

## HEDGEHOGS

### Background

The garden at Hedgehogs surrounds a 1923 farmhouse situated just north of Castlemaine. The climate is hot with dry summers and cold winters and some frosts. The soil is clay - poor, shallow and rocky. Luckily the property has a water right which has allowed us to have the productive food garden we now enjoy. The owners have lived at Hedgehogs for 32 years.

### Garden Development

The original house did not have a garden, just a scrappy lawn, a lilac, a couple of gums, two crab apples and an *Apricot Nectar* rose. What was obvious is that this area supported a varied bird life and with judicious planting the garden could become a haven for both the owners and the birds. The main criteria for the garden were:

- It needed to be dynamic, not linear - the gravel paths and dry creek bed all curve or are sneak paths leading to surprises. The garden beds are either gravel or soil.
- It needed to be peaceful and blend into the surrounding landscape, thus there is a lot of green with gentle blues, mauves, purple, cream, soft apricot and white as the predominant colours. More vibrant crimsons etc. are just points of interest.
- The need for visible water was paramount. The garden has two ponds, one made by Gordon Ford of Naturalistic Garden fame and the other by the owner. A small dam in the back area is surrounded by yellow iris. Birdbaths are strategically placed.
- The owners both work with metal constructions so the need for the works to be placed within the garden and to have sculptures is intrinsic to the overall plan. Most of the paved areas, gates, fences, tables, arches and the large orchard construction, as well as the pizza oven, were "home made".
- Food production is vital and an area to be set aside for this, including an orchard, berry area, potager and a potting shed were included.

### The Garden Layout

**North facing, front of house:** This includes a Gordon Ford frog pond with a small waterfall surrounded by granite boulders; part of this area contains three beautifully clipped creeping saltbushes - *Rhagodia Deltophylla* which look like strange animals overlooking the sculpture garden. Also, one finds a secret garden entered through an archway leading into a peaceful area surrounding the original *Malus Purpurea*, and a seedling from the original lilac on the property. Directly in front of the veranda is a curved bed of *the rose Apricot Nectar*.

The bed outside the sitting room window has a beautiful wisteria under planted with *Cotyledon Orbiculata* and *Nepeta Walkers Blue*.

## GARDEN NOTES

**Western area:** Directly below the veranda is a large, paved brick area with seating surrounding an old red box. Below this are three stone gardens planted with mainly natives with the occasional rosemary or salvia. Further down the slope are original gums with beds of correas, everlastings and chocolate lilies. The windbreak areas are mixed hakeas, acacias, westringia, eremophila, callistemon and gums and a number of Manchurian pears give autumn interest. There is also an arched seating area covered by a white *Mrs Albert Carriere* rose and a yellow *Banksia* rose.

**Southern area:** The area nearest the house is well shaded and so in one of the beds we can grow camellia, abutilon, windflowers and Helleborus *Foetidus*. Other beds support *Ceratostigma Willmottianum* with its deep blue flowers and in autumn, its red toned leaves. *Berberis Thunbergii* and *Cotinus Coggygria* thrive here as well as flax and Hebe *Salignifolia*. On the right there is a paved area and a beautiful wood fire pizza oven made by one of the owners. This section overlooks the more open areas leading down to the 80-metre dry creek bed with occasional side plantings. A small dam surrounded by water iris is below this. There is also a gravel area with cactus and an old mini bantam house. A beautiful ha-ha wall separates the top garden and the open areas. There are further beds in this area, mainly planted with roses, day lilies, grevilleas and callistemon.

**Eastern area:** Close to the house roses grow on the walls of our walled garden and trees give shade - a lime robinia, crepe myrtle *Natchez* and *Melia Azedarach* (White Cedar). A White wisteria winds its way along a pergola. Shrubs include *Exocordia Racemosa* (Pearl Bush), cistus *Salviifolius* and phlomis. Many sages are grown here - *Phyllis Fancy*, *Meigan's Magic* and *Amistad*, and a small pond supports 17 goldfish. Beyond the wall is the central drive area, a quince walk, a grevillea bed and a rose covered archway leading to the food production area.

**Food Production Area.** We grow avocados and citrus in microclimates - with north facing curved walls and coverings against frosts; and persimmons in their own fruit cage. There is a large wire covered orchard for mulberry, fig, olive, plum, nashi, cherry, peach, plumcot and apples and another for berries and for grapes. The heritage pear *Doyenne du Comice* has its own fruit house. As well there is a large potager with seven shrub roses in pink and mauve tones, many vegetables and a smaller area for asparagus, dahlia and pumpkins. Plantings of picking flowers are dispersed.... French Delbard dahlias and the roses *Just Joey* and *Dallas*.

**Please enjoy your visit. Margot and Morry.**

***Hedgehogs is located on the lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung people. Open Gardens Victoria wish to acknowledge the Traditional custodians and we pay respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging.***

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