

GARDEN NOTES

G AND J'S GARDEN

2 RAOUL PLACE, LYONS



HISTORY

The property sits on a large corner block on the top of a hill and faces south to Mt. Taylor. The house was built in 1966 and positioned toward the back of the block to accommodate the eucalyptus tree already growing there. My husband and I purchased the house in 1988. The property had been rented out for the previous 10 years and what garden there was had been totally neglected. There were several garden beds consisting of black layered plastic covered over by pebbles and some struggling plants of various varieties trying to survive. There are still a few remaining bushes. The two oleanders along the driveway as well as the paperbark at the side front are some of these. There were a few steppingstones leading to the front door.

Our first task after getting rid of the plastic and pebbles was to plan the layout of the garden. We had some rock retaining walls built to create flatter spaces for gardens and to prevent water runoff. We also established the paths. Our idea was to create different spaces/rooms in the garden with a feeling of flow between the areas. We had previously lived in the Dandenong ranges just out of Melbourne. The climate there was much more accommodating for gardening, and we simply thought we could plant the same as we had down there and just sit back and watch it grow. Wow did we learn fast! The soil here of course was pretty much clay and being on the top of a hill we were very exposed to strong winds. We began mulching the soil using lucerne, hay, shredded paper, really using anything we could find to improve the soil and break down the clay, even growing potatoes at one stage.

FEATURES

My son created the pond about 1991 as part of a school project so we elaborated on this with a Japanese theme. We planted the golden elm to provide a canopy over the area as well as the weeping cherry tree. We did an expansion to this area and built a higher pond which ran down into the lower pond. We removed this a few years ago due to its high maintenance. We experimented with various plants but mainly kept to the exotic and English plants which we loved. The camellia hedge was established around this time, but time was limited due to work and family commitments so not a lot was happening in the garden at this time.

Sadly, my husband Richard passed away suddenly in 2001 and the garden became an even lower priority. Two years later John and I met and formed a relationship. He moved in with me and enthusiastically (amazing what love can do!) took over the garden. I have him to thank for

the garden we see today. He planted the box hedge on the front slope below the gum tree as well as the James Stirling pittosporum hedge along the driveway and the various hedges you see throughout the garden. We have introduced a lot more native plants making a much more eclectic mix. Our constant battle is with the 3 large gum trees on the property. Summer sees us spending most of our time picking up leaves and gum nuts and tidying around them. The very front of the property has been heavily planted with lavender, daisies, star jasmine, prostrate juniper, and various other plants which don't require a lot of attention.

The garden at the front of the house, housing the gleditsia, is a raised bed. The extra soil being from the excavation for the pond. Naturally this was thick clay but with mulching is now quite good soil. The garden on the eastern side of the house gets morning sun but is in shade for a lot of the day. There is quite a mixed collection of plants with hellebores, daphne, conifers, some maples, and various natives. We use agapanthus quite a lot in difficult areas as we feel they're great space fillers.

My husband and I had installed a partially sunk, above ground pool for the children in the early 1990s. I had this removed a number of years ago and two water tanks were installed in its place. The rear deck is built over them. They hold a total of 9800 litres which is used mainly to water the pots on the deck and some of the back garden.

I established a small vegetable garden a few years ago and added a chicken run which houses 3 girls. The girls make short work of our kitchen scraps and what they produce goes into the garden as well as keeping us and the family in eggs. I have 2 compost bins in this area and always have lots of lovely compost available to be used both in the vegetable garden as well as wherever else it's needed.

John has a small bonsai collection which he has established over many years, and these are housed mainly on the back deck. We also have a number of Japanese maples in large pots, as well as smaller pots which we use for some perennials, colourful annuals and also orchids. Looking to the west from the deck there is a pergola supporting a banksia rose and this frames a small garden surrounded by a May hedge with a large urn as its centrepiece. We back on to a reserve which gives a feeling of space to an otherwise small back yard. We have taken advantage of this and planted 3 Manchurian pears as well as various natives and agapanthus. This we consider as a fire break against possible grass fires.

GARDEN OWNERS

We hope you come and visit and find as much enjoyment in our garden as we do.

Geraldine and John