

# GARDEN NOTES

## JANET'S GARDEN

### 14 YOUNG ST, BARTON



DATE OF OPENING  
29-30 OCTOBER  
2022

#### HISTORY

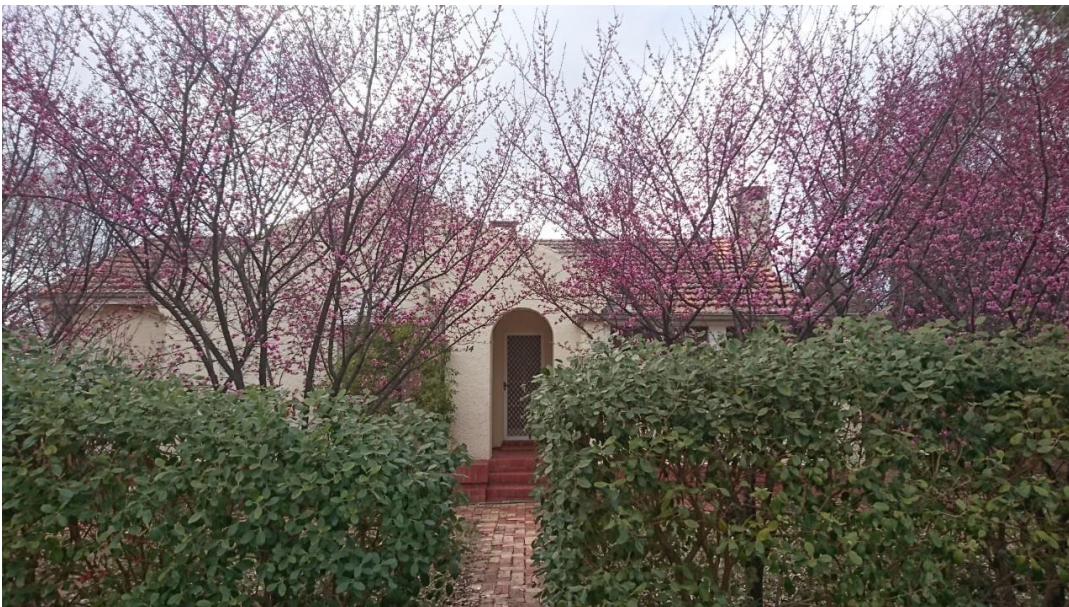
**1927** After construction, houses in Barton were surrounded by bare reactive clay soil. We have little information on the garden from the early years but two roses appear to be quite old (both have thick trunks and deep red flowers with strong perfume). One is possibly Alister Clark's Black Boy, released in the 1920s and grown in other Barton gardens.

**1947** The house was rented by the Bates family who purchased the house in the late 1950s. This was the happy home of two parents, six children and two grandmothers. Mr Bates, who was the chauffeur for the Governor-General, planted several trees including two cypresses trimmed into ball shapes in the front garden, a Granny Smith apple and a quince (probably Smyrna) in the back garden. Only the quince survives although a crab apple (1930s?) and white-flowered plum tree and trumpet vine (cercis) remain from past decades. We know there were previously lilacs, juniper, pines and lawn.

**1997** We bought the house with aspirations for a garden but had no experience of Canberra's climate and little spare time (due to three small children) – and no spare money! Weed trees were cleared, the quince was greatly admired and sporadically pruned, lots of compost and sheep manure were applied, then the drought struck so it was a struggle to keep anything alive.

**2007** Renovation and extension of the house. A hedge of feijoas and pink flowering prunus was planted at the front to reduce summer heat and winter winds. A lawn was planted optimistically but it failed to thrive despite lots of water and reasonable soil preparation and has now been replaced with jonquils, calendula, violets and other hardy flowers.

**2020** The January hailstorm stripped and dented tree branches, broke numerous pots and destroyed plant labels and totally destroyed our roof. We spent 18 months with tarpaulins and leaks. Fortunately, the increased rainfall since then has accelerated re-growth but hedges remain uneven and some plants will take years to fully recover.



## FEATURES

New plantings were partly inspired by family visits to Suzhou and Hangzhou in China and Kanazawa in Japan. We didn't want to replicate Asian gardens but remember the beauty and harmony of the plants that often include both flowers and food production. We planted two cumquat (calamondin) trees on the sunny north side of the new part of the house, two pairs of Japanese flowering cherries, various Osmanthus, daphnes, two seedling Chimonanthus (wintersweet) and various sasanqua and japonica camellias. A flowering apricot provides pink blossom in mid-winter. The trees are underplanted with violets and mondo grass.

Peonies Encouraged by the survival of more plants than expected, we planted three tree peonies under the flowering cherries near the back door which (by chance) proved an ideal location. The cherries protect against severe summer heat and frost which can damage the flowers (late September- early October). The peonies (white Destiny, pink Etienne and a deep red-purple one (Heart of Darkness?) usually flower simultaneously with the cherries. We also planted herbaceous peonies over 10 years ago but only two flower reliably (Marie Lemoine and an unknown white double) although they have fared better with recent higher rainfall.

Fruit trees include a very productive miniature peach tree (a birthday present for our son), two almonds, a plum (decorative rather than useful), nectarine, Wheeney grapefruit, Meyer lemon and Australian lime. All survived the drought due to self-installed drip irrigation and improved soil structure from the sheep manure but the citrus are the most benefit.

Bulbs have thrived and multiplied, mainly white jonquils and November lilies. Irises (two toned purple ones like in Monet's painting and Florentine irises love the extremes of the Canberra climate and survive drought. I have been experimenting with orris root from Florentine irises as a fixative for making perfume.

Vegetables, fruit and chickens We tried various irrigation methods, experimented with different vegetables and learned the importance of netting. The most successful of two netted enclosures uses a frame from a former temporary car port (cost about \$100) with netting stretched over the frame so we can accommodate tall tomato plants. The net suffered holes from the January 2020 hailstorm but we have since found this lets blue wrens enter and leave at their convenience (to eat aphids) and keeps out currawongs and bowerbirds. Currawongs eat tomatoes (except the black cherry variety) and bowerbirds eat tomato leaves.

We planted thornless raspberry plants which produced some fruit even during the drought but are much more productive with plentiful rain. We are thinking of replanting them in a wicking bed to increase productivity and prevent canes from escaping. The chickens rake the compost piles and provide eggs (when they feel like it). Foxes are a problem in Barton, hence the high fence.

The quince tree produces over 200 kg of fruit each autumn and is beautiful in every season- we are most thankful to the Bates family for their forethought in planting this wonderful tree that has given over 70 years of joy.

## GARDEN OWNERS

Janet Hughes and Rupert Summerson

