**GARDEN NOTES**

**‘THE BAKER GARDEN’ - 20 WELLS GARDENS, GRIFFITH**

**Background and Design Approach**

We moved to 20 Wells Garden 12 years ago and established a new garden from scratch as the whole block was very overgrown with ivy, vinca, honeysuckle plus two huge Plane trees that were under our power line and an aged Hawthorn which proved to have rot in the trunk. We had all of that cleared so that we could start again. The only ‘inheritances’ were the pale green wooden trellis across the back of the garden and the open-sided shed now used as a blacksmithing and potting shed.

Since we arrived in Australia in 1970 we have established three new gardens and for the previous two we used a garden designer. However, this time we decided to design and establish the garden ourselves, although we had the stone walls and paved areas put in by contractors.

The block has an area of 970 m² and the footprint of the house and hard areas covers about 350m², leaving a garden area of 550m². We decided not to have a lawn, but instead have regularly watered, fertilised and mown the grass on the nature strip.

Our design brief was for a low maintenance garden which could be left to largely look after itself for periods of several weeks at a time. We have used pine bark as mulch throughout the whole garden area. Watering is by individual drippers or by dripper pipe, with timer-controlled sprinklers watering the vegetable beds.

We are currently in our mid-70s and do all the garden work ourselves without the assistance of a paid gardener, as was our intention. Hence the emphasis on a low maintenance garden.

We also decided not to have flower beds in the conventional sense and instead chose shrubs, plants and bulbs which would give year-round colour as well as coordinated colour palettes.

**Principal Garden Areas**

**The front garden** contains flowering shrubs, perennials, bulbs and roses in shades of pink, purple, blue and white. Trees include a *Magnolia x soulangeana*, *Malus ioensis ‘Plena’*, and a mauve Crepe Myrtle. The winding stepping-stones through the garden are a children’s favourite. Two snails made from strap iron are an interesting feature, plus a ceramic female form by Ros Auld. Shrubs include Correas, *Sasangua camellias ‘White Ribbon’* and *‘Mine-no-Yuki’* and a beautiful deep pink double Syrian Hibiscus propagated from an old country house in central NSW. There is almost always something in flower!

**The small patio area** near the front door is a serene space with several sculptures (including a guard dog) clipped shrubs, a Seville Orange, a ‘*Meyer’* Lemon and a Tahitian Lime tree, plus a Cycad near the front door.

**The back garden** in front of the painted wooden trellis is defined by paved paths and features a bird bath purchased in Tasmania and several sculptures – including a group of ceramic chooks! One raised bed is full of hot colours whereas the other is silver and gold. Water is provided for the birds by three other containers. Trees we planted to replace the two plane trees that were removed are *Malus floribunda*, *Prunus serrulata ‘Prentice Dancer’*, and a white Crepe Myrtle *‘Natchez’*. There are many bulbs planted to flower in most seasons. David Austin roses are a favourite, plus several other fragrant roses. There is a large collection of Bearded Iris which put on a show in October. The shady part of the garden has a collection of Hellebores plus Bergenia, *Camellia sasangua ‘Yuletide’* and *‘Paradise Vanessa’,* and several peonies.

**The vegetable garden** behind the painted wooden trellis comprises five 2m x 1m raised garden beds which are about 0.5m high and are watered by five 180° sprinklers. The whole area is paved to make maintenance easy. Three rotating compost bins serve the vegetable garden and all our green kitchen waste, leaves and other garden waste go into them. The compost has contributed to very good soil in the five veggie beds.

The open-sided roofed area, which was there when we bought the house, has been made into a potting and blacksmithing area. Adjacent to it are two citrus trees - a Blood Orange and a Mandarin, planted because Liz is a big jam and marmalade maker. There is also a *‘Black Genoa’* Fig planted a few years ago, which when fruiting has a fine net fitted to protect the fruit from bees, birds and flying foxes. There are also three Blueberry bushes, which cropped very heavily last year.

On top of the back fence is a recently-constructed wooden trellis, with wire supports for new fruit trees being espaliered on it. The trellis and fruit trees replace a vigorous pittosporum hedge which was removed because it added little value and there was a lot of work involved in trimming it. The new fruit trees are a Josephine pear; an apricot, fruit salad tree Pink Lady/Gala, fruit salad tree white peach/yellow plum, a navel orange and a cumquat.

**Under the** **house verandahs** we have a range of potted plants standing either on the ground or on tiered wooden benches. Plants here include a wide range of succulents, fuchsia, ferns, pelargoniums and orchids.

**The Greenhouse**

John ordered a kit to build a greenhouse for Liz in late 2021 as her Christmas present.. It arrived as a very large package and was just like a huge Lego set! It needed a concrete base, electricity and water and now Liz is using it for propagation and to store frost tender plants in the winter.

**Sculptures**

Scattered throughout the garden is an eclectic collection of sculptures, ranging from works by established artists such as Greg Johns, Michael Le Grand and Patricia Lawrence, through to a range of works by students from the ANU’s School of Art and Design. A recent addition is a sandstone slab with an inscription carved by Ian Marr and copied from a plaque in the Snowshill Garden in the UK. (A separate laminated sheet is available which details the sculptures.)

**Visitors to the Garden**

The following birds were seen visiting the garden for food and water during 2022:  
A pair of Satin Bower Birds; Currawong; Magpie; Magpie Lark; King Parrot; Rainbow Lorikeet; Eastern Rosella; Crimson Rosella; Scrub Wren; Superb Fairy Wren; Silver Eye; Striated Pardalote; Red Wattle Bird; Eastern Spinebill; Crested Pigeon; Koel; Crow; and Indian Myna Bird.

Fruit Bats visit when the figs are ripe plus Brushtail Possums raid the vegetable garden regularly.

The garden was featured on pages 4 & 5 of the Spring 2022 edition of ‘Our Gardens’.

John and Liz Baker, November 2022