

**‘Evalees’  
1494 Marked Tree Road,  
Gundaroo, NSW.**



*“And so I went on one of my favourite drives, my favourite routes, which is through Gundaroo, up over the hill, down to Collector...., and I think it's the place that I always take visitors. That's what Australia's like, the distance, the height, the clarity, and the fact that there's nothing there, but everything is there.” – Rosalie Gascoigne.*

**History:**

In 2000, a chance drive took us along the above mentioned road. In subsequent trips along the same road, with the memorable views of Lake George, we noticed a ‘For Sale’ sign on this block of land. “All of the stars seemed aligned” and we went ahead with the purchase of the land. The block of land on which sheep grazed had been previously owned for a remarkable fifty years. We named the block after the previous owner.

We spent two happy years leading clandestine lives escaping the suburbs of Canberra to plant trees, with our dog, on most weekends. Native trees, especially local ones were the first plants of choice. Somewhere, we decided to have a sustainable house designed and built so we could spend more time in the environment, while continuing to commute to Canberra for work.

**Size:**

The total block size is 80 hectares while the house garden area is approximately 800m x 100m.

**Soil and Vegetation:**

The Site and Soil Assessment Report prepared for the building indicated a rich surface loam to a depth of 15cm grading to a silty loam then light clay subsoil. Total soil depth is around 70 – 80cm. The vegetation in that report stated “The present vegetation at the site is luxuriant cover of native perennial grasses, predominantly microlaena and danthonia. The management of the site has taken these grasses into consideration and all efforts have been taken to encourage the growth of these grasses. A visiting Greening Australia consultant mentioned that the place would be unrecognizable without grazing animals. Regrowth has occurred, only halted by dry periods.

**Garden philosophy:**

We moved in in late 2003. In this harsh hot/cold/dry climate, we imagined a garden of rocks and grasses. In fact, we have been rewarded with apparently good soil and our plants enjoy the environment

as much as we do. The design philosophy was to compliment the views of Lake George rather than compete and to emphasize the undulations of the Lake George Range.

The garden 'plan' is informal and always evolving. The initial native plantings were watered by hand and took some time to establish. Subsequent plantings are the result of seed collection or propagation from cuttings, often with a connection to family and friends.

#### **Barriers:**

There are intentionally no fenced areas as we choose to live with our wild yet friendly animals – kangaroos, wallabies, lizards, shinglebacks, echidnas and wombats together with a large range of very welcome birds. Individual trees have been protected using a variety of guards ranging from wire mesh to plastic mesh and the common plastic sheeting supported by cane sticks - greening Australia literally.

#### **Events:**

Two of our daughters were married on this site and plantings have occurred to reflect these events. The first was in October, 2001 and the trees and garden to the South of the house were planted to commemorate that event. The second was in April, 2005 after a house had been built and twenty-seven groups planted various native memory trees to the North of the house.

#### **Gardens:**

As a family we have lived in a number of countries and some plantings have been made to reflect these experiences. We lived in Kent in a village adjacent to Sevenoaks. With this in mind we planted seven oaks grown from acorns, collected in the streets of Red Hill, ACT, in a semi circle in the upper lawn area.

Many trips to Japan since 2010 have inspired us to plant specimens seen there. We named this area Arisugawa Park after a local garden in the Hiroo region of Tokyo.

Gardens have been named to reflect places where our children and grandchildren have lived. The Boston garden contains tree 'faces'. The Sydney and Melbourne gardens reflect experiences in those cities. A memory garden, a Memorial garden and a Heart Garden have personal significance. A fairy tree and a den created by the grandchildren add to the interest of the garden.

#### **Fruit Trees and vegetables:**

A number of fruit trees including apple, pear, nectarine, crabapple, quince, damson plum, fig, cherry, mulberry, blueberry, and olive tree together with vegetable areas are in the establishment phase. Citrus trees include lime, cumquat, lemon, finger lime and mandarin.

#### **Quirky Installations:**

Small sculptural installations involving wood, seeds and pods have been erected throughout the garden areas to create light hearted , fun and colourful elements.

**Come along and see for yourself.**

