

GARDEN NOTES

YELLOW BOX

447 SPRING RANGE ROAD,
SPRING RANGE



30 AND 31 MAY
2020

HISTORY

'Yellow Box' is a 45 acre property, 23kms from the centre of Canberra, with views to the Brindabellas and Spring Range. The property was purchased in 1992; a vacant block, formerly a sheep property, with nothing but a few large old eucalypts. Planting of the boundaries began then, mainly with eucalypts, acacias, casuarinas and melaleucas.

The house (also a yellow box!) was moved to the site in 1996, and the house garden has been developed from scratch over the last 23 years, including the dry stone walls, perhaps my most challenging undertaking. The house garden is perhaps some 2 ½ acres, and along with the property boundary plantings, is almost exclusively Australian native.

Beyond the house garden there are two smaller areas - one to fence off some native heath of hibbertia, melichrus, egg and bacon pea flower, hovea, and kangaroo grass; and one which is a small patch for university friends from the early 1960s.

FEATURES

Apart from watering new plants until established, the garden receives little water, as I feel it is inappropriate to put down a bore to draw ground water for a 'hobby farm'. This can be a problem in really hot and windy summers; and losses do occur, as well as in severe winter frosts. As a consequence, most of the plants are hardy natives, which have proved to be reliable. This reduces variety, but avoids some otherwise unavoidable disasters, and the work of replanting.

The most successful and reliable plants in the home garden include callistemons, correas (of which some do too well), banksias, eriostemons (philotheca), some grevilleas, crowea, calytrix, kunzea, micromyrtus, sollya,

melaleuca, homoranthus, astartea, melia. Saltbush (rhagodia) is particularly suitable, but proves invasive in the wrong place (and the rabbits love to make a home under it). More recent plantings of eremophila are fortunately surviving, especially the grafted ones.

There was no early plan for the garden, it took shape as and when some particular area needed attention, and it is still a work-in-progress. The area in the front of the house has not been overplanted so as not to impede on the view of the mountains. The most recent plantings have been designed to screen the absorption trench, and to create a walkway down the hill towards the lower paddocks. The bank along and above the trench has been paved with rocks to control weeds, and carpobrotus is now thriving and softening the effect of the row of rocks.

The new walkway resulted from a gift of several mallees, and the need to find a place for them. So one side of the walk is largely mallee, and the other is primarily grevillea. So far most are surviving with help from the grey water. There are also some new plantings under the nearby eucalypts, which are supposed to tolerate shade. This area is designed to be simply a casual lightly wooded zone. .

Personally the garden gives me a great deal of pleasure, despite the hard work, and the birds are a constant delight – wrens, finches, honeyeaters, shrike thrushes, parrots, magpies, and willy wagtails, thornbills, rufous whistler, grey fantails, and a pair of European goldfinches. Though it does take quite a bit of water to keep their bird baths full!

I have offered to have the garden open in the hope that visitors may enjoy what has been done with natives in what is a fairly harsh environment, and that those unfamiliar with natives may be inspired to plant more.

Anyone with a particular interest in eucalyptus may wish to explore some of the boundary plantings.

GARDEN OWNERS

BERYL CUTHBERTSON