

GARDEN NOTES, THE BAKER GARDEN 20 WELLS GARDENS GRIFFITH ACT 2603



OPEN
GARDENS
CANBERRA

24 AND 25 APRIL
2021

BACKGROUND AND DESIGN APPROACH

We moved to 20 Wells Garden 11 years ago and established a new garden from scratch as the whole block was very overgrown with ivy, vinca, honeysuckle plus two huge Plane trees that were under our power line and an aged Hawthorn which proved to have rot in the trunk. We had all of that cleared so that we could start again. The only 'inheritances' were the pale green wooden trellis across the back of the garden and the open-sided shed now used as a garden and potting shed.

We had previously established three new gardens, and for two of them had used a garden designer. However, we decided that this time we would design and establish the garden ourselves, although we had the stone walls and paved areas put in by contractors.

The block has an area of 970 m² and the footprint of the house and hard areas covers about 350m², leaving a garden area of 550m². We decided not to have a lawn within the garden, but instead have regularly watered, fertilised and mown the grass on the nature strip.

Our design brief was for a low maintenance garden which could be left to largely look after itself for periods of several weeks at a time. We have used pine bark as mulch under all of the trees and shrubs. Watering is by individual drippers or by dripper pipe, with timer-controlled sprinklers watering the vegetable beds.

We are currently in our mid-70s and do all the garden work ourselves without the assistance of a paid gardener, as was our intention. Hence the emphasis on a low maintenance garden.

We also decided not to have flower beds in the conventional sense and instead chose shrubs, plants and bulbs which would give year-round colour as well as coordinated colour palettes.

PRINCIPAL GARDEN AREAS

The front garden contains flowering shrubs, perennials, many bulbs and roses in shades of pink, purple, blue and white. Trees include a *Magnolia x soulangeana*, *Malus ioensis 'Plena'*, and two Crepe Myrtles. The winding stepping-stones through the garden are a children's favourite. Two snails made from strap iron are an interesting feature. Shrubs include many *Correas*, *Sasangua camellias 'White Ribbon'* and *'Mine-no-Yuki'* and a beautiful double Syrian Hibiscus. There is always something in flower!

The small patio area near the front door is a serene space with several sculptures (including a guard dog) clipped shrubs and both a *'Meyer'* Lemon and a Tahitian Lime tree, plus a Cycad near the front door.

The back garden in front of the painted wooden trellis is defined by paved paths and features a bird bath purchased in Tasmania and several sculptures – including a group of ceramic chooks! The back raised beds are full of hot colours whereas the lower beds are more muted shades. Water is provided for the birds by three other containers. Trees we planted to replace the two plane trees are *Malus floribunda*, *Prunus serrulata* ‘Prentice Dancer’, a white Crepe Myrtle ‘Natchez’ and the new *Diamonds in the Dark* ‘Blush’. There are many bulbs planted to flower in most seasons. David Austin roses are a favourite, plus several other fragrant roses. There is a large collection of Bearded Iris which put on a show in October. The shady part of the garden has a collection of Hellebores plus Bergenia and *Camellia sasangua* ‘Yuletide’ and ‘Paradise Vanessa’.

The vegetable garden behind the painted wooden trellis comprises five 2m x 1m raised garden beds which are about 0.5m high and are watered by five 180° sprinklers. The whole area is paved to make maintenance easy. Three rotating compost bins serve the vegetable garden and all our green kitchen waste, leaves, grass cuttings from the nature strip and other garden waste go into them. The compost has contributed to very good soil in the five veggie beds.

The open-sided roofed area, which was there when we bought the house, has been made into a potting and garden tools storage area. Adjacent to it are three citrus trees planted last year - a Seville Orange, a Blood Orange and a Mandarin, planted because Liz is a big jam and marmalade maker. There is also a ‘Black Genoa’ Fig planted a few years ago, which is currently under a fitted fine net to protect the fruit from bees, birds and flying foxes. There are also three Blueberry bushes, which cropped very heavily this year.

Along the back fence is a newly-constructed wooden trellis, with wire supports for new fruit trees being espaliered on it. The trellis and fruit trees replace a vigorous pittosporum hedge removed before Christmas because it really added little value and there was a lot of work involved in trimming it. The new fruit trees are a Josephine pear; an apricot, fruit salad tree Pink Lady/Gala, fruit salad tree white peach/yellow plum and both a female and male kiwi fruit vine.

Under the house verandahs we have a range of potted plants standing either on the ground or on tiered wooden benches. Plants here include a wide range of succulents, fuchsia, ferns, pelargoniums and orchids.

SCULPTURES

Scattered throughout the garden is an eclectic collection of sculptures, ranging from works by established artists such as Greg Johns, Michael Le Grand and Patricia Lawrence, through to a range of works by students from the ANU’s School of Art and Design. (A separate laminated sheet is available which details the sculptures.)

GARDEN OWNERS

John and Liz Baker