

## GARDEN NOTES FOR A WALKING TOUR OF 'THORNLEIGH'

On entering the driveway, you will note part of the extensive 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 and in the gardens, shows that this was a working property!

To your left, there are two semi-circular rose gardens which embrace an arbour that has been planted to climbers Zepherine drouhin (hot pink) and Pierre de Ronsard (multi-cupped, no fragrance, pastel pink) They are destined to intertwine to provide an elevated pink screen when you stand at the front of the block. 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 are waiting for their blooms to identify them this year. If you can help, we would be glad of your advice.

These two beds are designed to embrace the visitor with fragrance and colour in a gesture of welcome. They also include Wall-flower, Nigella, Lavender, an historic fig tree from the original garden, a climbing rose 'Buff Beauty' along the Northern fence, extensive Phlox, Acanthus, Borage and Chives from the original garden, Berberis, Flanders poppies, Mederland roses and Rosemary (prostrate varieties), Hebe, Helleborus, Cineraria, Daffodils and Jonquils.

If you then turn around to face the house, a long bed of traditional cottage garden plants has been planted for diversity of form and colour. These include Foxglove, Delphinium, Larkspur, Cineraria, Salvia, Phlox, Dahlias, Sanguisorba, Lavender, Hemerocallis (potted), Erigeron (Fleabane) Bergamot and Green Mint Thyme, Alyssum, Chrysanthemum, Loropetalum (Chinese Fringeplant), Cecile Brunner climber, Iceberg standard, Russian garlic scapes, Iris, Dahlia, Larkspur and Aquilegia. Continue walking East and there are examples of Azalea, C. Japonica, Pierre de Ronsard rose, old rosemary bushes and a border of assorted Adjuva and Erigeron. The centre of this bed has a 'Little Gem' Magnolia and two re-located Crab Apples (Malus) are doing well.

Turning again to face North (Forster Street) you will note that a row of Manchurian Pears ('Cleveland Select') has been planted on the verge to continue the streetscape of this variety down Ellendon Street. This species has a wine-glass habit and will provide a frame for the Viburnum hedge outside the fence. The plantings in this East-West plot, like the lawn in front of it, have been designed to slope away towards the South so that the viewer's eye is drawn up to the lovely Colonial features of the house. This plot includes Scaevola (Fan Flowers) picked from the bush, where they are a weed, assorted Lavendula, Poppies, Epilobium, Pansies and Larkspur. As you walk East, towards Ellendon Street, there is a restored 'fountain' mid-lawn, which contains Alyssum, Carnations, Aquilegia, Armeria and Linaria, Snapdragons, Fennel and Sedum. The corner bed at the North-eastern side of the house was always intended to be the showpiece, as it had been deprived of light and

moisture for decades. As well as the many cottage plant species you have already seen, this is a mass-planted domain on four different levels which also has Lupins, four varieties of Salvia, Gaura, Valerian, Oriental lilies, Fennel, Nigella, Borage, white Penstemon, Hollyhock, Aquilegia and Humeria to name a few. 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.

Walking South now along the Ellendon street wall, plantings have been made of climbing roses, which have only been in the ground since 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 Delphinium., Foxgloves, Flanders poppies, African daisies and Aquilegia. In the foreground at your feet, is a bed of cottage plants, including Salvia ('Hot Lips'), a non-fruiting Passionfruit, Red hot Pokers, mint, which is to be heavily culled next year and well- fruiting Granny Smith and Quince trees. The second bed, in the right foreground has been planted to Grevillea, Callistemon, Correa, a Peony Tree, Bebe, Larsepur, Lithodora (convolvulus) and is dominated in summer with Kniphofia aged some 150 years! Looking to the right, there is an Almond tree in an elevated bed containing the same diverse plants as well as Kaffir Lilies, Spirea, Euphorbia, Cineraria, Canna Lilies and historic Pokers!

You are now standing under a mulberry tree which is over 145 years old and still fruiting! Beneath it is a circular plot of Tulips, Snow Drops, Daffodils, Jonquils Alyssum Aquilegia and the ubiquitous Russian garlic! 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. A Black Wattle (Acacia) stands above. At the French windows there is a herb garden overhung by a Banksia Rose and Muscatel. An ornamental grape covers the pergola.

Behind the clothesline is the start of a planned potager parterre garden. A comprehensive extension is planned for this area next year.

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. Across the board, Thornleigh's soil was acidic, due to long periods in which tree debris was integrated into the soil. Extensive treatment with Superphosphate (9% Phosphorus, 22% Calcium and 11% Sulphur) whenever rain looked promising, rectified the soil's elemental depletion. Of course, Nitrogen was also needed and to handle the scale of its supplementation, a purpose built dispenser was made. It is moved to the sites required when it was empty, then liquid worm castings and/or cured cow manure was taken to the unit. 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. Nitrogen gives plants vigour, but it is Phosphorus which gives them "rigour"; leaf growth without proper root development is a waste of time. The areas in which Australian natives were planted was not treated with the Phosphorus supplement.

Some thousands of litres of liquid Nitrogen were thus poured into the soil and from early September, liquid NPK (Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium) was substituted in alternate fortnightly cycles of fertilizing. The evidence of its success is now being seen in plant and tree growth as well as in the kitchen garden produce. I 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, Allium and the like, 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.

Having now established the temperature ranges in various parts of the garden, it is now obvious which zones in our micro-climate are most suited to further kitchen gardens."

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

Hope you have enjoyed what has been achieved so far. Please exit through the carport.

Anthea and Kevin