



Winter 2019 Newsletter

A message from the President

Welcome to our midyear Newsletter. What a terrific Open Gardens year we have had with record attendance numbers including over 1000 people visiting Cambrey Farm in Pialligo on our final weekend for Autumn. Also membership is at record levels. These combinations have made it possible for many of our garden owners to make generous donations to their chosen charities.

A big thank you to my/your Committee who have worked tirelessly during the year to put together a variety of lovely gardens for members to view and a wonderful schedule for the upcoming Spring. Autumn 2020 is coming together nicely as well. However, we are always on the lookout for more or new suitable gardens, so if you see one in your neighbourhood let us know and we will work on it from there. We are continuing our Scholarship scheme and seeking nominations in the second semester of this year. Again Julie Collins, Head of Horticulture at Canberra Institute of Technology is coordinating this. A big thank you for Julie.

As mentioned in our previous Newsletter we are trying something different this Spring with four gardens being open in Bungendore on the same weekend with a \$15 charge to see all 4 for non members, members are free of course. More details follow and is available on our Website.

Please consider submitting a request for funding any worthwhile "Gardening Related" causes as we are a not for profit organisation and have some funds allocated in our budget for this purpose. It would be remiss of me not to mention our "Garden Entry" volunteers who do a terrific job many doing 3+ gardens in our "Garden Year", thank you so much for your efforts. Obviously this would not be possible without the generous garden owners, thanks to those too. We are planning a surprise thank you event before the first open garden in Spring. Further advice to follow.

Our AGM is scheduled for Wednesday, 28 August 2019 from 10.30 – 12.30 at the Southern Cross Club Jamison with morning tea provided. Please put this date in your diaries and consider nominating for a position on our Committee. We have a couple of vacancies and would welcome new faces and ideas. Perhaps you may wish to just attend a couple of meetings to see how we operate before committing. It is not terribly onerous and very rewarding, The gardens cannot open without a healthy committee.

Lastly for the past couple of years we have held our Committee meetings and our AGM at the Southern Cross Club, Jamison who generously supply a meeting room at no charge. For this we thank the Management and Staff of the Southern Cross Club.

Chris Lord, President

Spring 2019 Open Gardens

Our next season will soon be under way with the following events during October and November. Opening times are 10 am to 4 pm both Saturday and Sunday. Entry for members of Open Gardens Canberra is free (membership \$25/year) and for non-members is \$8.

12-13 October 2019

The Garden Cottage

87 Schlich Street, Yarralumla, ACT

This pretty and romantic garden features seven open areas, each containing a different sort of ornament, seating or gazebo. These areas are connected by paved paths lined with English and Japanese box, which offer no-step access to the whole block. The garden has grown out of the owners' love of history, and is filled with many useful, often rare, plants. Every garden bed brims with ground covers, bulbs and perennials offering interest throughout the year and a burst of colour in spring. The garden is a source of supplies for craft, dying, fibre art, and cooking and is an inspiration for the owners' historical costume, dance and music hobbies. Dancers from Earthly Delights will perform at selected times.



The Millers' Garden

42 Couvreur Street, Garran, ACT

Miller's Garden is a deciduous woodland of maples and eucalypts, with a dense understory of azaleas, rhododendrons, camellias and numerous other shrubs and groundcover plants. A series of paths traverse wooded terraces which have been carved out of the very steep, westward facing granite slopes of Red Hill. Carefully placed mirrors, water features, rest areas and art add interest. The dense plantings set in the rocky slopes have created massive natural cooling for the house and garden. Please note: The garden is very steep and is not suitable for wheelchairs. Children must be closely supervised.



19-20 October 2019

The Woodland Walk

12 Laver Place, Melba, ACT



This 1200m² garden was redesigned six years ago and features attractive stone retaining walls with a variety of plants including some natives. The garden includes some lovely Forest Pansy trees and a Gleditsia tree in the front with Daphne, Hydrangeas, Magnolias, Crepe Myrtles and Maples in the rear. Bird baths and other garden ornaments complement the plantings.

16-17 November 2019

Terroux

88 Rochford Road, Wallaroo, NSW



This is an evolving garden with water features, a labyrinth and quirky pieces of art which will delight children. This garden of discovery includes gravel paths revealing diverse plantings such as hedges of flower carpet roses, callistemons, conifers and photinias. There are 3 dams each of different design and plantings: one flows to a wetland; another has a terraced garden; while the third features a large dry creek bed surrounded by natives. The gardens' park-like setting is enhanced by a backdrop of the Brindabellas.

Bungendore Weekend 23-24 November 2019

Four beautiful and diverse gardens will be opened.

