

GARDEN NOTES THORNLEIGH 21 FORSTER ST. BUNGENDORE



**23-24 NOVEMBER
2019**

HISTORY

WELCOME TO THE GARDENS OF "Thornleigh"!

Thornleigh was built circa 1860, and was originally a dwelling on Gidleigh Station, owned by the Rutledge family. In July 1922, Albert and Anne Edmunds purchased the home and 14 acres of Land, which they subdivided into 12 blocks; that parcel now comprises Bungendore Village. Theirs are the first primary sources of Thornleigh's appearance and specify a large *Cupressis glabra*, a Mulberry tree, well as a wisteria-covered verandah and *Kniphofia* (Red Hot pokers) and lilac bushes in the surrounding gardens.

They confirm that by the post- WW1 period, Thornleigh already had an interesting history. It had been a boy's boarding school and had once been the home of Colonel Dr. Eric Dark, a WWI surgeon, who brought his second wife Eleanor to live here. While he conducted a surgery, she began writing the first of her three celebrated novels of historical fiction; the first being 'The Timeless Land'.

The current recreation and re-designing of the garden started in July 2018 and required significant landscaping and reluctant tree removals to provide sunlight into the proposed gardens. Previous restoration of the dwelling had already provided for significant tank water storage. Planting was undertaken in late November, so what you will see this weekend is a Colonial garden that is just a year old, against the backdrop of a home which is almost 160 years old! The remnants of the Edmunds' garden includes Rosemary, Wormwood, Iris, a *Cecile Brunner floribunda*, Red Hot pokers and some trees which are identified in the 'Garden Notes'. Thornleigh offers a small, but historically significant glimpse of rural Colonial lifestyle - due to the sensitive restoration of the dwelling and re-creation of the garden, the property still has that ambience of 'yesteryear' and its owner, Anthea Thomson, is passionate about sustaining its profile.

Despite its uniform, lateral streetscape, the house comprises two titles. It is joined in the centre by a shared common wall, affording open fireplaces to each of its Eastern and Western components. During your visit, Anthea will explain the well-researched origins of the dwelling and her gardener Kevin Jones, will point out his rationale for what you see today. The dwelling sits on an East to West decline of 10 degrees. To give the building an optical equilibrium required tree removal and landscaping of major proportions. A *Cupressis glabra*, standing 20 metres tall, revealed after its removal, that its 152 growth rings showed that it was planted when the first stones were laid!

GARDEN NOTES FOR A WALKING TOUR OF THORNLEIGH

On entering the driveway you will see the Wisteria (now underplanted with Iris), which is a relic of the original planting across the front verandah. The home paddock was quite extensive and a tonne of used horseshoes discovered around the house, shows that this was a working property! The arbour has two climbers Zepherine drouhin and Pierre de Ronsard. Below this 'Just Joey', 'Blue Moon', 'Remember me', 'Donald Bradman',

'Iceberg', 'Rose of Narromine' and a dozen others have been planted. Many of the unidentified species were gifted, so we're waiting for their blooms to identify them -if you can help, we would welcome your advice.

A long bed of traditional cottage garden plants has been planted in front of the house; these include: Loropetalum (Chinese Fringeplant), Cecile Brunner climber, Iceberg standard, Russian garlic scopes, Iris, Larkspur and Aquilegia. Further east there are Azalea, C. Japonica, a border of assorted Ajuga and Erigeron and in the centre a 'Little Gem' Magnolia and two re-located Crab Apples (Malus). Along Forster Street a row of Manchurian Pears ('Cleveland Select') has been planted on the verge to continue the streetscape of this variety down Ellendon Street. All front garden beds and trees have sub-surface irrigation, which can be switched from tank supply to town supply easily. This is because the prevailing winds in Bungendore are Westerlies, which can 'sadden' an herbaceous garden in a few hours.

Along the Ellendon street wall are more climbing roses, only planted in August 2019! Healthy citrus trees of lime, lemon and grapefruit are also flourishing in this warm precinct of the garden. As you pass the water tank on your left, you will see four re-created zones of the garden; the first is the display of Iranian poppies along the newly- built wall of the secret garden. This Middle-Eastern variety, grown from seed, are interspersed with cottage plants. In the foreground there is Salvia ('Hot Lips'), a non-fruiting Passionfruit, mint, and well-fruiting Granny Smith and Quince trees. The second bed, has Grevillea, Callistemon, Correa, a Peony Tree, Bebe, Larkspur, Lithodora (convolvulus) and is dominated in summer with Kniphofia aged s 150 years! The mulberry tree is over 145 years old and still fruiting! Along the Northern face of the Studio are plantings of generally, acid-loving flora which have been moved there to recover and consolidate; they are framed by a Star Jasmine. At the French windows there is a herb garden overhung by a Banksia Rose and Muscatel while an ornamental grape covers the pergola.

To bring a neglected garden to life requires both organic and inorganic chemical intervention. When the size and plant profile of each garden bed was finalised in October 2018, pH testing and addition of compost was needed to make the soil friable. Thornleigh's soil was acidic, so a purpose built dispenser with liquid worm castings and/or cured cow manure was used. The fertilizer is then moved to the dispenser and diluted 1:10 with water. Gravity feeding through the dispenser's 10m hose facilitates the process.

Some thousands of litres of liquid fertilizer were thus poured into the soil. The evidence of its success is now being seen in plant and tree growth as well as in the kitchen garden produce. We cannot recommend the maintenance of worm farms too highly; not everyone has ready access to cow manure! All kitchen waste, with the exception of Citrus, and onions is put through the blender and fed to the worms. Their farms are washed out twice weekly in Spring and Summer and less frequently during the colder months. All other organic waste at Thornleigh, including herbaceous prunings and meat-free kitchen waste is "cooked" in black compost bins, with a heavy dose of Dolomite and a weekly soaking with water. When decomposed it is stored in a bed growing potatoes until Spring, when it is laid around the drip lines of roses and trees especially. Winter mulching with pea straw has been essential during this past year of soil improvement.

After all, gardens only require "Knowledge, love and...Time!"

GARDEN OWNERS

Anthea Thomson –Owner and Kevin Jones -Gardener