

ROSY BOWER

20 Scott St Narrabundah ACT 2604



OPEN
GARDENS
CANBERRA

The garden was originally planted by its first owner – Molly. I never had the pleasure of meeting her, but her keen interest in gardening can still be seen all around the perimeter of this garden.

The hydrangeas below the front verandah very nearly didn't stay. When I first got here more than 30 years after Molly's first plantings, I thought they should go, along with all the mission brown paint!

Luckily the mission brown went first and over the next few years, while concentrating on the back garden, the hydrangeas slowly grew on me. What I'd considered "old ladies' plants" turned out to have a charm of their own. Luckily the odd appreciative taxi driver or visitor helped open my eyes. The "row of hydrangeas out the front" has become the best descriptor for locating my house, which long ago lost its number and, thanks to the hydrangeas, hasn't needed a replacement.

I've always loved visiting other people's gardens and botanical gardens and dreamt of one day having a garden of my own. But knowing next to nothing about the practicalities of gardening, I initially concentrated on identifying what was here to work out what the plants needed to survive. Then as I walked my dog around the neighbourhood I looked at other people's gardens and started thinking about what I'd like to have in mine.

As you can see there's no "grand plan". It's a small informal garden of plants that interest me, tucked into available spots. The soil and climate are harsh. Trees have provided screening, creating a bit of a micro-climate and welcome shade in summer, while also imposing limitations on sun-loving species. Trial and error have been my main teachers. There have been plenty of mistakes – for example, it took three goes to find the right spot for a lemon tree and even then it's not in the recommended position.

Roses, like hydrangeas, have become favourites. A handful were already here, another 30 or so have been added.

The January hailstorm shredded much of the greenery, which was at its summer peak. The front and back gardens were completely covered in a 15cm carpet of devastation. Scars remain, but fortunately everything survived.

There are less than a handful of native plants. I've tried to introduce more, but the needs of the "thirsty and hungry" introduced species, plus summer shade from the trees, makes it nigh impossible. Fortunately I can now explore native flora and my growing interest in Canberra's natural environment doing conservation work in a small native woodland nearby.

Molly's plantings form the backbone of my garden ...

Acer negundo Box maple

Deutzia scabra Wedding Bells

Feijoa sellowiana Pineapple guava

Forsythia x intermedia Golden Bells

Hibiscus syriacus "Ardens" Rose of Sharon has been joined by a purple variety, donated by a family friend when she left Canberra

Hyacinthoides hispanica Spanish bluebell

Hydrangea macrophylla

Liquidambar styraciflua Liquid amber/American sweetgum

Rosa "Cecile Brunner" which sprouted from a fragment of a cane - all that was left from a magnificent 50-year old rambling bush fencers chopped down despite being instructed not to

Rosa 'Paul's scarlet climber' & R. 'Mister Lincoln'

Viburnum carlesii Korean spice viburnum, *V. plicatum* f. *tomentosum*, *V. tinus* (Lauristinus) viburnum

Weigela Fairy Trumpets

Wild cherry tree

One *Cotoneaster* tree remains to provide shade, shelter and food for visiting Gang-gang cockatoos and King parrots and as a nod to Molly

I've added fruit trees, daphne, azaleas, camellias and these roses in the back garden:

Albertine 1921

Ballerina 1937

Cecile Brunner 1894

Delbard roses - Henri Matisse 1996, Alfred Sisley 2004, Soeur Emmanuelle 2004, Utrillo or Grimaldi

Grandiflora white rose

Iceland 1958

Seduction aka Charles Aznavour 1988

Mme Gregoire Staechelin 1927

Red Pierre de Ronsard 1989

Rosa 'Rena' 1954

Rosa chinensis or *Rosa x odorata* "Mutabilis" pre 1896

Rosa banksiae alba & *R. banksiae lutea*

Rosa multiflora white & pink 1862

Rosa rugosa scabrosa "Superba"

Front garden roses: Bantry Bay, Irish Mist, Zephirine Drouhin 1868, Laure Davoust (French 1834), Rosa "Bonica 82" 1981 & Rosa rugosa 'Alba'