- The Old Stone House,
- Fox's Folly,
- Fieldstone, and
- Thornleigh.

Visitors can see all four gardens for an entry fee of \$15, members are admitted free. Members and visitors will start at either Fox's Folly or Fieldstone and will receive a map and ticket which provides entry to all four gardens.

Fieldstone

64 Ellenden Street, Bungendore, NSW

The owners have landscaped this simple, semi-formal garden over the last four years, in keeping with the heritage 1860 gneiss stone dwelling and the pre-existing, large trees. A very long pergola-covered driveway features sentinel pears, wisteria and viburnum shrubs. Fencing, building structures, sandstone pathing and a large collection of French and English outdoor antiques are all designed to add to the charm of this garden. The 'Cobblers Cottage' next door, also constructed in 1860, contributes to the heritage landscape.



Fox's Folly

52 Molonglo Street, Bungendore, NSW

This is a large cottage garden in a relaxing woodland setting. There is a diversity of plantings to be seen throughout the very deep half acre block. The garden has been developed over the last 30 years since the stone cottage was finished. The garden has progressively taken over a paddock, starting with trees, followed by many groundcover plants, the rose garden, bulb beds, perennial beds, fruit trees and many potted plants. The large grassed areas under the trees provides a foil for the garden rooms.



The Old Stone House

41 Molonglo Street, Bungendore, NSW



One acre of semi-formal gardens lies behind the 19th century restored two storey house. The gardens have been restored and developed during the last 20 years using original plants and material where possible. Ramps and steps lead down to large lawns dominated by a very large central arbour, supporting roses and weeping cherry trees. The property boundaries are dominated by very large trees, mainly English elms and cypress (up to 140 years old) and a lilac hedge at the rear, all providing a microclimate and a private atmosphere. Other features include a Japanese garden, gazebo, tea house and more than 200 roses.

Thornleigh

21 Forster Street (cnr Ellendon St), Bungendore NSW

A heritage cottage garden surrounding the 1880s house with walled secret garden incorporating the owner's sculptures and potager. The current owner has made every endeavour to replicate the type of plantings which were common to homes built in the era of Thornleigh's construction, not only in respect of a residential garden of the period, but a garden as a source of produce for home use. The cottage garden has hundreds of bulbs, annuals, herbaceous perennials as well as heritage trees and roses.



Seeking Volunteers

Would you like to help out at one of our Open Gardens? We need volunteers at the entrance table for this spring's gardens.

Volunteers are an essential part of opening a garden to the public. The duties are not onerous and many have told me that they thoroughly enjoy their time 'on the gate'. The entrance table volunteers welcome visitors, take entrance fees, generate or renew memberships and hand out garden notes if available. Two people are on duty each shift.

Anyone who feels like helping will be most appreciated! You make Open Gardens Canberra the success it is. New members can tick the 'helping at an open garden' box on the membership form. If you are already a member but would like to volunteer, contact the membership secretary via info@opengardenscanberra.org.au to update your membership.

Sally Stephens

Membership

With the Spring open garden season almost upon us your highly valued membership may become due on 1 September 2019.

You may pay your membership via bank transfer, cheque or in person at any of our open gardens, see details below. The volunteers who greet you at these locations will have a record of membership and will be able to quickly advise you of the status of your membership and accept payment if required.

We no longer issue Membership cards as the process is too costly and time consuming. If you renew at an Open Garden please retain your receipt to admit you to the rest of the gardens on that weekend. We endeavour to update our member lists in the week between Open Garden weekends thereby having you listed on the records at the gate asap.

Finally, our membership database is only as good as the information you supply to us so if you change your postal address, phone number or email address please let us know promptly either via info@opengardenscanberra.org.au or complete a Change of Details Form at an open garden.

Payment can be by:

