

GARDEN NOTES

SARAH'S GARDEN

45 MIDDLETON CIRCUIT

GOWRIE



5 AND 6
NOVEMBER 2022

HISTORY

Sarah's garden complements and maximises the orientation of our solar passive house to the winter sun and the view to the garden from the north facing windows. The garden was created in two phases - by Alan and Jan Miles in the early 1980s and from the mid 2000s by Andrew and Jane Rankine.

The Miles designed and built the garden paths, steps, garden beds, mounds and rock structures creating the beautiful curves seen today. Fill and stones were unearthed from the construction of the house and from other construction sites in the area. A tower to the north west housed a zip line for the Miles children. Pine trees, obtained for free, were planted to stabilise the mounds. The Miles planned to grub the pines out but moved away before they could do so. We bought the property in 1990. Other than (to the disappointment of neighbourhood children) removing the zip line, we did little else in the garden. The pines became a forest.

In 2005 toward the end of the millennial drought we asked our wonderful neighbours at no. 43 for advice. They designed and built the beautiful north courtyard which transformed the garden by connecting it to the house and reducing the lawn. Over the years, and following the template set by Alan Miles, we extended paths and garden beds and designed and built new ones. The pine trees were removed except for a copse surrounding the remains of the zip line tower. (We harvest a pine branch each year for our Christmas tree.)

The house and garden have seen the arrival of at least three babies, been the home and play space for two families of children and, until she died aged 18, the territory of Sarah the cat. While there is always work in progress, living in Canberra's winters and summers is made joyful and easy in this wonderful house and garden.

FEATURES

The garden is on a battleaxe block and is entered from the south from a shared 'country lane'. Plants include Alister Clark roses, 'Lorraine Lee' and 'Sunny South', and an 'arch' of Ovens wattle (*Acacia pravissima*). A garden bed with Alister Clark's 'Sunlit' and 1980s plantings of Jasmine and Iris was recently extended. The Iris were moved during the re-structure and are not happy. An old Apricot tree has a carpet of Bergenia at its feet, both planted in the 1980s, and a bed of *Poa sieberiana* planted more recently. An over 20 year old Grass Tree that we planted is to the left of the front door. Running along the wall under the kitchen window is *Erigeron* (Seaside daisy) – a thug but one Jane has a soft spot for. *Dianella tasmanica* enjoys the damp conditions near the hot water tank and an old Camellia planted by the Miles family is probably enjoying the bathroom plumbing on the south west corner of the house.

The main bed in the south garden includes a *Eucalyptus stellulata*, *Casuarina* trees, *Olearia phlogopappa* and *Correa* 'Little Cate'. These plants coexist eclectically with *Diosma*, Pigface and *Crocasmia* – the latter outstaying its welcome. The planter by the clothes line is filled with Saffron crocus, but the yield will not make us rich anytime soon. Alister Clark's 'Lady Huntingfield' (beautiful, but hates rain) is by the south fence. Car port, sheds, potting area, bins, compost bins, carbon store, pavers, bricks, general rubble and 'spill over' beds are housed in the south 'utility' side of the garden.

On the west side of the house is a 22,000 litre rainwater tank which shelters the plants in its space. Rain water is used in the garden and in the house and for Andrew's sourdough.

The trellis gate leads into the main garden to the north. A small bird bath is dwarfed by *Lomandra* and *Grevillea*, the latter a magnet for the wattle bird. We host a beehive for Kevin Martin of Martin's Honey. The bees bring the garden to life. A 'Floriade' garden of bulbs and Hellebore is on the left with a Crab Apple tree. The path leads up past the first of many garden benches and across the top of the garden.

To the right of the gate, a path runs along the north side of the house. Low plantings contribute to solar gain and frame the view from the windows. Here is a mix of indigenous plants including Kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*), natives, pollinators, a mess of *Ajuga* and vegetables. Indigenous grasses in the garden are cut down at the end of winter. A big job but worth it.

The deciduous trees (Claret Ash, Manchurian Pear and Golden Ash) and the Plum and Apricot trees all planted by the Miles family allow the winter sun to come into the house and warm the floors and walls for solar gain. In summer the trees help protect and cool the house from the hot sun and wind. The courtyard is planted with places to sit, *Correa glabra*, *Philothea myoporoides*, Gallipoli Rose, Alister Clark's 'Zara Hoare Ruthven', 'Papa Meilland' and *Sedum* 'Autumn joy'. Lavender, victim of age and La Nina, is being replaced. The 'Kooka' stove was a Miles family heirloom.

At the top of the north mound facing the bike path, native and local species were planted after the removal of the pine trees. We are guerrilla gardening, fighting back the *African Lovegrass* ('Don't love this grass!') with mainly local grassy woodland species, including Wallaby grass, *Acacia rubida*, and Kangaroo Apple planted around an existing (name unknown and if you recognise it please let us know) eucalyptus to the north east.

On the east side of the house the courtyard is screened by a 'Cecile Brunner' climber and a Smoke Bush. The Ivy is tolerated only because it holds up the fence, the bees love the flowers, and we have a battery powered hedge trimmer. Native bushes have been recently planted beside the steps that lead out to the front driveway.

Notes on the solar passive house will be available at the garden opening.

Map available at the garden opening

GARDEN OWNERS

Jane and Andrew Rankine

We acknowledge the Ngunnawal people the traditional custodians of this land on which we live and garden and pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging. We extend this respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples visiting today.