teacher in the world as observation becomes so important in working out what makes plants happy.

Some of the original plantings in the driveway and the rear garden have been retained although several trees had to be removed because they were old and unproductive. I am forever grateful to the original owner for introducing me to *Camellia* 'Magnoliaflora', *Campanula muralis* and the winter beauty of japonica.

The very first thing we planted was the silver birch in the front garden and this tree has dictated the plantings ever since. Roots from the birch and the melaleuca in the nature strip are extensive throughout the front garden and the original rose plantings failed to thrive. And so began the search for plants that would survive these conditions, as well as drought, and I have been experimenting with hardy shrubs, succulents and perennials ever since.

The rear garden has several large trees – jacaranda, acers, crepe myrtles and a michelia doltsopa with a white flowering banksia rose entwined through it. I love these trees, even the old cotoneaster, as they provide canopy which creates beautiful patterns of light and shade over the garden.

The grapefruit tree is now huge and does a great job of hiding our clothes line. The fruit is in great demand from the locals who say it is sensational. I created a perennial garden around the perimeter of the tree and in the early days, whenever I needed space, I would dig up more lawn and extend the garden beds so I could plant my most recent acquisitions - always the most satisfying day's work!!!

Roses have performed better in the back garden and the perennials have been chosen to complement their various colours. Favourite perennials are campanula, echinacea, euphorbia, limonium, nepeta, species geranium, salvias, sedums and tulbaghia.

As our family grew up we no longer needed play equipment, so the garden changed to what it is today - although the demands of dogs and now grandchildren have also made a significant contribution to the garden layout.

Memory also plays an important part of this garden. The hydrangeas under the jacaranda have all been taken as cuttings from my mother's garden 35 years ago. They were meant to be potted up for the local school fete but they are still there and are a highlight every summer.



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The low walled garden in the courtyard is a favourite area although the trees have now created more difficult conditions to the extent that pots are now used to create foliage interest throughout the year. I love the curved feature wall and the *Acer japonicum* 'Vitifolium', with its springtime growth, looks beautiful against the now muted wall colour.

My garden style is 'controlled wild' with plant growth exploding into spring and there is always something new emerging every day.

Welcome to my garden - I hope you enjoy your visit.

Mary Graham.

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www.opengardensvictoria.org.au