

'The Finch Farmlet'



Welcome to 'The Finch Farmlet', home of Chris and Warwick Finch.

The main attraction here is our recently established water feature, although we also have chickens, fruit trees, small vegetable patches, a shade house, a polycarbonate glasshouse, a worm farm and a composting area. The block is about 900m².

The early days



We bought our home in 1990, but things have evolved quite a lot over the past 28 years.

The main infrastructure (curvy cement paths, split level backyard, semicircular driveway) was already in place when we moved in.

The original grounds were perfect for our two young daughters, with plenty of lawns to run around on; a swing set on the top back level; a sandpit on the lower level (where the pond now is); a cubby house (now used as a garden shed); and a fairy garden out the front (now enclosed as a craft room known as 'The Burrow').

As they became teenagers, a gazebo-enclosed hot tub and a shaded barbecue deck became more appropriate additions to the yard. With water restrictions, the lawns became mulched gardens and paved areas - with the exception of one small patch of grass saved for nostalgic reasons.

Recent refurbishments



While we both worked and raised our family the garden received only minimal care, but was always a well-loved respite. Now that we're both retired, we are making it into a little oasis in which to relax.

The hedge out front provides privacy and sound-muffling from the main street. The side privacy screens were installed as the properties either side of us were developed into dual occupancies. The koi pond has been our biggest investment, adding serenity and sanctuary. Birds come down to bathe in the waterfall, and bees sip the moisture from around the edge. Pitcher plants do well there too, and garden art adds extra interest.

Urban homesteading



We have also tried to make our yard into a little working property, as we dabble in urban homesteading by growing our own fruit and vegetables. Around the place you will see trees such as fig, quince, feijoa, apple, lemon, lime, pomegranate and an experimental

espaliered plumcot.

There are also raspberries, blackberries, red currants, strawberries, rhubarb and cherry guavas. Vegetables are seasonal, and have included broad beans, peas, chard, lettuce, rocket, onions, beetroot, carrots, parsnips, asparagus, radishes, chillies, tomatoes, zucchinis, potatoes and whatever else we can squish into the tiny garden beds!

Chickens



The chickens are well-spoiled. Their coop has a solar-powered automatic door, that goes up in the morning to let them free-range along the back fence during the day. After they've roosted at nightfall it automatically closes, to keep them safe from foxes. Food is elevated from the ground to discourage vermin, and 'salad bars' and a dedicated forage patch of lucerne and clover provide greens. Three separate water supplies, including a nipple drip system, ensure that they never go thirsty. Their nest box is accessible from outside the coop for easy egg collection. Likewise their poop can be scooped up externally from a drop system set up under their night time roosting perch.

Chicken manure is mixed with composted garden waste and worm juice and added to garden beds to help improve the heavy clay soil. A recent tip suggesting the addition of peat and vermiculite has also helped with water retention.

The H2OK initiative



We recently received a government grant under the H2OK initiative to implement measures to keep rainwater on our property. We used this towards installing a 5000 litre rainwater tank, and re-vegetating the nature strip to absorb run-off from the neighbouring property. The pond area also provides a catchment area, with overflow being directed along the side garden bed to the feijoa tree.

Frost protection



We have also established a little shade house and glasshouse down the far side of the block, which house quite a few orchids. We were both members of the Canberra Orchid Society for some years but our interests have evolved with time and now include hobbies such as woodworking, glass-slumping and, of course, back yard gardening.