

A message from the President

Hi to all our members and a very Happy Christmas and prosperous New Year! Spring is now over and we are in the final stages of planning for the Autumn gardens in 2018. Special thanks to all our members who supported the Spring open gardens in record numbers, we had over 700 visitors to Tour Rouge alone.

Our hard working Committee member Sally, has managed to have enough “volunteers” to man the entrances to all the gardens so far which was a terrific effort considering we had 3 gardens open on one weekend each requiring 8 helpers, so thanks to our volunteers. Our garden selection committee (Tom, Jane, Ross, Sue and Deirdre) have put together a great schedule of gardens for autumn. Full details will be available in the near future on the website but see below for early details of the Autumn 2018 season.

Our new Secretary Sue has updated the Facebook page and Deirdre has the Open Gardens Canberra website humming along but would welcome some assistance (see below). Treasurer Meryll has been handling the finances, doing a special Treasurer’s report to line up our financial year and making sure all the garden entrances have the “Float” and tickets etc promptly, a sterling effort. Then there have been many new members and lots of renewals to have Ian very busy updating the membership records and issuing new membership cards.

Lastly and most importantly thanks to our garden owners who work very hard to have their respective gardens at their peak and be available on opening days to respond to visitor enquiries. Our organisation would not exist without your support, so a huge vote of thanks.

Chris Lord, President

What did you think of our spring program?

We’d love to hear your feedback on our spring program, what you liked, what you didn’t like or anything you feel we could do better. If you have any comments, feel free to send an email to info@opengardenscanberra.org.au or write to us at:

Open Gardens Canberra
PO Box 344
Jamison Centre ACT 2614

Photo - Tour Rouge - opened 25 & 26 November 2017



Autumn 2018 Open Gardens

Planning is almost complete with the following gardens to be featured, subject to last minute changes, in February, March and April 2018. Further details will be available on our website soon. Our next newsletter in February 2018 will have details of the final program.

February 24th & 25th

Dragonflies and Bluebees

19 A/Beckett St, Watson. ACT

This suburban oasis features a natural water pool from which you can admire the water lilies, lotus and water poppies. The garden is highly productive, containing vegetables and herbs. Espaliered pear, plum and apple trees are features, together with cherry, quince, apricot, feijoa, pomegranate and grapes. The Maran chooks enjoy their home under the inoculated hazelnut trees as the owners await their first truffles. Good design ensures that local native plantings (especially correas) integrate beautifully into this productive garden.



March 24th & 25th

Haven

31 Drooka Crescent, Crace. ACT

This attractive garden on a 540m² flat block is just 5 years old and has achieved the owner's aims to design a garden which is both easily maintained and fully accessible. Being a cottage garden there is interest 12 months of the year be it colour, flower, shape and/or foliage and the garden includes many rare and unusual plants both native and non-native. The backyard has a chook run, fruit and vegetable garden, and several potted citrus trees to complement the owner's plot at the nearby community garden (also open this weekend). Despite its petite dimensions, there is even space for a patch of real lawn!



Crace Community Garden

Drooka Crescent, Crace ACT

Crace is a Canberra Organic Growers Community Garden - this is a relatively new suburb so the garden is providing a great opportunity for locals to get to know each other. The 2000-square-metre garden was built by Crace's developers; there are 30 raised garden beds of varying sizes, and a few larger plots are shared by up to four ploholders each. Around the perimeter are rosemary, lavender and blueberry bushes as well as fruit trees such as pomegranates and feijoas. Free entry.

Loraine and Geoff's Garden

93 Macfarland Place, Pearce ACT

This garden flows beautifully, providing comfort and inspiration and framing views of nearby Mount Taylor. Careful plantings, featuring diverse and effective groundcovers, draw your eye to different garden rooms. A feature of the front garden are the 'steppable' plants in lieu of a front lawn. In the back garden the sloping land allows a beautiful dry creek to run diagonally from top to bottom, linking ponds at either end. Diverse plantings surround several seating areas in which to relax and chat.

April 7th & 8th

McLeod's Creek Reserve,

Marked Tree Rd, Gundaroo NSW

McLeods Creek Nature Reserve was created in August 2010. It covers an area of 204ha. and is currently being restored to preserve the White box –Yellow Box- Blakelys Red Gum Woodland and Natural Temperate Grassland . Daily walks will be lead by Rainer Rehwinkel. Free.

Evalees

1494 Marked Tree Road, Gundaroo NSW

An informal country garden with views of Lake George. The garden has extensive native grass areas with informal plantings of native and exotic tree. The garden designs have been developed to complement rather than compete with the landscape. There are colourful beds of shrubs and flowers with designated areas and garden names corresponding to places/people/events in the families' lives. The garden has many quirky additions that will delight children.

April 14th & 15th

The Oaks Estate Garden

35 William St, Oaks Estate. NSW

Two gardens, back to back, are set in a quiet, well treed neighbourhood of Oaks Estate, in a very historic part of the Region near the Queanbeyan River. The gardens have much to interest all, but characterised by many autumn flowering perennials and shrubs. Native planted areas contrast with more reflective corners, vegetable gardens and the poultry run.

15th April - 10 am to 3 pm

Fetherston Gardens - A Heritage event.

Unwin St, Weston. ACT

The Gardens comprise 3.5 hectares of urban parkland with a small arboretum, and woodland gardens. The vegetation is mixed, but includes some outstanding mature yellow box trees. Free guided walks.



H2OK: Keeping our waterways healthy is a call to action to protect our local waterways, lakes and ponds by preventing pollutants from entering our stormwater system. The program was launched in February 2017 and runs until June 2019 across the ACT and the surrounding NSW regions of Cooma, Queanbeyan and Yass.

