

# GARDEN NOTES

## “SERENDIPITY”

### 29 FITZALAN PLACE, KAMBAH



#### HISTORY

The block of land that forms the basis of our garden “Serendipity” is a little over 2200 m<sup>2</sup> in area and the block originally had a moderate, essentially uniform slope. Steep enough to make it interesting – but not so steep that we had to become mountain goats to traverse it. The garden was so named partly because we hope that visitors would see it as a pleasant and unexpected surprise in the suburban environment but also as a nod to the cultural heritage of my wife Yvonne.

We have been here now for a little over 40 years after having had the house built and moving in a couple of days before Christmas 1979. We were enthusiastic enough early in the New Year, i.e. January 1980, to attempt to plant some trees along our boundaries – but quickly found that, even with a crowbar, it was almost impossible to dig holes deep enough to plant anything. In the end we hired a contractor with a backhoe and got him to rip up a band of soil about 3 m wide on the North, East and West boundaries. Only then after levelling it did we have the freedom to plant.

With the development that has occurred over the last 40 years the garden now consists of a number of interconnected levels with a small lawn featuring in each. The garden features extensive paths, with intermittent steps, that meander through the planted zones to provide easy access to most areas.

As you walk around, you may notice that there are a lot of relatively large rocks used in the garden for embankments and for the pond – some probably weigh more than a tonne. These were all imported from the adjacent suburb. Yvonne, who was home at the time with the children at the time, would drive to Wanniasa to scout for building sites with substantial piles of rock floaters and then negotiate with the builder to have the rocks dropped off with us rather than dumping them. Truckloads of soil spoil were also delivered to us by builders and so the level section of the garden just down from the pond also consists of fill obtained from Wanniasa.

Our aim in developing this garden is to have a visually attractive landscape with enough variety and detail to always have something of interest around the next corner - to create an almost park-like feel to the place. And it is rare, at almost any time of the year, not to have something in flower. Whilst I would like to say that we had a clear layout of the garden at the time we started – that would be more than a little exaggeration. It is true that we had a basic idea of what we were going to try to achieve and some early decisions that we made still exist in the garden today. In other respects, only once elements such as the major retaining walls were completed – could we really begin to see what can be done in other areas. And so, the layout has gradually developed over time.

## FEATURES

There are many mature trees in the garden – including Japanese Maple, Pistachio, Pin Oak, Eucalypt, Dog Wood, Golden Elm, Blue Spruce, Tulip Trees and some not so mature such as the Tricolour Beech. There are some flowering trees – such as the Dogwoods and Crab Apple and many flowering shrubs – such as the Mollis Azaleas, Rhododendrons and Camellias, Azaleas and Mountain Laurel and also plenty of cultivars of Correas and Grevilleas to name a few.

Although there are some less common plants among our collection, we have never focused on developing a collection of rare plants nor a comprehensive collection of any one plant family. We like both native and exotic plants and so we have used them fairly freely throughout. Although we do try to keep the natives grouped, we are not dogmatic about such notions.

As most of us know, summers in Canberra can be extremely hot and, without shade, very uncomfortable. As our tree plantings have matured, we now have significant shade in summer, and we can nearly always find a shady spot outside and even on the hottest days we can now spend extended periods in the garden. At the same time, the interplay of sunlight and shade on our garden beds and also on our lawns on these sunny days is one of my great pleasures in the garden.

## GARDEN OWNERS

Yvonne and Gerhard Horoschun