

# GARDEN NOTES

## VASEY GARDEN

### 46 VASEY CRESCENT CAMPBELL



22-23 OCTOBER  
2022

#### HISTORY FEATURES

The house at 46 Vasey Crescent was built 60 years ago, when Campbell was developed, for Gordon and Catherine Blakers. The design was by Roy Grounds, then in partnership with Robin Boyd. (Nos. 42 and 44 Vasey Crescent are by the same team, and the three houses are heritage listed as a group.)

Early photos of the property show expansive lawns, but when we acquired 46 Vasey Crescent from Catherine Blakers in 2005 there was a very mature garden of largely Australian native plants on the 1300+ sq. m. block. At the time we were not native gardeners, and brought various exotics with us to our new home, including Solomon's seals, lily of the valley and lots of tall bearded iris. These interlopers, and other exotics, are still here but generally we have kept faith with Catherine Blakers' intentions.

We are particularly fortunate that the Blakers had their very rocky site – like the Mt Pleasant reserve just over the back fence - covered with a decent layer of fine topsoil and this, together with the northerly aspect, the slope and tree shading has provided an environment that will support a very wide range of species despite frost, drought and flooding rains (though over the past 15 years lots of introductions have failed the test of a Canberra winter). In 2008 we had a new wing built on the back of the house, indistinguishable in style from the original two pavilions.

#### OBJECTIVES

Our aim initially was to remove dead wood and to manage or delete plants that had got out of control (sollyas, billardieras, etc.). Then we set about filling the gaps with the native plants that caught our eye at the local nurseries.

There has been no over-riding landscape design to guide the garden's development. Instead, the priority has been to incorporate as wide a range of attractive, mostly flowering, natives as possible. Planting has progressively intensified over the years, fitting new plants in to likely spots as they have come to hand. Crowding is now evident as our own plantings have matured, but there is always room somehow for one more interesting acquisition.

#### THE GARDEN TODAY

Most of the biggest things in the garden were planted by the Blakers. They include the very large *E. mannifera*, the big melaleucas, the two *Grevillea robusta*s, several *Banksia* "Giant

Candles”, and so forth. The numerous *Acacia pubescens* down at the front and the larger callistemons are also owed to the Blakers. Most of the smaller shrubs are our own choices, (but we also planted the very vigorous native frangipanis *Hymenosporum flavum*).

There are now over 500 different species in the garden, including more than 40 grevilleas, 25 or so hakeas, 20 banksias, 20 acacias, and 15 correas. Also in good numbers are *eremophila*, *phebalium*, *pultenea*, *hibbertia*, *crowea*, *prostanthera*, *philothea*, *cassia*, *isopogon*, *adenanthos* and *plectranthus*. There are not many local species because they can be seen in the parks and reserves around about. The tall bearded irises are still present in big numbers.

We began by sourcing most of our plants from the nursery at Yarralumla but for the past several years Cool Country Natives at Pialligo has been the main provider with contributions also from the bi-annual sales of the Plant Society and the Growing Friends of the ANBG. Some rarities have come from nurseries in Queensland (Changers Green at Toowoomba) and Victoria (Phillip Vaughan at Pomonal). WA varieties have become a particular attraction, notably *lechenaultia* and *verticordia*, and the proportion of grafted plants in the garden is starting to increase.

The garden is mulched with coarse forest litter from Corkhill’s, intermittently renewed. Martin’s native planting mix is used a lot when new holes are dug, as well as sand and pebbles for drainage-sensitive types. Nearly every plant in the garden has trickle irrigation to help establishment and to tide them over during hot, dry periods. They might get a scatter of native plant fertiliser cast in their direction every year or so if it occurs to us to do it when good rain is forecast to follow. Many have lost their identities owing to carelessness, choughs digging up and/or smothering the tags tucked in beside a nearby rock, or whatever. Possums can be very tough on young plants especially; and usually there are chicken wire cages around the smaller things to keep off the rabbits resident nearby. We try to be conscientious about tip-pruning after flowering, but don’t always succeed.

## THE GARDEN IN FUTURE

The garden will continue to change incrementally as plants die or get cut down to size. Duplicates will be winnowed out to make room for even greater variety; there’s a lot of wonderful things that we would like to (try to) grow. We probably won’t live long enough to see the garden affected much by climate change but, if it happens, then that’s another opportunity for new planting.

Please enjoy your visit (but kindly stay on the paths).

## GARDEN OWNERS

Peggy Douglass and Digby Gascoine