It is part of the ACT Healthy Waterways project jointly funded by the Australian and ACT governments which also includes the construction of water quality infrastructure and stormwater research across the ACT and region.

H2OK Keeping our waterways healthy was developed in response to the results of a 2015 catchment-wide survey of the ACT and region that revealed low catchment literacy in the community as well as limited knowledge about the types of actions that lead to poor water quality. Monitoring further shows that many creeks and waterways in urban areas are not healthy, due mainly to contaminated stormwater run-off. With the population increasing, pressure on the ACT and region's lakes and rivers will continue to grow and have a negative impact on water quality downstream in the Murrumbidgee River system and the wider Murray-Darling Basin.

Diffuse pollution is part of the problem. It comes from urban and rural residential areas, building and construction activities as well as from farms and commercial areas. The main problems are fertilisers, soil, septic sewage systems and organics like leaves as well as rubbish, cigarette butts, chemicals, oil, paint and pet poo.

Gardeners can demonstrate best practice in making their gardens water and catchment sensitive. To help motivate people to do so, the H2OK program has provided grant funding to 15 garden and rural residential property owners to undertake projects that demonstrate best practice. These gardens are being progressively opened for others to visit and benefit from their experience. Open Gardens Canberra is helping with opening these gardens to visitors. The first of these gardens to open will be in the autumn of 2018.

For more information go to <http://www.environment.act.gov.au/water/ACT-Healthy-Waterways/h2ok/demonstration-sites-grants-program>

Membership

If you haven't already done so, you can still renew your membership to Open Gardens Canberra and enjoy the benefits of membership until 31 August 2018. The \$25 membership fee will give you free access to all of the gardens to be opened in our Autumn Season.

Membership may be paid in one of three ways:

1. by cheque/ postal order mailed to PO Box 344, Jamison Centre ACT 2614
2. by Bank Transfer to BSB 633 000 A/c no. 155187628 Reference is: your name.
3. by cash at the first Open Garden you attend in the season.

Volunteers

Once again, many thanks to our volunteers who attended the entrance desk at each open garden, taking payments, renewing memberships and generating new ones, giving advice and information, tallying up the takings at the end of the day and maintaining a welcoming presence in all weathers.

Seven open gardens translated to 56 shifts, each 3½ hours. 35 volunteers filled these shifts. Of these, four people did three shifts (you get a gold star!), 13 people did two shifts (silver star!) and 18 did a single shift (also a glittering star!).

Included in these figures are seven committee members, one son and one friend. The rest are Open Gardens Canberra members who had indicated on their membership forms that they would be willing to help out at an open garden.

Clearly we cannot open gardens without this support, so to all those who so generously gave their time, many thanks. A couple also happily responded to last minute changes to their shifts. Again, many thanks.

We have several new members offering to help at the entrance desk, so the pool of volunteers is growing. Don't be afraid to encourage your friends to become members and volunteers. The rewards are evident in the very positive feedback we receive.

Website assistance

Open Gardens Canberra would welcome the assistance of someone who has website skills to help maintain and develop our Wordpress website. Please contact Deirdre on 0417 937513 if you are interested.

Facebook – C'mon like us!

The Open Gardens Canberra Facebook page is proving very popular with around 70 new followers over the spring season. If you haven't already done so, join our little Facebook community and receive updates on our open gardens and other gardening events happening in and around the Canberra region.



Wanna Bee a Beekeeper?

There are many reasons for keeping bees other than to harvest one of life's sweeteners. To name but one is their importance in providing a pollination service which has recently gained wide recognition.

There are bee owners, plenty of them, and then there are keepers of bees. Those are the ones with gentle productive bees.

This is your choice. One is to buy a beehive, relegate it to a corner of the back yard, forget about it and then wonder why the bees are too cranky to approach – a real danger to life and

limb – why they rarely produce a drop of honey and also how to deal with stroppy neighbours plagued by swarms and stingers.

The alternative is to be a keeper of bees, people proud of having bees and who want – like the family dog or chooks – to look after them well. This reflects an old adage: 'Look after your bees and the bees will look after you'.

So before taking up the dream, think about the commitment needed to manage bees effectively. I'd recommend joining any one of a number of beekeeping groups such as the Beekeepers Association of the ACT before making that first step. Find out about how to keep healthy, gentle, productive bees before spending all that hard earned cash on a bewildering array of bee gear or on bees that may be diseased or pretty useless.



Telling the Bees – Wikipedia

European culture is steeped in the custom of 'Telling the Bees'. You tell the bees of misfortune and important events such as welcoming a new child into the world 'less you neglect the bees and they swarm'. But bees have their own story to tell and I think that is a good enough reason to keep them well.

There are many bee groups you can join before committing yourself to the challenging journey of keeping your own bees. One option is to simply come along to a meeting of the Beekeepers Association of the ACT, a friendly show with a burgeoning membership. We meet at 7.30 pm on the third Thursday of every month at Yarralumla Primary School– except December – and we have a show and tell session at our Jerrabomberra Wetlands Apiary. It sports a wide range of hive types and different races of honey bee and we try to keep gentle tractable bees, the sort we hope you would want to keep. To find out more, check the club website at <http://www.actbeekeepers.asn.au/>

The beekeeping club has other interests, for example an active insect (native wasp and solitary bee) hotel construction program. These hotels can be constructed from the simplest of natural materials and are an alternative entree into the world of beekeeping. The native bees are excellent 'buzz' pollinators of tomatoes and cucurbits while the wasps help zap veggie and fruit tree pests.

Alan Wade

ACT Beekeepers Apiary Manager