1. Direct deposit:

BSB: 633-000

Account number: 155187628

Account Name: Open Gardens Canberra Inc

Reference: Your name

2. Cheque by mail to:

Membership Officer

Open Gardens Canberra

PO Box 344

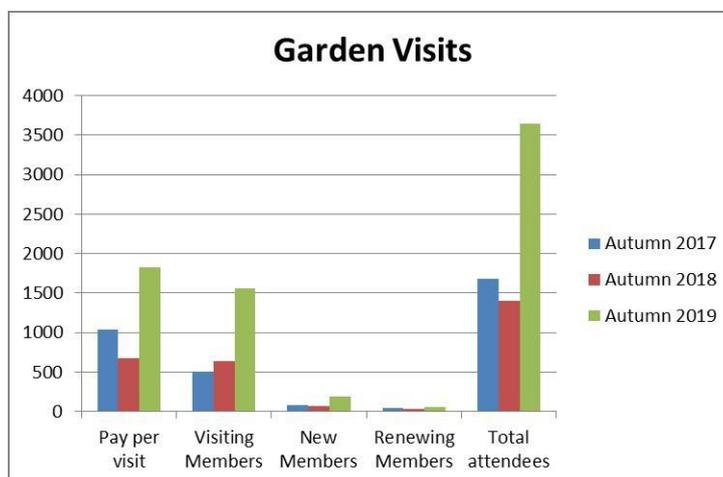
Jamison Centre ACT 2614

3. Cash or cheque at an open garden

Autumn 2019 Roundup

Some Visitor Statistics

When you visit an open garden we note the attendance of members and provide non-members with a ticket. This allows us to gather statistics on attendance at the open gardens. We now have three years of visitor number information showing trends in attendance. The following graph shows Autumn season attendance for the past three years. Five gardens were opened in Autumn 2017 and 2018 with seven gardens opening in 2019. As can be seen in the graph our Autumn 2019 season had record attendance with total visitor numbers of 3640. The previous record was Spring 2018 with a total of 2465 visits.



Volunteer involvement

Between February and April, seven gardens were opened to the public by their very generous owners. As two of these were next-door neighbours, they were treated as one garden for entry fees and for rostering volunteers at the entrance table.

31 volunteers covered the 48 shifts, each of 3½ hours. Two volunteers did four shifts each, two did three and six did two – very impressive! All the volunteers were kept busy, though some gardens were busier than others. Cambrey Farm at Pialligo outstripped all expectations, drawing over a thousand visitors over

the weekend. Volunteers at this garden deserve a thousand thanks for their patience and grace in coping with the volumes of people pouring in the gate.

OGC depends totally on our entrance table volunteers: welcoming visitors, taking payments, renewing memberships and generating new ones, giving advice and information and finalising the records at the end of the day. Without you, there would be no open gardens.

Thank you all for your generosity in giving your time to help make Open Gardens Canberra such a success.

Sally Stephens, OGC volunteer coordinator

From our open garden owners

Choosing a charity to support

In spring 2018 we opened our garden to the public as part of the Canberra Open Garden Scheme. One of the advantages of doing this is that the garden owners can nominate a charity of their choosing to which half of the entrance fees collected from visitors go. We chose Canberra Refugee Support (CRS). CRS has at its heart the human connection, being good neighbours, making people welcome here in Canberra, building community with families, couples and individuals who are looking for a safe place. The aim is to help asylum seekers and refugees become as independent as possible as soon as possible. This is sometimes difficult for people who are living with the uncertainty of a temporary visa and those who are denied the right to work.

Much of the support involves practical things such as helping those without their own transport to get to appointments, helping them understand and access government and other support services and helping sort out problems that arise in daily life.

Despite the fact that CRS is totally run by volunteers, has no premises or paid staff and receives no money from any government for its own activities, its support costs tens of thousands of dollars a year and so it runs a number of fund raising events. One of these is a scholarships scheme that provides small grants to children and adults who are undertaking formal education at various levels from primary school right through to university to encourage them in their endeavours. The last round of scholarships concluded in June when over 40 children and adults received grants totalling over \$30,000.

Chris Ansted

A Relaxed Garden - opened 20 and 21 October 2018

A very successful open garden

Cambrey Farm in Pialligo opened on 13 and 14 April 2019. The weather was lovely and visitors enjoyed relaxing Devonshire teas in the garden; the friendly alpacas; a display and sale of artwork including paintings, textile art and mosaics; purchasing local honey and preserves; and the overall ambience of the property.

Just over 1000 people visited the garden, a new record attendance for Open Gardens Canberra.

Lindy and Bob, the property owners, opened their garden to support Mulligans Flat Woodlands and Wetlands Trust and were thrilled to be able to present to them a cheque for \$3,000. This included a share of the gate takings and a component of the sales at the open garden. Accepting the cheque from Bob and Lindy was ranger Millie and Balbo the baby bettong.

Photo from Lindy Ross



Some Tips

Composting

Composting is the process of speeding up the natural process of decomposition of organic material (food, grass, leaves, manure, twigs, bones, cat litter, sawdust, paper etc) into humus. The humus contains nutrients that can be slowly released for uptake by plants, and also improves the physical and chemical properties of soils for growing plants. These changes also significantly improve the infiltration and retention of water and enables to soil to 'breathe'.

Adding this composted organic matter to soil, either on top as a mulch or mixing, also contributes to reducing carbon dioxide emissions into our atmosphere.

