

GARDEN NOTES

A MEDITERRANIAN GARDEN

37 MOLLOY CRESC, COOK ACT



OPEN
GARDENS
CANBERRA

26-27 MARCH 2022

OVERVIEW

Our garden is built as a series of garden rooms for different purposes, with an overall Mediterranean feel, inspired by our trips to Europe. We have spaces for entertaining, parking, growing food and enjoying flowers (block size is 913m², plus 400m² of verge out the front). Although it looks well established, much of the garden is less than 3 years old.

HISTORY

We moved here from Sydney in late 2005, and chose the property for its convenient location, block size and the mature tree canopy. We were not experienced gardeners although Robyn had grown herbs and vegetables before, but never trees or flowers.

Initially we had no plan, but the front courtyard was an easy place to start – we transformed the bare space with a raised herb garden, wall fountain and creeping fig. After our trip to Europe in 2006, Robyn drew up a master plan, inspired by the wonderful gardens we had seen.

Since we had decided on major house renovations, the rest of the garden would need to wait – as owner builders, the house would take all our spare time for years! We completed the courtyard with the pergola, pizza oven and BBQ area in 2008 - a haven amidst the chaos. Render and terracotta limewash on the walls helped set the Mediterranean theme.

In 2010 we embarked on the major extension, which meant digging up the entire back garden to replace the sewerage pipes. We built the workshop and planted more fruit trees along the side fence and beside the driveway, but ignored everything else.

2012 Robyn finished the front porch mosaic and we commissioned a 25,000l underground rainwater tank – now used for both garden and house (kitchen is on mains water). In 2013 we built the rose arbour and in 2014 replaced the side fence and *Photinia* hedge with *Luma apiculata* (Chilean myrtle) underplanted with *Campanula poscharskyana* (Serbian bellflower). In 2016 we replaced the old back deck with a low maintenance version (Ecowood, steel joists).

In 2018 we started on the side garden. We replaced the side fence with panels (ModularWall). Jeremy built the cloister-style crosswall using bricks saved from the back of the house. Robyn painted the walls in fresco style, featuring our fruit trees and local birds. Jeremy plumbed an old birdbath to make a fountain and Robyn added mosaic.

We wanted a garden that would look good all year round without too much work, focused on perennials, bulbs and self-seeding annuals. The ground was very poor – even with the old path, gravel and weedmat removed, it needed a lot of soil and compost. The paths provide structure amid the chaos, and the plants continue to evolve. Some poor initial choices meant rework, such as the Evening Primrose which was too aggressive for the space.

With the side garden complete, we finally started work on the back garden in late 2018. Jeremy laid the paths and integrated watering system (fed from the underground tank). We replaced the back fence and Robyn made the composting system from the recycled wood.

Root invasion from the neighbour's Elm tree is a major problem, solved with the use of wicking beds for the berries and vegetables, completed in 2020. These were a lot of work to build but well worth the effort (we built ours based on info at <https://www.wickingbeds.com.au/>). Robyn sculpted the 'green men' overflow spouts and cast them in concrete. One permanent bed holds asparagus, rhubarb etc, while the other beds are rotated each season.

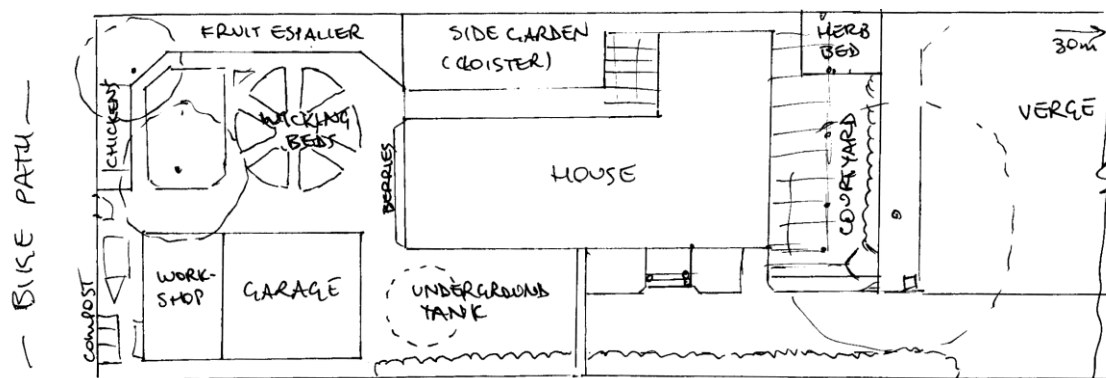
In 2021 we removed the broken concrete driveway and 'weed trees' – oleander and privet. Jeremy paved the huge driveway and forecourt with permeable pavers (Hydropave), while Robyn planted the hedge and upgraded the garden beds with Cor-Ten steel edges. And we finally built the long-planned chicken run and acquired three chickens.

We love the many different areas of the garden – each perfect for different time of day, time of year and activities. The major construction is done, but a garden is never finished!

FEATURES

Garden rooms, courtyard, pizza oven, wicking beds, espalier fruit trees, cloister garden, wall frescos, chicken run, tank water, mosaics

MAP



GARDEN OWNERS

Robyn Spencer & Jeremy Gregson