

GARDEN NOTES

TIGMINOU

9 GIPPS ST BARTON



HISTORY

Tigminou ('My home' in South Moroccan Tachelhit Berber language) is a house and garden inspired by countries my family call home: Morocco, France and Australia.

The house is located in Barton, a heritage precinct developed in the early twenties by the Federal Capital Commission to house Canberra's first public servants. It is a 1926-27 "FCC type 10" cottage, one of 12 architectural types built at the time. When we moved in, in 1993, the small house was in quasi-original condition, with a sun drenched 900 square meter weedy garden surrounded by an old privet hedge with a magnificent English oak at the rear. In 1995, two bedrooms were added to accommodate our growing family. The Hills-Hoist died a natural death, giving way to a paved terrace and a curved path leading to the oak tree, a barely used sandpit and a swing. From that skeleton of a plan the garden grew in a chaotic and enthusiastic way.

The first olive tree was planted, then a second, a third and a fourth. Later, two more found their way into the back garden, rejects of Floriade. This was the start of what became our 'rescue garden'. Unwanted and unloved plants migrated from neighbours and friends plots, saved from a certain death and hastily planted in the unforgiving heavy clay soil that we had no time or knowledge to improve. Rescued plants fend for themselves, with little water and no fertiliser – the words *compost* and *mulch* belonged to a foreign culture. But along the years, compost bins appeared, the sandpit gave way to a "good soil" heap, the trial and error regime taught its lessons and my gardening skills slowly improved.

Family members flew away, retiring friends escaped to warmer pastures and the rescue program reached new heights. It contributed to shape and enrich today's garden, a collection of living memories, a bric-à-brac of Mediterranean climate trees, plants and bushes that often bear the name of their original owner. I haven't had much luck with native plants, but a few have survived and I hope more will thrive one day. A veggie patch remains a fantasy, as with no water tanks, little success with home-made wicking beds and the determination to rely on rain water only, greens, pumpkins, tomatoes etc. remain largely at the mercy of La Nina.

In 2020, the entire garden was shredded and the house severely damaged in a matter of minutes by the infamous 20 January hail storm. The devastation was heart breaking. A thick

layer of foliage and debris covered the entire yard, dead or injured king parrots, cockatoos and magpies lay everywhere, terracotta pots were in pieces, hoses, watering cans and garden furniture were destroyed. Friends rallied for a major cleanup and a five cubic metre skip was filled with green waste. But that year, the rain came, and the garden made a spectacular recovery, a lesson in patience and resilience.

Tigminou is an untamed work in progress, but it is a place for family and friends to share and enjoy, a place I feel privileged to be responsible for. I hope many migrants will have like me the opportunity to create and nurture a garden of their own, a soothing and restorative refuge, evocative of a faraway past, heralding a new future, and respectful of the character of Barton heritage precinct.

FEATURES

Plants must be frost resistant, time and water wise, scented if possible, with an accent on white, green and purple. However, rescue plants are full of surprises, and all colours of the rainbow have appeared in the garden. All plants relate to and remind me of the people I love, my daughters, parents, sisters, close friends, mentors etc. and the places I lived in.

Edible plants: Coral's figs, Margot and Pia's persimmon, Christine's cumquat, Raihan's Moroccan mint, Nathalie's thyme, Janet's sorrel, Queanbeyan wasteland prickly pear (ode to a Berber childhood), Captain's Flat raspberries, olives, pomegranates, lemon Meyer, Lemon Buddha fingers, Greengage plum, rescue purple plums, elderberry, bay laurel, black Muscat grape vines, angelica, Marrakech lemon-scented verbena, self-seeded fennel, rescued lemongrass, artemisia absinthium, rosemary, horse radish, artichoke, etc.

Non-edible plants: Mum's climbing rose, Erica's Garrya elliptica, Omar Khayyam rose and buddleia, Ric's koelreuteria and rhus typhina (staghorn sumac), Prue's choysia and Mr Lincoln rose, Marcus' camellia, Bruce's bush rose, Anne-Yvonne's Queen of the Night cactus, Virginie's hellebores, columbines, grevillea, dianella, recalcitrant geraniums and struggling leucadendron, Véronique's gardenia and dogwood, Hoskinstown cemetery's rambling rose, Atlas valley oleander and tamarisk, capricious daphne, heavenly scented osmanthus, delicate lily of the valley, fiery hemerocallis, elusive peony, eucalyptus caesia, rescued Christmas tree and feijoa, exuberant snowball bush, French and oak-leaf hydrangeas, ever-forgiving potted cactuses and succulents, still to come thickets of salvias and lichen - one lives in hope, invasive violets and acanthus, and an invincible army of Italian lilies.

GARDEN OWNERS

France Meyer