Micro-organisms, including fungi, bacteria and many small soil animals do the work, whilst consuming water and oxygen (air). You should aim to create a well-rotted, dark compost which is earthy to smell. Some composts can be low in nutrients, so if you want a very productive garden, you may need to add compost regularly, or add manures or other fertilizers in moderation.

The simpler methods include shallowly burying the organic material directly in the soil where it is required, making sure animals don't dig this up. You can of course simply feed your 'waste' scraps to poultry or other animals, and recycle the manures.

There are other more formalised methods which give more control on the decay process and accelerate decomposition. All methods require moisture and good drainage. These include:

1. Heaping ('Berkeley'). Mix materials in heap (or pit) one to two cubic metres in size. Mix the different types of organic material. Larger heaps means more heat and more moisture content
2. Composting bins, boxes (plastic, brick, timber etc). These are also good for 'tidying up' gardens and using your space efficiently, especially for small gardens. Bins must have small gaps to allow air and water to enter and to allow good drainage.
3. Worm Farms: Worm farms are perhaps the best way to obtain high quality compost in terms of nutrients and soil organisms. Kitchen rinsings and food scraps can be added daily. However, worm farms must drain well and cannot dry out, and not get very hot, so leave in semi shaded area. The advantage of worm farms is the excellent worm castings and the nutrient-rich leachate that can be used to water plants. A simpler model is a foam worm box, with holes, which can be moved around the garden, which also improves the soil underneath.

An average sized garden can incorporate all these methods!

Tom Baker

Consider the birds and the bees: another view of lazy gardening.

Even now, in mid-winter, the Sulphur-crested Cockatoos and King Parrots are gnawing into the White Cedar fruits that are lying on the ground and garden beds, where I haven't managed to rake them up. Until wild winds whipped them all from the tree a week ago, these birds were devouring them in the tree as the fruits matured. Throughout summer and autumn, I have vegetables and herbs that flower then seed - an organised gardener would pull them up. But my garden is less managed; to some it's messy. Borage self-sews randomly around the garden, others such as lettuces, rocket, fennel, parsley, radicchio and tansy bolt, their flower heads waving in the breeze, looking neglected.

But take another look. Bees congregate busily in the flowers, especially in the blue borage, rosemary and radicchio. They love the fennel and rocket flowers too, also the lovely pom-pom heads of



onions and leeks. And Crimson Rosellas daily patrol the borage plants, checking for mature fruits. Often they stand on the small branches, slowly collapsing the plants to the ground. All the better for finding ripe seeds! Borage plants seem to have a long flowering and seeding season, so bees and rosellas benefit for many months.

Until a week ago, I had dead pumpkin vines collapsed along the chookyard fence. The leaves were yellow, withered and mildewed. For weeks families of Fairy-wrens visited the leaves, hovering like hummingbirds and picking something from their undersides. Close inspection showed they were infested with tiny dark specks, probably aphids or some other insect larvae.

So once I thought my messy garden was the result of procrastination, disorganisation, laziness. But now I consider it part of my garden plan.

This is lazy gardening with biodiversity benefits!

Sally Stephens, July 2019

Note: This information was published in a similar article titled 'Benign neglect brings bees' in 'Canberra Organic', Autumn 2019 (vol 27 No 1)

Photo by Sally Stephens - Crimson Rosella seeking Borage seed

Other open gardens in our region

Saturday 14 September 9:30am - 3:30pm

Cloverleigh

23 Tait Street Crookwell

Cloverleigh" will open its gates possibly for the last time.

"Cloverleigh" is a 20 year old garden planted with a wide variety of exotic trees and plants. This garden will excite tree and plant lovers. Special features include a Ginkgo tree, camellia's all grown from seed, a large orchard underplanted with daffodils, and a grape vine and a raspberry bush grown from cuttings brought from England in 1856. Garden owners Leon & Mary Willis have opened their garden many times in years past, and would like to open it one last time when it is looking its best. They will be selling plants and seeds from their two acre garden and will be available for growing and pruning advice during this event.

Bus groups & picnics on the grass welcome. A gold coin entry will be donated to a local charity.

For more information please call Billie 0409 245 220.

Supported by Crookwell Garden Festival www.crookwellgardenfestival.com

Newsletter editor wanted

Loved reading the Newsletter? You could be our next newsletter editor. Open Gardens Canberra emails a newsletter to members and subscribers several times a year, and we are never short of contributions. Let us know if you'd like to take on the editor role. We use Mailchimp to design and distribute the newsletter. You will need to have moderate computer skills including email, word processing, and spreadsheets. Full training will be provided. Send an email to treasurer@opengardenscanberra.org.au if you are interested in undertaking this role.