

“Gollion” Garden Notes

History

“Gollion” Farm’s extensive garden is over 30 years old. When we purchased the farm in 1983, we selected this house site, in the side of the hill to be protected from the wind. The garden was then a paddock with just a few stringybark trees (*Euc. macrorhyncha*). We decided our priorities for the garden were trees, a degree of self sufficiency in both fruit and vegetables, and flowers all year round both for a colourful garden and for picking for vases. As we built a passive solar house, we first planted deciduous trees to the north, to shade the house in summer, but also to let sunlight into the house in winter. These were planted in a semi-circle with drippers for the first few years. The largest tree is a desert ash (*Fraxinus angustifolia*) which provides wonderful shade in summer – it has obviously benefitted from water running off the vegetable garden. Other trees include liquidambers, maple, oak, crabapple (*Malus*), *Robinia*, *Prunus* and box elder.

Vegetables

The vegetable garden consists of a series of raised beds plus some wicking beds made from recycled tanks. The raised beds are predominantly for brassicas and salad leaves in winter, as well as asparagus and broad beans in spring. We set up the wicking beds last year when we found vegetables were not doing well competing with the desert ash’s roots. The large tank (originally a garden water tank until a tree fell on it) has a beautiful mural, of autumn fruits and vegetables painted by artist Clare Thackway. Berries (raspberries and boysenberries) are grown under the shadecloth for late spring fruit. Vegetables are also grown in a rotating yard system with the chooks.

More trees

Around the perimeter fence we planted many different wattles –these look great through winter. However they are relatively short-lived, so after 15-20 years we planted a series of new lot of wattles - this time mainly smaller varieties, like Snowy River wattle, (*Acacia boormanii*), to prevent the damage of big trees falling over, plus with pruning these should last longer. Below the driveway, in front of the lower orchards are some almond trees kept for their early blossom. The cockatoos are the only ones to taste the actual almonds!

Flowers

Along the north side of the house, by the brick pavers, there are violets and hellebores in winter, then many different daffodils in early spring followed by freesias, bluebells and iris.. The tennis court has climbing roses, most of which are grown from cuttings, so they are nameless. On the eastern side of the house, bordering the driveway there are many roses; David Austin, Hybrid teas and Floribundas, with several old favourites like First Love, Just Joey, Apricot Nectar and Mutabalis. The roses are underplanted with snowflakes (*Leucojum aestivum*), violets, iris, hollyhocks and lilioms as well as several large rhubarb plants. On the carport is a large white banksia rose, a sasanqua camellia and a climbing Dorothy Perkins Rose.

On the south side of the house, near the swimming pool, is a cottage garden with several self –sown annuals including poppies, borage and hollyhocks. There are some shrubs such as Salvia Hot lips and Weigela, and herbaceous perennials of wallflowers, bog sage and penstemons. In addition this bed has tubers, rhizomes and bulbs of tulips, irises and dahlias. Along the edge of the house on the south are hydrangeas for summer flowers and both Japonica and Sasanqua camellias for winter and spring. The Clematis armandii by the front door, is stunning now and that will be followed by the large Cecile Brunner climbing rose.

Orchards

A feature of the garden is the three orchards, two of which are netted. One has the older trees; stone and pome fruits, a fig, a pomegranate, quinces and hazelnuts planted in 1983-84. Some of the original stone fruit trees are nearing the end of their lives so we have been gradually replacing these with both new and old varieties. The two large walnut trees are only now starting to bear well. The fruit trees start bearing in November with cherries and end in June, with apples and pears.

Another orchard has younger trees with later varieties of apples, like Lady William and Pink Lady and new varieties of other fruits. The youngest orchard is mostly figs, grown from cuttings from our original 32 year old Black Genoa tree. The orchards are grazed by the sheep in winter, with the added benefit they eat any old fruit left on the ground, thus minimising disease. In summer there is the low growing, summer native perennial grass, *Microlaena stipoides* under the trees plus we leave some dry grass to attract beneficial insects, as this is run as an organic orchard. The netting is available from Gregsons in SA. For more details on the orchard please join my son, Sam for an orchard tour at 11am, 1pm or 3 pm each day - meet at the orchard gate near the broad bean bed.

Farm

Gollion Farm is run on organic principles, with no artificial fertilizer, just fish hydrolysate (an excellent use of old tuna), worm juice from our worm farms and compost tea, made from our large compost heaps. The ingredients for our hot compost heaps varies, but includes dry leaves, comfrey, borage, nettles, seaweed, grass clippings and Tagasaste (see below). These compost heaps are made in a few hours and reach 65 °C, ensuring any weed seeds are killed. We have a commercial Angus beef herd, holistically managed, plus a small flock of Dorper ewes, for fat lambs - these shed their wool, so do not require shearing. The first farm trees we planted were permaculture trees. i.e. multifunctional. So the white flowering plantations are Tagasaste or Tree lucerne (*Chaemaecytisus palmensis*) – we can feed these branches to the stock in time of drought and we chip large quantities which form the staple ingredient in our compost, as it has the perfect ratio of C: N of 30:1. Along the driveway leading to the house are Honey Locust trees (*Gleditizia*) – these have enormous edible pods for the sheep. On the farm we also have mixed native plantations from both tubestock and direct seeding, as well as deciduous trees grown from acorns for the added soil carbon content from the dropped leaves in autumn.

Plants for Sale

I have pots for sale of some of more unusual plants like Solomon's Seal, Corydalis and Wallflower, as well as hanging baskets I have prepared. A complete list can be found at the glasshouse where the plants will be for sale. This is a Pink Ribbon event with sales from plants, tea, coffee and cake going to Breast Cancer research, in memory of my mother who set me along this path to gardening! Thanks to The Sutton Bakery for bread and Barrio Collective Coffee in Braddon for their coffee. We can recommend The Sutton Bakery if you are after a close lunch spot.

Jane Vincent.